

Epistle to the Called Servant
on
The Minor Feast of St. Crispin
25 October Anno Domini 2003

Grace, mercy and peace to you in the Name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Dear Called Servant,

Considering both my general lack of knowledge concerning you as well as any detailed familiarity with your particular circumstances, “called servant” seems the appropriate greeting. Admittedly, the writer of this writ knows not your name, but that is not important and the failure to know your name neither stays the scribe’s pen nor stops the mouth’s word. Besides, God knows who you are, for it is most certainly true that *the Lord knows those who are His (2 Timothy 2:19)*.

Please bear with me and pardon a few moments for reflection. Indeed, do you recall that one day when you were called to the solemn task? Fix the moment in your mind and recollect the fear, the wonder and the awe when you received word that you had been called. From among and out of all the others, you were the one who had been called to that one place at that particular time. Then, having heard the word, you accepted the call and, according to the summons, you appeared in the house of the father - to be in his presence. Likely you knelt and listened as God’s spokesman - the presbyter - declared to you the particulars of your call. Do you remember the charge you received, with the words of “authorize and obligate” that bound you to the deed?

You wondered within yourself and spoke aloud to the reverend father concerning your doubts - of whether or not you really could do such a thing as you were charged to do? The height of the authority being conferred upon you by the father was only exceeded by the depth of what was now being demanded of you concerning his son? Do you recall those words that you promised and that business with the hand whereby you swore your pledge, vowed your faithfulness and promised your deeds? Thus you were ordained into that one office and had a special commission that no one else in that particular house had. Who would ever take upon himself such a vital, momentous mission? No one would presume to volunteer to undertake such a noble task. Could you really lead the bride to the father’s son? And yet this, dear called servant, is exactly what you were ordained to do.

If, perchance, the details of your ordination are hazy - as oft is the manner of man when time passes and the prolonged duties occupy the mind - then you are invited to invest in a reading of that day once again.

Now Abraham was old, well advanced in years; and the LORD had blessed Abraham in all things. And Abraham said to his servant, the oldest of his house, who had charge of all that he had, "Put your hand under my thigh, and I will make you swear by the LORD, the God of heaven and of the earth, that you

will not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, among whom I dwell, but will go to my country and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son Isaac."

The servant said to him, "Perhaps the woman may not be willing to follow me to this land; must I then take your son back to the land from which you came?"

Abraham said to him, "See to it that you do not take my son back there. The LORD, the God of heaven, who took me from my father's house and from the land of my birth, and who spoke to me and swore to me, 'To your descendants I will give this land,' He will send His angel before you, and you shall take a wife for my son from there. But if the woman is not willing to follow you, then you will be free from this oath of mine; only you must not take my son back there."

So the servant put his hand under the thigh of Abraham his master, and swore to him concerning this matter (Genesis 24:1-9).

Certainly the man sent by Abraham could have been Eliezer of Damascus who was, prior to the birth of Isaac, the heir of Abram's house. However, between that lone Genesis 15 mention of Eliezer and this Genesis 24 ordination a half-century passes. It is just as likely that the elder Eliezer has passed on and a younger man has taken his place in this house of the lord named Abraham - a sort of Elijah to Elisha passing of the household mantle. Since those men called as Christian pastors may not say "*Thus says the Lord*" when no such *thus* Word is revealed, and because the application of this text remains remarkably sharp, the reference to the "called servant" will continue.

Therefore, called servant, think on the gravity of the task and ponder the consequences, not only for Isaac, but for generations to come, for our Redeemer will come forth as a result of this union! The called servant is to journey through the wilderness and locate an unknown maiden to whom he will propose marriage. He is to go forth in the stead of the son and by the command and authority of Father Abraham. Upon finding her, he is to propose marriage to her on behalf of the son and, if she agrees, this apostle is to bring her safely to the wedding day of the son according to the father's will. Can you think of any task as daunting and far-reaching?

Likely you have a hint of one, dear brother. Certainly you know one such charge from experience ... for you are a called servant of the Word. The LORD God has called you to be His man in the office of pastor and to shepherd His "wilderness woman" (Revelation 12:14). For surely the Apostolic charge given generally at Ephesus has been spoken to you specifically on that day of your ordination and installation. "*Take heed to yourselves and to all the Flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the Church of God which he obtained with the Blood of His own Son*" (Acts 20:28).

