

Lutheran Missionary League Sunday October 9, 2011

“Being with Jesus—Living on the Edge”

Christ is Risen. (He is Risen, indeed!) This is the day we give thanks to God for the gift of our Savior, Jesus Christ, who died for our sins and rose again from the dead so that we might be saved. God extends the invitation to everyone to repent, believe in Christ, and receive salvation. Today we honor the work of the Lutheran Women’s Missionary League who has embraced Jesus Christ as Savior, and who has stood together, as one, to proclaim this news to the world. In the words of the theme for this worship service this year, they live “being with Jesus-Living on the Edge.”

When I first heard the theme, particularly the “Living on the Edge,” I thought of one of our LWML members at St. Paul’s (perhaps Martha or Julie in our skit, or Leslie Jaseph, or Lois Schmiesing) bungee jumping off of the Chesapeake Bay Bridge. And I suppose if that act would promote the cause of Christ and help save lost souls, they would probably say, “Sign me up.” They wouldn’t be the first Lutheran women to live on the edge. The wise pastor doesn’t mess with the LWML, but rejoices in the partnership of spreading the Gospel.

Here is an example of a Lutheran woman in the past who lived on the edge. During the Civil War, as General Lee’s Confederate soldiers were coming towards Gettysburg, one German Lutheran lady, named **Hannah**, felt she had to do something. Having nothing else to use as a weapon, she grabbed the broom and started walking down the road to meet the enemy. When the Confederates were confronted by Hannah, to their credit, they gently brushed her, and her broom, to the side.

Some years later, at a quilting party, the Gettysburg ladies were reminiscing about the fight, and they had some good fun at Hannah’s expense. One of them, a **Mrs. Bomberger**, asked, “Hannah, what in the world did you expect to do with your old broom against the great Southern army?”

“Vell,” (well) said Hannah, with her Pennsylvania German accent, “I din’t tink I vuld schlow dem down, but I vanted dem ta know vut site I vas on.” (I didn’t think I would slow them down, but I wanted them to know what side I was on.) The German Lutheran, Hannah, also knew she was on the side of Christ.

Hannah was a woman who lived on the edge ... but she is hardly the first individual to do so. Let’s go back almost 2,000 years ago to a Judea where four women are on their way to Jesus’ tomb. They are Mary, the mother of James and Joses; Joanna, wife of Chusa, the steward of Herod; Mary Magdalene whom Jesus freed from seven devils; and Salome, the mother of James and John. These four women got up early because they were going to finish the burial of someone they loved.

Salome, living in Capernaum, would have remembered the day her boys spoke of Jesus’ miraculous catch of fish, how Jesus had cast out a demon, healed a paralytic, or raised the dead daughter of Jairus. **Mary Magdalene**, whom history has maligned and misinterpreted, might have spoken of how Jesus had cast out the seven demons that had possessed and plagued her. **Joanna**, with her husband’s contacts in Herod’s court, might have shared how Jesus had fulfilled Isaiah’s prophecy (53:7) and refused to defend Himself at His trials.

These women had lived on the edge as they stood at the foot of the cross. If those whom Jesus had healed, those whom He had fed, those whom He had raised from the dead, and most of His disciples

were not there, these women would stay. They would keep Jesus' mother company. They would stay and hear what He had to say. Others might pass by mocking and maligning Him, but they would stand fast. Surrounded by hatred, they showed love. They were living on the edge.

Thousands of years later it would be fashionable for critics to say Jesus had fainted, become comatose, been buried, and then had revived. These women knew differently. Jesus was dead and, like many women before them and many millions more since, these women gave thanks that the suffering of their loved One had ended. Courageously they watched as His corpse was taken down from the cross; bravely they watched to see where He was buried; sadly they noted the preparation of His body was richly, but incompletely done. That was when they pledged: "After the Sabbath we will set this right."

If a person had reminded them of the stone in front of the grave's entrance, or had informed them of the guard ... well, that person would have learned: "You don't mess with the LWML." With single-minded dedication the women gathered the spices necessary to finish Jesus' burial and, on Sunday morning, set out toward His tomb. There they intended to offer their final respects to Jesus' dead body.

