



*"Which hope we have as an Anchor of the
soul,
both sure and steadfast."*

Hebrews 6:19

Vol. 52, Num. 5

THE ANCHOR

January 2018

From the Pastor . . .

I have run across several people in my life who don't know what day they were born. It happens. Mom was busy and just didn't remember. This seems awfully strange and even negligent to us – who fails to record a birthday? But this wasn't strange at all in the ancient world. Any student of ancient history has to memorize dates. Our students at Mount Hope Lutheran School actually memorize a timeline from the creation of the world all the way up to the significant events in our own day. And as they rattle through their dates, you'll often hear them say the Latin word *circa*, which means, "about." "Birth of Abraham, circa 2100 BC," or, "Pythagoras is born, circa 575 BC," and so forth. These men are ridiculously famous and we don't even know what *year* they were born, much less what day. And something similar goes for most of the great men and women of ancient history, from Socrates to Cleopatra – we don't know their birthdays. Neither, probably, did they.

Much more common is to know when someone dies. Cleopatra died on August 12, 30 BC, poisoned by an asp. Socrates' death in 399 is recorded in detail, but not his birth. The ancient world simply had different priorities than we do (though the Roman nobles liked their birthdays from the beginning, and cakes).

So when my children came to me distressed that another child said December 25th wasn't Jesus' birthday, my answer was and is, "Don't worry about it. December 25th is as good a day as any to celebrate His birth." We know the day of Jesus' death – 15 Nisan, which we celebrate every year on Good Friday (varying in date every year because Nisan is part of a lunar calendar). But the ancient Church didn't find it so important to determine the exact date of Jesus' birth. Birthdays just weren't a big deal.

But, of course, the Incarnation of God is a big deal. And this is what we celebrate on Christmas – that God took on our flesh and blood. And this the ancient Church *always* celebrated, from the very beginning. Before the West set the celebration of Christmas on December 25th, well-established was the celebration of the Annunciation on March 25, the day Gabriel announced to Mary that she would conceive by the power of the Holy Spirit and the Child would be called the Son of God. That's when Jesus' took on our human flesh, when He was conceived in the Virgin Mary's womb (another reason we Christians are pro-life!). We have reports of Christians celebrating the Annunciation since before AD 200, whereas the celebration of Christmas on December 25 (9 months after March 25) was made official only when Christianity became the religion of the Roman Empire under Constantine the Great (AD 336).

There have been some silly Christ-myth theorists who think that this late date for the official day of Christmas somehow means Christmas is a fake. I've never understood what that even means. The detractors of Christianity have, it seems, become more and more desperate to score a point. No Christian has ever claimed the Bible gives us December 25 as the date of Jesus' birth. We simply celebrate our Lord's birth on this day. Just as we celebrate His resurrection every Sunday, and the night of His betrayal every time we receive the Lord's Supper. And we

have good reason to do so. We value Christmas, set it aside as a special day, because we value as our dearest treasure the history of God coming into the flesh, conceived in the Virgin Mary's womb, and born in the town of Bethlehem *circa* 2018 years ago, to live and die for us, to bring peace with God by the forgiveness of our sins, to give us a life worth living on this earth and to open the way to everlasting life. That's the point of Christmas, whether we celebrate it on December 25 or, as the Eastern Christians still like to do, on January 6, or any other day for that matter.

But when I get to heaven, I won't be surprised if Mary smiles and says she remembers the day very well, and it was December 25, one of those rare days it was snowing in Bethlehem. Merry Christmas and Happy Epiphany.

Pastor Preus

From the School . . .

Enjoy this essay by Joel Gehrke, a Foreign Affairs journalist for the Washington Examiner, and brother of Miss Amanda Gehrke.

* * *

Hearts that too wildly beat,
Brief is their epitaph.
Wisdom is in the wheat
Not in the chaff.
But, oh, my dear, how rich and rare
And root-down deep and wild and sweet
It is to laugh.

— Walter de la Mare

* * *

What does this mean? Maybe that question sounds unnecessary. Maybe it's just a short poem with a pleasant finish, like a candy that dissolves on your tongue. But it is a poem, by a good poet (an English professor once referred to de la Mare as a poet of the second order, clarifying that he meant it as very high praise), so it bears a closer look. Poets use few words to suggest their meaning. The restrictions imposed by the genre limit them in some ways, but they also create opportunities to say more indirectly than might be said in a more straightforward fashion. (If that sounds silly, remember the Psalms or the Magnificat. The Virgin Mary responds with poetry to the angel's announcement that she will bear the Son of God. There's something about poetry that is appropriate for trying to express the highest or the deepest things.)

So what does this poem suggest? To get a better idea, consider the images offered and the sounds that repeat. The opening sentence is clear enough, right? "Hearts that too wildly beat / Brief is their epitaph." There's an obvious warning here, anchored in the biology of heart palpitations, against excess passion. It's reinforced by the next couplet, which allows for the rhyme between "chaff" and "epitaph." Young lovers are advised not to take their high feelings too seriously. At least, they would be if the poem ended there. It doesn't.

“But, oh, my dear, how rich and rare
 And root-down deep and wild and sweet
 It is to laugh.”