The Church's One Foundation, Is Jesus Christ her Lord;
She is His new creation, By water and the Word;
From heav'n He came and sought her
To be His holy Bride,
With His Own Blood He bought her
And for her life He died. (*The Lutheran Hymnal, #473, stanza 1*)

For it is most certainly true and we believe, teach and confess that God ...

“... has a unique community in the world. It is the mother that begets and bears every Christian through the Word of God. The Holy Spirit reveals and preaches that Word, and by it He illumines and kindles hearts so that they grasp and accept it, cling to it, and persevere in it.”

The Large Catechism
The Apostles' Creed
Third Article

“To obtain such faith God instituted the Office of the Ministry, that is, provided the Gospel and the Sacraments. Through these, as through means, He gives the Holy Spirit, Who works faith, when and where He pleases, in those who hear the Gospel. And the Gospel teaches that we have a gracious God, not by our own merits but by the merit of Christ, when we believe this.”

The Augsburg Confession
Article V.
The Office of the Ministry

Dear called servant, the father desires a bride for his son and not just any old bride will do. She is in this world - a fallen land wherein one finds the pagan Canaanites, the latter day fanatics and a legion of gods, their clerics and the host of the same. “*The servant took ten of his master's camels and departed, taking all sorts of choice gifts from his master; and he arose, and went to Mesopotamia, to the city of Nahor*” (*Genesis 24:10*). With the beasts of burden in line and the provisions loaded, the called servant journeyed. He did have other men with him to help in the trek. The Word of God also informs us that he had a guardian angel, that is, of the messenger in the wilderness who prepares the way by going before him. Though he had men with him, the called servant experienced a unique loneliness along the way - “the lonely way” as one of our fathers wrote. Days on the dry trail provide time to ponder the call that has been received and its particulars. No doubt you recall them but it is good to review the required list.

Part of the Diploma of Vocation reads, “We authorize and obligate our called minister ...

To administer to us the Word of God in its full truth and purity as contained in the Sacred Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament and as set forth in the confessional writings of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as found in the Book of Concord;

To administer the holy Sacraments in accordance with their Divine institution;

To perform the functions of a pastor in an evangelical manner; to aid, counsel, and guide members of all ages and social conditions; to visit the sick and the dying; to admonish the indifferent and the erring;

To guard and promote faithfully the spiritual welfare of the members of this congregation, in particular to instruct the catechumens, both children and

adults, in the Word of God and thus prepare them for communicant membership in the church;

To guide the congregation in applying the Divinely ordained discipline of the Church agreeably to the Word of God;

To promote and guide the mission activity of the congregation as it is related to the local community and to District and synodical endeavors, in particular to train workers and guide them in evangelism activities and to enlist the support of the congregation for mission work generally;

To assist the congregation in adopting administrative policies and procedures which will help it carry out the mission of a Christian congregation;

To serve the congregation as an example of Christian conduct, to endeavor earnestly to live in brotherly unity with the members of the congregation and fellow workers and sister congregations in the District and the Synod, and by the grace of God to do everything possible within the sphere of his calling toward the edification of the congregation and the upbuilding of the Church of Christ, both locally and generally.”

What does such a reading of the holy document of vocation work within you? If anxiety rises up as you ponder that Call of the Lord given you through the Church, there is but one reason, even two. Concerning the latter, you think and know that these perfect, Divine mandates and churchly obligations are beyond you. Concerning the former, the reason for your anxiety is that your old, sinful nature is being accused by the Law. These things you have pondered as you journeyed between the place you received the Call and the place where you were called - as you trekked between Abraham’s tent and the city of Nahor.

And the called servant “made the camels kneel down outside the city by the well of water at the time of evening, the time when women go out to draw water. And he said, ‘O LORD, God of my master Abraham, grant me success today, I pray Thee, and show steadfast love to my master Abraham. Behold, I am standing by the spring of water, and the daughters of the men of the city are coming out to draw water. Let the maiden to whom I shall say, “Pray let down your jar that I may drink,” and who shall say, “Drink, and I will water your camels” - let her be the one whom Thou hast appointed for Thy servant Isaac. By this I shall know that Thou hast shown steadfast love to my master’” (Genesis 24:11-14).

