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## **PRESIDENT'S LETTER - APRIL 06**

"To whom shall we go, You have the words of eternal life?" (John 6:68)

Jesus had just fed the five thousand with five loaves and two small fish. In response, the crowd had tried to make Him their Bread King. When Jesus would not give them what they wanted (material security and prosperity), and when Jesus spoke hard sayings regarding His being the Bread of Life, many of His disciples no longer followed Him. When Jesus asked His disciples, "Will you also go away?" Peter replied, "Where shall we go?"

A thousand years earlier, the Preacher had asked himself, "Where can I find meaning and happiness in life?" The Preacher records his search in the book of Ecclesiastes.

The Preacher sought happiness and meaning in life in connection with the things of this world. (Ecclesiastes 5:10) "He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; Nor he who loves abundance, with increase. This also is vanity." The reason that this life-style is vanity is because of death. A person dies, and his heirs spend what he has worked so hard to accumulate. Today people work themselves to the bone so that they can secure their future, and then they cannot enjoy their wealth or life. Our members increasingly are being caught up with the mad pursuit of things. We also can easily evaluate our happiness in terms dictated by the world we live in.

The Preacher sought happiness and meaning in life in connection with the pleasures of this world. (Ecclesiastes 2:10-11) "Whatever my eyes desired I did not keep from them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, For my heart rejoiced in all my labor; And this was my reward from all my labor. Then I looked on all the works that my hands had done And on the labor in which I had toiled; And indeed all was vanity and grasping for the wind. There was no profit under the sun." The mad pursuit of pleasure turned to dust in the mouth of Solomon because of death which made it all vanity. Our generation is one that could be described as hedonistic, i.e madly pursuing pleasure at all costs. This pursuit of pleasure can only end in heart break and emptiness. As pastors, Easter assures us that "our work in the Lord" is not in vain. Let us get back to the basics of preaching that Christ died according to the Scriptures, that He was buried according to the Scriptures, and that Jesus arose according to the Scriptures.

The Preacher sought happiness and meaning in life in connection with the pursuit of the world's wisdom. (Ecclesiastes 1:13-14) "And I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven; this burdensome task God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind." Man's wisdom can provide no real answers because it has no answer for death. Sometimes as pastors, we may be overly impressed with degrees and scholarly discussions. The wisdom of the world will never satisfy the deepest needs of those to whom we minister.

Your members may have tried all of these things as they sought to discern the purpose and meaning of their lives. They may not want to talk about or think about death because it makes everything vanity or worthless. Death is the elephant in the room that no one wants to talk about. Do not be afraid to talk directly about death with your members. Someone said that Christianity does not so much teach us how to live as it teaches us how to die.

That is why Peter said, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life." Jesus is the Bread of Life. His words give life. Jesus alone has the answers that satisfy our and our members deepest needs and desires. Jesus' words tell us how He came down from heaven as the Bread of Life. They reveal that anyone who eats this "bread" will live forever. Jesus came to do the unthinkable, to give His perfect life for miserable sinners who were subject all their lives to the fear of death. He even suffered eternal death for us on the cross as God loaded all the sins of the world upon Him and forsook Him.

Jesus has the words of life as He proclaims to Martha, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me, though he may die, he shall live." (John 11:25) Jesus conquered death by His glorious resurrection victory for us. He will not leave us behind in the grave when He returns in glory. This resurrection gift of everlasting life gives meaning to our lives. Now we can enjoy the blessings God gives us in this world to the fullest knowing that death is not the end. Solomon spoke of the vanity of a life without God. Psalm 23 reminds us that not only shall goodness and mercy follow us all the days of our lives, but that we also will dwell in the house of the Lord forever. Paul speaks of the purpose-filled life of the believer through Jesus' physical resurrection and our resurrection. (1 Corinthians 15:58) "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that **your labor is not in vain** in the Lord."

To whom else could we go? Only Jesus has the words of life. Jesus is the Bread of Life. You have the privilege of proclaiming a living Jesus to a dying world. May the Lord bless your Easter proclamation. Where else will people go except to Jesus, Who has committed the Word of reconciliation to us.

He is risen! He is risen indeed!



John Schierenbeck

The Coordinating Council of the CLC will meet April 26-27 in Eau Claire, WI.

The Call Committee for graduates will meet Wednesday at 7:00 pm. Calls for graduates should be in the hands of the president by April 26, 2006.

The Board of Doctrine will meet Tuesday, April 25, at 9:00 am to conduct a colloquy with Ed Starke.