Note that “laugh” rhymes with “epitaph” and “chaff.” This isn’t an accident. It might even be the point. We are supposed to think of all three together, somehow, but “laugh” redeems the sound so that the association isn’t so negative. There’s another repetition in the penultimate line, when “wild” is salvaged from the condemnation of the first line and used alongside “rich” and “rare” and “sweet” to characterize the great good of laughter. What does that suggest about the meaning of wisdom? The first half of the poem seemed to define wisdom by what it isn’t — it’s not too wild, it’s not chaff; it must be sober and stolid. That’s not quite right anymore. Look at that one remaining image: “root-down-deep.” Laughter is “root-down-deep.” What has roots? Wheat, but also chaff. So, you’ll have laughter in both, passion in both. In fact, wisdom is just as much a product of laughter as chaff can be. What does this mean for the two who love? How can they know if they’re making the mistake shown in the first line, or living the joy of the final line? Maybe that’s the wrong question. It might even be the fatal question. Wheat rhymes with the “beat” of heart beat. And the problem with a heart palpitation isn’t that it’s beating, but that it ever stops, or fails to beat when it should. So maybe the poem is not saying, “consider carefully whether you are engaged in this kind of love or that kind.” Maybe it is instead, or additionally, saying that wisdom is in the action of love and its continuance. That fidelity is supported by laughter, and there’s perhaps the subtlest hint that it’s laughter in the face of suffering. After all, wheat and chaff go together until they are separated on the threshing floor. So how do you learn to laugh while being threshed? The speaker in the poem doesn’t say, exactly, but he can’t even begin to talk about it without looking at his dear.

OFFICIAL ACTS

Transfer In: None
Reception by Profession of Faith: None
Transfer Out: None
Peaceful Release: None
Funeral: None
Wedding: None
Baptism: None
Adult Confirmation: None

WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES

Randy & Paula Thoroughman	Jan. 2	30 yrs.
Wally & Charlene Aakre	Jan. 26	50 yrs!

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

Jan. 2	Alma Cardinal	
Jan. 2	Lydia Ekin	
Jan. 3	Joan Osterloh	
Jan. 4	Kathy Airisa	
Jan. 6	Layne Parks	9
Jan. 6	Natalie Plumb	17
Jan. 6	Richard Rice, Sr.	
Jan. 10	Catherine Hill	
Jan. 13	Bob Suedes	
Jan. 17	Rebecca Cordova	
Jan. 18	Nickolas Lewallen, Jr.	
Jan. 19	Kaitlyn Glynn	
Jan. 21	Wendy Doctor	
Jan. 24	Ed Fink	
Jan. 24	Jason Parks	
Jan. 28	Charles Bonds	
Jan. 28	Paula Thoroughman	
Jan. 31	Daniel Cordova	17

News & Notes

LWML NEWS

**Commit your works to the Lord,
and your thoughts will be
established. Proverbs 16:3**

The LWML is going to begin the New Year with a business meeting. **The meeting will be on Saturday, January 13 with refreshments at 9:00 a.m.** Wendy Doctor and Tiana Harris will be our lovely hostesses. There will be Valentine cards to sign for our college students and shut-ins. We need all you fine ladies to attend!

Please mark your calendars for our next meeting on Saturday, February 10 at 9:00a.m.

Pastor Preus will lead us in a study on the Augsburg Confession beginning at 9:15a.m.

The fabulous hostesses for February's meeting will be Betty Bayer and Lori Carl.

See you on January 13!
The LWML Board

Good Shepherd News

The Good Shepherd Auxiliary prayerfully and financially supports Bethesda Lutheran Communities, which serve people with developmental disabilities in group homes.

Our members at Mount Hope join in the mission to reach forward in Faith, Word, and deed by sharing the love of Jesus.

The Christmas offering collected during the Advent season totaled \$200! Thanks be to

God for His gifts of love and the gift of Jesus!

We will meet January 19, at 9:30 am in the Fellowship Hall for refreshments and a short business meeting to be followed by Bingo. What does this mean? Please remember to bring a White Elephant (bagged or wrapped) to share. All those interested in joining us – please come!

January is Membership month for the National organization. Deloris Radtke has done a good job of bringing the Bethesda campaign to our congregation and she will be happy to accept any donation. This year, an annual donation of \$10 (or more!) has been suggested by headquarters. **Please consider becoming a member by filling out our name, address, city/state/zip and giving this information to Deloris with your donation.**

In the Shepherd's care,
Debbie Lee, President

Monday Night Bible Study resumes January 8, at 7:00 pm, continuing the study of the Book of Revelation. Wednesday morning Bible study resumes January 10, at 9:30 am. Hope to see you!

GEMÜTLICHKEIT WILL BE JANUARY 31, AT 7:00 PM AT PASTOR PREUS'S. ALL MEN (YOUNG AND OLD) ARE WELCOME TO JOIN IN THE DISCUSSION AND ENJOY FELLOWSHIP IN THE WORD.

The Food for Thought Project THANKS YOU for your contributions of food in 2017. January kicks off with the need for canned soup. Please leave your donations on the food box in the school wing. THANKS AGAIN FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!

SAVE THE DATES!!!

Winter Youth Ski Retreat!

WHEN: Friday, February 2 – Saturday February 3, 2018. Check in begins at 4:00 pm Friday.

WHERE: Prince of Peace Lutheran Church, Buffalo, WY, and Meadowlark Ski Lodge

WHO: All youth 6th grade and up

COST: See Registration packets on table in the narthex.

DEADLINE: Please let Pastor or Dan Graham know if you are planning on coming by **JANUARY 20**.

BABY BOTTLE BOOMERANG 2018!!

Announcing True Care Women's Resource Center's Baby Bottle Boomerang! Baby bottles from the Center will be available here at church for you to take home **between January and Presidents' Day (February 18)**. Each bottle has a tag that lists the life-affirming services of True Care Women's Resource Center and the costs of some of the many materials needed to keep the ministry going. Please your baby bottle in a prominent place in your home where you will remember to pray for the staff, volunteers, and patients of the Center. **Return your bottle on Presidents' Day weekend (February 18), filled with the coins, bills, and checks you collect.** Thank you for partnering with True Care to erase the perceived need for abortion in our community!