Here he who has been called and sent meditates on that Godly task and prays to Jehovah. This is an recognition that the called servant is completely dependent on the LORD God for anything and everything associated with this noble task. Consider that he is sent to find a wife for Abraham’s son, the one through whom the promised Seed of the woman would be born some day ... through whom the Messiah would come, that is, Emmanuel, which means *God with us*. This wife of Isaac would be in the genealogical line of the Savior, which means *Jesus*. Thus the called servant seeks the will of the Almighty, being guided in his actions by the word spoken to him, meditating on his vows, praying not

only for himself and his mission but interceding on behalf of others ... Abraham, Isaac and the maiden.

In the midst of one's daily tasks praying the promises of God is an excellent practice. For example, consider praying the promise of Isaiah 55:10-11 ...

For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and return not thither but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and bread to the eater, so shall My Word be that goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it.

O LORD God, You reveal Your desire for all to hear Your Good News through the Word that You have given to the world through Your prophets, evangelists and apostles. I thank You for the revelation of Your Word by the Prophet Isaiah and of the preservation of the same by the Holy Spirit. But woe is me, for I am a man of unclean lips - and not my lips only, but also in my reason and all my senses and all my deeds. I am not worthy to be inside the threshold of Your House, yet You have summoned me to stand, not only in Your Presence, but in Your stead, and You have called me to speak Your Word to Your Bride. In this Word You give me peace, hope, comfort and encouragement, both as an individual Christian and as a called servant of Your Word. That same Word has gone forth to accomplish Your purpose and has come to me - one part of it accusing me - another part of it comforting me. I can never praise You enough for the occupation of the Holy Spirit accomplishing His purpose through both Law and Gospel to work faith in my soul and keep me steadfast in the faith. I can never thank You enough for the forgiveness of all my sins on account of Who Your Son is and what He has done. Too often, dear Father, I take upon myself what is not mine. I try to make the Word become effective and work faith in the souls and lives of Your people and of those who are without You. Remind me that the going forth of Your Word accomplishes Your purpose according to Your times and places. Remind me that the task You have given me is to get the Word out ... to preach it and to teach it. Remind me that Your Word prospers in the thing for which You sent it. Remind me that, as the rain and the snow come down from heaven to water the earth and give life, so does Your Word not return to You empty, but accomplishes Your purpose. While granting me the gracious patience to abide in and rely upon Your promise, also grant that nothing I say or do detracts from Your Word, or tarnishes the Office of the Holy Ministry, or is harmful to Your Church. Hear my petition that You grant unto me a quiet spirit and peace, that I might tell, teach and proclaim Your Word in all its truth and purity, with the emphasis on the message and not on the messenger, and to administer Your Sacraments as You instituted them. Grant this unto the brotherhood throughout the world, but especially to me, O LORD, in Your Name ... in the Name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

Before he had done speaking, behold, Rebekah, who was born to Bethuel the son of Milcah, the wife of Nahor, Abraham's brother, came out with her water jar upon her shoulder. The maiden was very fair to look upon, a virgin, whom no man had known. She went down to the spring, and filled her jar, and came up. Then the servant ran to meet her, and said, "Pray give me a little water to drink from your jar." She said, "Drink, my lord"; and she quickly let down her jar upon

her hand, and gave him a drink. When she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I will draw for your camels also, until they have done drinking." So she quickly emptied her jar into the trough and ran again to the well to draw, and she drew for all his camels. The man gazed at her in silence to learn whether the LORD had prospered his journey or not. When the camels had done drinking, the man took a gold ring weighing a half shekel, and two bracelets for her arms weighing ten gold shekels, and said, "Tell me whose daughter you are. Is there room in your father's house for us to lodge in?" She said to him, "I am the daughter of Bethuel the son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor." She added, "We have both straw and provender enough, and room to lodge in." The man bowed his head and worshiped the LORD, and said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, Who has not forsaken His steadfast love and His faithfulness toward my master. As for me, the LORD has led me in the way to the house of my master's kinsmen" (Genesis 24:15-27).

The called servant arrives at the place where he was sent seeking the maiden who would be the son's bride. His prayers to the LORD continue with the content of blessing and thanks. This maiden is the bride-to-be, but would she be willing to be accompanied to the bridegroom and celebrate the wedding day? For she might be like a church that hearkens to the temptations of other gods and to the voices of evil clerics of the same. And if she is willing to abide by Word of the Godly called servant, will the men of the household permit her to journey to Wedding Feast? For there might be some in the household who seek to divert the Bride's attention from her Bridegroom, thus preventing the Word being brought to her and the children that she would beget.

