

Nbr. 51 – April, 2023

Glad to be on the Losing Side?!

When wars are lost in this world, this can be a disaster for those who are defeated. Terrible degradations and inhumanities can and do follow for them. Victory does not come across as good news if you have ended up on the losing side.

Easter is a victory celebration: Jesus wins. He beat the devil, death, and sin. That used to be our side. It is the side of our sinful nature, the opposite side in the cataclysmic war with God. When our Lord emerged from the tomb alive and well, there could be no doubt that He had won.

Now here is the great Good News: not only has Christ ‘beaten’ us, but now through His Holy Spirit He puts us on His side. In His Gospel, He shares the fruit of His victory with us.

The secret weapon to win the war was Jesus Christ Himself, the Man Who is also God. Even though the whole fullness of Deity dwelled in His body (Col. 2:9), He became a loser on the cross so we can be winners by the power of His resurrection.

See? WOW! Never before in history has it been so good to be on the losing side, with so much as stake. In Christ and with Christ, we win.

Helping Beleaguered Pastors – How to Ask?

Please help us at the CID office to help you. I sense that one of the things impeding evangelism efforts is that pastors have so many other things “on their plate.” Can pastors and churches help one another with such things? Can CID offer help? How?

I’d like to survey pastors at the May conference about this, but I am unsure about how best to raise the questions. I’m all ears for ideas!

Save the Date: June 3, 2023

Small Church Summit

The third Small Church Summit will meet on Saturday, June 3 at Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church, Farmersville (I-55 exit 72) from 10:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Zion welcomes small congregations in the Central and Southern Illinois Districts to attend.

What is “small,” for these purposes? Well, if you think your church is small, consider yourself invited! And be sure your church sends not just one person, but perhaps three or four -- or more!

The Small Church Summit started to provide an opportunity for pastors and laypeople from small LCMS congregations in Illinois to come together for mutual encouragement and to discuss common challenges and innovative solutions. Participants at the last meeting, in January of this year, said they wanted to know more about various resources that are available.

So for the June 3 session, we have invited someone who can give the group expert guidance with regard to resources: Pastor Todd Kollbaum. He is the Director of Rural and Small Town Mission for our Synod’s Office of National Mission. He is also very much engaged in such ministry on the front lines as Pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, Madison, Nebraska. He is a great encourager with the Word.

There is no cost to attend the Small Church Summit. If you know of people who would like to travel the day before, let me know ASAP and I will try to find folks in Springfield who would be willing to host houseguests on Friday night, June 2.

In any case, register for the Small Church Summit by May 26. Go to

<https://forms.gle/R5BBVcvgnrL9iRcW7>



Circuit Witness and Outreach Workers

Worth Considering: “He Gets Us”

Within televised coverage of sporting events and other programs, you have probably seen commercial announcements from “He Gets Us.” This organization, with sufficient funding to make commercials with high production values and to purchase expensive airtime in which to show them, is trying to introduce or re-introduce Jesus to the American public. Sometimes this is done by “de-familiarizing” the story, presenting Jesus in terms recognizable within our society, yet not terms in which people may be used to hearing about Him.

“He Gets Us” preliminary research showed that over 50% of adults in this country are open to learning more about Jesus. These folks strongly agree that Jesus’ teachings are good for society as a whole. Jesus is widely seen as a Seeker of peace, welcoming, accepting, and loving to all.

The television commercials and associated resources can be found online at www.HeGetsUsPartners.com/engaging_culture

“He Gets Us” has two stated goals. The first is to raise respect for Jesus and show His relevance. The second is to call on Christians to reflect Jesus’ love in their interactions with others.

The “He Gets Us” approach has strengths:

- It takes the Incarnation very seriously. The Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory (John 1:14). To know how the Father is disposed to you, look at Him (John 14:9). The Good News is all about Jesus.
- Further, Jesus was tempted in every point as we are, albeit without sin (Heb. 4:15). He stands out as a striking and summoning Figure for that reason alone. Many who view the television commercials say that they believe Jesus

understands them and that they want to learn more about Him from the Bible.

- Jesus *gets* us. NOT: “He *got* us.” The verb is in the present tense. This is speaking of Jesus alive and well, risen from the dead.

The approach also has its weaknesses:

- The makers of the television commercials candidly report that they tell of Jesus with the felt needs of people very much in mind. The leading need noted in the research was that people are suffering in toxic relationships. (That point explains the emphases in some of the commercials.) Yet, however valuable it can be to note that we can identify with Jesus and that He empathizes with us, there is more to Him than what fits within the horizon of our emoting or even our imagining. A lot can be left out.
- Related point: over the centuries, it has proven quite tempting for people to re-make Jesus in their own image, according to their own ideas. This can happen even with respect to the “sympathetic” themes presented in the commercials. Scripture must remain our source and norm whenever we ask Who Jesus is.

The present short article cannot provide extensive critique. For now, I suggest:

1. Call attention to the “He Gets Us” campaign.
2. Find out more about it. Its website provides information on themes for future commercials. For example, the announced theme for Lent, 2023 is “sacrifice.”
3. Suggest referring to the commercials in talking about Jesus. We need not approve of everything in them in order to use them as starting points for evangelistic conversation.

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