

See? WOW!

News and Encouragement for CID Circuit Witness & Outreach

Workers

Nbr. 8 – April 29, 2019

God's Gift to Jesus

At times people say that someone acts like he or she is "God's gift to the world" or to some industry or city or state.

Jesus prayed in His High-Priestly Prayer: "I have manifested Your name to the people whom You gave Me out of the world. Yours they were, and You gave them to me. . . . For I have given them the words that You gave Me" (John 17:6, 8). Here, Jesus was speaking directly about first-century disciples. Indirectly, though, he was praying about *you* when he talked with His Father concerning "the people whom You gave Me."

See? WOW! *You* are God's gift to Jesus! He has given you the words that were given to Him by the Father. "Sanctify them in the truth," He went on. "Your word is truth" (John 17:17). You and I have been given the word of His dying and rising for you, the word of forgiveness and reconciliation. It is for us to be saved, and to pass on.

For others are God's gift to Jesus too. You know what that's like. For you are God's gift to Jesus, and you will continue to be God's gift to Jesus in eternity. Now we get to act like it!

One last reminder: *Deaconess Rachel Jaseph* from Ft. Wayne presents on urban outreach this coming Sat., May 4, from 10 to noon at Wittenberg Lutheran Center, Normal. It would be great if you

could come, collect insights and take them back, especially if your circuit has urban churches! Feel free to come, whether or not you RSVP beforehand

Recall: Please don't copy p. 2 of this newsletter.

Another tool: County by County Statistics

The Center for U.S. Mission has statistics on "unclaimed" people on a county by county basis in most states. Scroll down to *Illinois* after going to <http://www.centerforusmissions.com/demographic-maps-by-state>

"Unclaimed" in this instance means not affiliated with ANY religious group. Put differently, some of the "claimed" may not be Christian but, for example, Mormons or Jehovah's Witnesses. But it is sobering simply to see the large number of "unclaimed" people in most Illinois counties.

The data is available on a table and on a map. Either of these formats also includes the number of LCMS churches in each county.

This can be another tool for you to use. Especially if your Circuit includes more than one county, you might find this helpful.

Connect to Disciple:

Last week Wes Reimnitz, our CID trainer, wrote to say he is ill and will not be at the Clinton workshop in June. Bill Denham will be at Clinton to assist. This will be "phase 2" of Bill's training.

And here's some exciting news from the just-concluded LWML District convention: our grant request was approved to provide funds to



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pay expenses for our CID workshop facilitators to travel in the future, after the Synod is no longer paying for their travel to workshops where they are being trained. This will enable us to continue to make CTD workshops available with churches needing to pay only the cost of the materials.

So: please encourage churches to schedule workshops. In fall, 2019, we have Immanuel, Rock Island (Sept. 6-7) and Our Savior, Springfield (Sept. 27-28). We could use 2 more this fall alone!



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Worth considering:

Synergism in Philippi?

The Philippian jailer asked St. Paul, literally, “What is necessary for me to do in order that I might be saved?” (Acts 16:30).

What sort of answer might this man have been expecting? Naturally, sinners know that they have somehow offended God, and they tend to conclude that they should try to make it up to Him. The jailer was asking for something to do. If Paul had responded by telling him to climb a high mountain or swim a wide river, the response would have probably made sense. The man may not have wanted to do it, but it would have made sense.

But Paul said: “*Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.*”

Notice, first, what Paul did not tell this man. He did not say to the jailer, “Friend, not so fast! I hardly know you. You have to work your way up to something like this. Take some time to wrestle with this matter in prayer and meditation, then come back to me in perhaps a week, and at that point we can talk.” No, Paul said nothing of the sort. He didn’t tell the man to do anything.

Some will disagree. “Wait,” they might say, “‘Believe’ is an imperative, a command. Paul did tell this man to do something: believe. So it was up to him to give his heart to the Lord, or to make his decision for Christ.” So the claim can go.

There are at least two ways of responding to this claim. One is fairly old. It recognizes that “believe in Jesus,” is indeed a command, in terms of grammatical form. But it doesn’t ignore the role

this expression plays in the sentence. In a similar way, if a beggar asks you for food and you hand him some saying, “Eat this,” in grammatical form you are also giving him a command. But he will recognize that you are really issuing him an invitation. It will not occur to that beggar to get on his high horse and say, “How dare you give me a command? Who are you to order me around?” No, he knows that – however much the wording may be that of a command – you are inviting him to eat.

That is the older way of analyzing Paul’s invitation, “*Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved.*” Another way is to observe the historical situation. Remember, Paul wrote a letter back to the church at Philippi, about 10 years after that night of the earthquake, 12 on the outside – that is, within the probable lifetime of the jailer and certainly of his children. In this letter, the epistle to the Philippians, he wrote: “*it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake.*” It has been *granted* to you to believe in Christ. It’s a gift.

How would the jailer likely have reacted upon hearing these words as they were read from Paul’s letter? Would he have said, “Wait a second. This was no gift. Paul told me to do something, and I did it”? Or would he have recalled that night of the earthquake as when he received a great gift: the gift of believing in Christ, of which Paul wrote?

A friend of mine once made an evangelism call on a young woman. He said he was there to talk about Jesus. “Jesus!?”, she exclaimed. “I love Jesus!” Yet the more they talked, though, the more



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it seemed she knew almost nothing about Jesus, about His 3-year ministry, His teachings, His healings, even His death and resurrection. Finally, my friend asked, "What has been your contact with Jesus?" "Oh, I went down the aisle," she told him. "And you know something?", she added. "I think I need to go down that aisle again."

People usually want to remain in the faith the way they think they first entered it.

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