Then the maiden ran and told her mother's household about these things. Rebekah had a brother whose name was Laban; and Laban ran out to the man, to the spring. When he saw the ring, and the bracelets on his sister's arms, and when he heard the words of Rebekah his sister, "Thus the man spoke to me," he went to the man; and behold, he was standing by the camels at the spring. He said, "Come in, O blessed of the LORD; why do you stand outside? For I have prepared the house and a place for the camels." So the man came into the house; and Laban ungirded the camels, and gave him straw and provender for the camels, and water to wash his feet and the feet of the men who were with him. Then food was set before him to eat; but he said, "I will not eat until I have told my errand." He said, "Speak on." (Genesis 24:28-33).

The called servant knows what his primary responsibility is and will not be dissuaded from delivering the message. Or, as declared another way, by the Holy Spirit via the quill of the Apostle Paul ...

I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

The called servant was invited to "speak on." Without such an invitation, he would be at best most rude, violating the order of the house. Or, as confessed another way ...

“It is taught among us that nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the church without a regular call.”

The Augsburg Confession
Article XIV.
Order in the Church

“Speak on.” So he said, “I am Abraham's servant. The LORD has greatly blessed my master, and he has become great; he has given him flocks and herds, silver and gold, menservants and maidservants, camels and asses. And Sarah my master's wife bore a son to my master when she was old; and to him he has given all that he has. My master made me swear, saying, ‘You shall not take a wife for my son from the daughters of the Canaanites, in whose land I dwell; but you shall go to my father's house and to my kindred, and take a wife for my son.’ I said to my master, ‘Perhaps the woman will not follow me.’ But he said to me, ‘The LORD, before whom I walk, will send his angel with you and prosper your way; and you shall take a wife for my son from my kindred and from my father's house; then you will be free from my oath, when you come to my kindred; and if they will not give her to you, you will be free from my oath.’” (Genesis 24:34-41).

This is a place where we need to ponder all these things for a moment and recall two important facets of one point. First, you are not required to be “successful.” Being successful has its standards in the world and its hawkers within the church. Let neither of these be the compelling motivation for your words and deeds, nor let them pall your soul with guilt because you do not meet the expectations of a purpose-driven world or an enthusiastic church leader. There is but one thing required of you ... faithfulness in preaching and teaching the Word. *Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful (1 Corinthians 4:1-2).*

Second, you face the distinct possibility that those in the house will not permit you to do what you have been called and sent to do. Dear brother, it might happen, or it may now be happening, that the household rejects the message of Law and Gospel. There may be some who are seeking to lead the entire congregation away from *the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 1:3)*. If such is the situation, as you are permitted to speak the Truth to the others, *preach the Word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, be unfailing in patience and in teaching (2 Timothy 4:2)*. If there is no one in that place that will hear or heed you, then you will be free from God's oath. Or, as the Lord Jesus said to those whom He sent out ...

As you enter the house, salute it. And if the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. And if any one will not receive you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town. Truly, I say to you, it shall be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah than for that town. Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. Beware of men; for they will deliver you up to councils, and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings

for my sake, to bear testimony before them and the Gentiles. When they deliver you up, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say; for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour; for it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you (Matthew 10:12-20).

Please bear this in mind. You are given the authority to preach and teach the Word of God. You are not responsible for the efficacious working either of the Law or the Gospel in the hearts and souls of the hearers. Concerning the former, that is your Call and only faithfulness is required of you. Concerning the latter, that is the work of the Holy Spirit, not you. Once again, as Jehovah declares through His authorized messenger, Isaiah, *so shall My Word be that goes forth from My mouth* (that, beloved brother, is your authorized task); *it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper in the thing for which I sent it* (that, beloved brother, is the responsibility of the Holy Spirit). God is responsible when the Word does either His alien or His proper work or both.

Ah, but what a blessed mercy and grace when pastor and congregation remain steadfast in the Truth! How royally is the congregation served when the pastor preaches the Word in its truth and purity, and how the angels and archangels rejoice in the House of the Lord wherein the Sacraments are administered according to Christ's institution. How wonderful when the congregation thankfully receives such ministrations of the Word from a faithful pastor. The entire household hymns ...

We bid thee welcome in the Name
Of Jesus, our exalted Head.
Come as a servant, - so He came, -
And we receive thee in His stead.