As they approached the tomb they would have been astonished to find Jesus' grave was open. That Jesus had risen from the dead was the one thing which did not occur to them. That was because the simple, unassailable truth is this: people who are dead for three days don't come back to life. Dead is dead. You know it; I know it; these women knew it. Fearing the worst, the women gathered their courage and respectfully, slowly, tentatively entered Jesus' grave. There they met an angel who told them, "Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen."

Those three words, "He has risen," meant for the women that their Friend, their Rabbi, their Master, their Teacher, was also their Savior. According to His own prediction, Jesus kept His promise. Before He had been arrested He had said, "I lay down my life that I may take it up again." These women were the first to learn the truth that Jesus was no mere man. Jesus was the human and divine Savior of the world. And this Savior had given them a mission. They were to tell Jesus' disciples that Christ is risen. That truth meant they would always be living with Jesus. It meant they would always live on the edge.

Today, 2,000 years later, their mission and message is yours. The Savior lives and that means you who live with Him will also live on the edge. I say that because we live in a country where speaking about Jesus to others is not always the most popular thing to do. In fact, sometimes giving a Christian witness to someone else can result in criticism, censor, and animosity. Sometimes it is easier, and feels safer, to keep our mouths quiet to protect ourselves and our reputation with the world.

We live in an age where living with Jesus means we live on the edge. Consider Marcus Borden, a New Jersey football coach, who had wanted to kneel in prayer with his team. He didn't want to organize or lead the prayers; he just wanted to bow his head. The U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear his case.

We live in a time when Erica Corder, a valedictorian in Monument, Colorado, couldn't speak about Jesus at her graduation. Erica was told she wouldn't get her diploma until she apologized for having said: "If you don't already know (Jesus Christ) personally, I encourage you to find out more about the sacrifice He made." Erica Corder was living on the edge when she shared her faith with her class.

We live in a time when a church in California recently spent thousands to make a movie advertising the Savior's rising and invite people to worship. Even though they had a signed contract, the movie houses rejected that pre-movie ad because saying the name "Jesus" as in "Jesus is the Savior" is too

controversial. However, patrons to those movie houses can hear the Lord's name taken in vain. They can hear it in cursing, but they can't hear He is the Christ.

We live in an age when Christians in Iraq were told: 'Stay home from church on Christmas and Easter because terrorists are going to attack us.' The terrorists did and many died living on the edge.

Even when it comes to the media, Christians are often portrayed as dense church people who are intolerant, ignorant idiots. On the news the scandals of Christians are publicly paraded, repeatedly rehashed, criticized, and condemned. Unrecognized are the millions of Christians who are good neighbors, good citizens, good parents, and good witnesses to Jesus Christ who has saved them by His birth, sinless suffering, death, and resurrection from the dead.

We live in an age where many people want to shove the risen Christ back into the grave. However, living with Jesus means we ourselves must sometimes live on the edge when we stand with Christ. It is time to stand up and say to the world, "What do you have to offer which is better than Jesus? You have laughed at the Savior, His suffering, His crucifixion, His death, and His resurrection. Yet, the living Lord has comforted countless Christians as they stood by the bedside of a sick child or at the graveside of a departed loved one."

It is time for us to live on the edge and say, "You laugh at Christian families, but what do you have to offer which is better than having Jesus at the dinner table when we pray: 'Come, Lord Jesus, be our guest?'" It is time to ask, "What do you have to offer which is better than Jesus? What can provide a better foundation than the Christ?"

And to the silence which must follow that question, we will extend the invitation, "Come join us. Join the redeemed who are committed to the cause of Christ. Join us, the forgiven and saved who live in the Lord Jesus. Join us as we live on the edge." And if we do this, as the Savior has commanded us, the devil will learn, "You don't mess with the LWML." Even more, he will know "vut site ve are on" (what side you are on). He will know we are Christian comrades committed to the cause of Christ. He will know Christians are people willing to live on the edge.

We are God's witnesses telling any and all who would listen, the wonderful truth which saves: Christ is risen! He is risen, indeed. Amen.

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