(The Lutheran Hymnal, #484, st. 1)

“*Speak On!*” says the household. Thus the called servant sent to them continues,

“I came today to the spring, and said, ‘O LORD, the God of my master Abraham, if now thou wilt prosper the way which I go, behold, I am standing by the spring of water; let the young woman who comes out to draw, to whom I shall say, “Pray give me a little water from your jar to drink,” and who will say to me, “Drink, and I will draw for your camels also,” let her be the woman whom the LORD has appointed for my master's son.’ Before I had done speaking in my heart, behold, Rebekah came out with her water jar on her shoulder; and she went down to the spring, and drew. I said to her, ‘Pray let me drink.’ She quickly let down her jar from her shoulder, and said, ‘Drink, and I will give your camels drink also.’ So I drank, and she gave the camels drink also. Then I asked her, ‘Whose daughter are you?’ She said, ‘The daughter of Bethuel, Nahor's son, whom Milcah bore to him.’ So I put the ring on her nose, and the bracelets on her arms. Then I bowed my head and worshiped the LORD, and blessed the LORD, the God of my master Abraham, who had led me by the right way to take the daughter of my master's kinsman for his son. Now then, if you will deal loyally and truly with my master, tell me; and if not, tell me; that I may turn to the right hand or to the left.”

Then Laban and Bethuel answered, "The thing comes from the LORD; we cannot speak to you bad or good. Behold, Rebekah is before you, take her and go, and let her be the wife of your master's son, as the LORD has spoken."

Genesis 24:42-51

The servants Thou hast called And to Thy Church art giving
Preserve in doctrine pure And holiness of living
Thy Spirit fill their hearts, Endue their tongues with power;
What they should boldly speak, Oh, give them in that hour!

(The Lutheran Hymnal, #485, st. 5)

When Abraham's servant heard their words, he bowed himself to the earth before the LORD. And the servant brought forth jewelry of silver and of gold, and raiment, and gave them to Rebekah; he also gave to her brother and to her mother costly ornaments. And he and the men who were with him ate and drank, and they spent the night there. When they arose in the morning, he said, "Send me back to my master." Her brother and her mother said, "Let the maiden remain with us a while, at least ten days; after that she may go." But he said to them, "Do not delay me, since the LORD has prospered my way; let me go that I may go to my master" They said, "We will call the maiden, and ask her." And they called Rebekah, and said to her, "Will you go with this man?" She said, "I will go." So they sent away Rebekah their sister and her nurse, and Abraham's servant and his men. And they blessed Rebekah, and said to her, "Our sister, be the mother of thousands of ten thousands; and may your descendants possess the gate of those who hate them!" Then Rebekah and her maids arose, and rode upon the camels and followed the man; thus the servant took Rebekah, and went his way.

Genesis 24:52-61

There can be no delay.

"Wake, awake, for night is flying," The watchmen on the heights are crying;
"Awake, Jerusalem, arise!" Midnight hears the welcome voices
And at the thrilling cry rejoices; "Oh, where are ye, ye virgins wise:
The Bridegroom comes, awake! Your lamps with gladness take! Hallelujah!
With bridal care, Yourselves prepare To meet the Bridegroom, Who is near."

(The Lutheran Hymnal, #609, st. 1)

Thus we come to the present time. Having been rightly called and specifically sent; having thus been graciously heard and ritely received, you are charged and entrusted with the care of the Son of God's Bride. This is the office to which you are called and this is your stewardship of the mysteries entrusted to you. Do you not behold who is traveling with you? Look at the children, the families, the old women, the young men. This is the Church, the Bride of Christ. Today is where you are; on your way and yet not arrived. You and the Bride have left Mesopotamia. You walk through the lands of many gods and you are always journeying to the Wedding Day.

Put another way, you are Pastor Adam entrusted with the Family of God. You are Noah, the Preacher of Righteousness for a congregation totaling eight souls. You are Moses

leading the Bride through the gracious baptismal sea and feeding the Church on the Bread Who is come down from heaven. You are the high priest called to cast the absolving Blood of the Lamb of God upon the people who assemble in front of the Holy of Holies. You are the chief steward of Cana's Feast entrusted with the serving of the Son of God's special vintage. You are the innkeeper tending to the Good Samaritan's rescued ones, people whom He has completely provided for as well as left in your care. You are the one the Master left in charge of His House. You distribute the oil for the virgins' lamps. You wear the collar and are the Good Shepherd's barking dog who warns the Bride of wolves in sheep's clothing and of hirelings in the congregation who come and go. You are the bearer of the Christ to the Simeons of this world that they may depart in peace. You are the one who receives little children in the Name of the LORD. You are the man who carries the Redeemer to the many old Annas who await night and day for the Good News of their redemption drawing nigh. You are Abraham's called servant.

So, how is the Bride being treated along the way? Are you feeding her with the pure milk and strong meat of the Scriptures, as well as nurturing her with the water, wine and bread connected with God's Word? Is she being told the truth? How much false doctrine does the Son want His Bride to be fed? Is she being allowed to wander among the high places of the gods? Is she being abused? Surely continued applications of the Law with no Gospel will result in a beaten and battered Bride. So also, lawlessness will yield a sow who tramples the Pearl in the license of the world's way. Woe to that man who appears before the Father presenting Him with such a woman as this for His Son. He will say, "You wicked servant, you brought into my presence a faithless whore adorned with the trinkets of idolatry and covered with the polluted tattoos of wickedness. You have ignored my charge and disobeyed me. You have brought a Canaanite woman into my house for my son!"

May this not be so for you and God grant that you not converse thusly with the righteous Judge on Judgment Day ...

"Not every one who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father Who is in heaven. On that day many will say to Me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your Name, and cast out demons in Your Name, and do many mighty works in Your Name?' And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you evildoers'" (Matthew 7:21-23).

Dear brother, which of us has been perfectly faithful in fulfilling the noble task? Not I. Not you. Not one of us. [Indeed, should there ever be one (and there won't), he would have to admit that he is an unworthy servant (Luke 17:10).] So what is to be done if guilt rises up in your heart - if you sigh at the Divine check-list, knowing that you are not able to mark off one as either completed fully or done perfectly - if your spirit withers because the demands of the call exceed not only the aging abilities at your disposal but even perhaps, after such a lengthy time, your desires?

These things you ponder as you journey between the house wherein you were entrusted with the maiden and the place where the son is - as you plod along the lonely way between the city of Nahor and Abraham's abode. But notice that the called servant,

though he is thirsty and gives drink to the maiden, he drinks water too. Though he is hungry and feeds the bride, yet does he nourish himself along the way as well.

Put another way, Pastor Adam was covered by the LORD God. Noah, the Preacher of Righteousness, was one of the eight saved souls. Moses drank from the Rock and ate the manna from heaven too. The high priest, along with all the people he was appointed to serve, was cleansed by the Atonement Day Blood. The chief steward of Cana's Feast drank from the cup. The innkeeper ate. The one left in charge of the house supped and drank at his master's table. The oil for the virgins' lamps is yours as well. Joseph, the bearer of the Christ Child, could also depart in peace. For as surely as the Law accuses you, just as certain is the Gospel intended for you. Christ Jesus has atoned for all your transgressions when He suffered on the cross, and you, dear brother, have been crucified with Christ in Baptism. The Body of Christ that you serve is also given for you. The Blood of God, shed for you for the remission of sins, is poured out for you. The Absolution you announce that sustains life for the repentant in the congregation is yours as well and may the Lord grant that you continually hear the proclamation of Christ and add your *amen* to the truth that you are forgiven of all your sin in the Name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Ghost.

Now Isaac had come from Beerlahairoi, and was dwelling in the Negeb. And Isaac went out to meditate in the field in the evening; and he lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, there were camels coming. And Rebekah lifted up her eyes, and when she saw Isaac, she alighted from the camel, and said to the servant, "Who is the man yonder, walking in the field to meet us?" The servant said, "It is my master."

Genesis 24:62-65

Tell the Bride of her Bridegroom - of the Incarnate Son of God. Tell her of what He has done for her, that *He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word, that He might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:26-27)*. Hold before her eyes the revelation of Immanuel so when she asks, "*Who is the man yonder, walking in the field to meet us?*", you, as the called servant, are ready and quick to reply ...

Ask ye, Who is this? Jesus Christ it is,
Of Sabaoth Lord, And there's none other God;
He holds the field forever.

(The Lutheran Hymnal, #262, stanza 2)

So she took her veil and covered herself (Genesis 24:65).

Ah, the pious humility, proper adornment and quiet majesty of the lovely Rebecca as she approaches her bridegroom now, in anticipation of day when he and she are become one. She asked you a question, *Who is the man yonder, walking in the field to meet us?* You answered her quite correctly; much in the same way that one of your fellow called servants, also a man in the wilderness, one who pointed to his Divine Cousin and said, *Behold, the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29)*.

So, according to the promises and vows that you made on that day when you were called, follow in this prophetic and apostolic train. Invite the Bride to hear the Word of God in its truth and purity, and to partake of the Sacraments as Christ has instituted them. Hold before her the Wedding Day and tell her of the Feast that is even now awaiting her. Encourage her to read the Word of her Lord, particularly the epithalmium written by the Son of David, *Song of Songs*. Do you cry out at times, "How long?" The answer is, "Until, just and always, until." Remember, however, the called man who leads the bride to the father's house is assured that his redemption is always drawing nigh. You are the called servant and the end of your ministry is always drawing nigh.

And the servant told Isaac all the things that he had done (Genesis 24:66).

Interesting, for the called servant gives an accounting to the son of all the things that he had done in leading the bride to the son. While it is most certainly true, that *all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body, (2 Corinthians 5:10)*, it is also an undeniable fact that those who have been given the charge that you have been given will be summoned to give an account (Hebrews 13:17). Jesus, the Incarnate Son of the Father, told those whom He called, *Watch therefore - for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or in the morning - lest he come suddenly and find you asleep. And what I say to you I say to all: Watch (Mark 13:35-37).*

Then Isaac brought her into the tent, and took Rebekah, and she became his wife; and he loved her (Genesis 24:67).

Ah, now behold what will be in the end, which has been promised from the beginning ...

After this I heard what seemed to be the loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, crying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our God, for His judgments are true and just; He has judged the great harlot who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and He has avenged on her the blood of His servants." Once more they cried, "Hallelujah! The smoke from her goes up for ever and ever." And the twenty-four elders and the four living creatures fell down and worshiped God Who is seated on the throne, saying, "Amen. Hallelujah!" And from the throne came a voice crying, "Praise our God, all you His servants, you who fear Him, small and great." Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty thunder peals, crying, "Hallelujah! For the LORD our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give Him the glory, for the Marriage of the Lamb has come, and His Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure" - for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the Marriage Supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are true words of God" (Revelation 19:1-9).

However, dear brother, that is what will be. Let us return to the present for your task of leading the Bride is not done. You are somewhere between Mesopotamia and the

Promised Land. In this fallen world the way is often difficult as you battle your own will and the natural tendency to wander from the lighted path. The sirens in the shadows that beckon you and the Bride are many and are legion. Among such as these are Adam's heart and man's will ... Dame Reason and Master Emotion ... unionists and universalists ... seekers and Sikhs ... Allah and Buddha ... synergists and syncretists ... LDS and LSD ... civil religion and *false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing upon themselves swift destruction (2 Peter 2:1)*. As you lead the Bride of Christ, you are in the midst of contending against principalities and powers (Ephesians 6:12) as you *contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3)*. Those faithful militant who contend in this are in the brotherhood and such a one who battles thusly is my brother.

Today is October 25th and is the Feast of St. Crispin, a fourth-century martyr. Nearly a millennium later, the Battle of Agincourt was fought on 25 October Anno Domini 1415 when Henry V and his out-numbered longbowmen defeated the French. Nearly 200 years after that, in 1599, William Shakespeare used the event in his play, "Henry V." The St. Crispin's Day Speech is moving and worthy of being committed to memory. It stirs the hearts and resolve of the faithful brethren.

ST. CRISPIN'S DAY SPEECH

Westmoreland:

O that we now had here
But one ten thousand of those men in England
That do no work to-day!

King Henry V:

What's he that wishes so?
My cousin Westmoreland? No, my fair cousin:
If we are mark'd to die, we are enow
To do our country loss; and if to live,
The fewer men, the greater share of honour.
God's will! I pray thee, wish not one man more.
By Jove, I am not covetous for gold,
Nor care I who doth feed upon my cost;
It yearns me not if men my garments wear;
Such outward things dwell not in my desires:
But if it be a sin to covet honour,
I am the most offending soul alive.
No, faith, my coz, wish not a man from England:
God's peace! I would not lose so great an honour
As one man more, methinks, would share from me
For the best hope I have. O, do not wish one more!
Rather proclaim it, Westmoreland, through my host,
That he which hath no stomach to this fight,
Let him depart; his passport shall be made
And crowns for convoy put into his purse:

We would not die in that man's company
 That fears his fellowship to die with us.
 This day is called the feast of Crispian:
 He that outlives this day, and comes safe home,
 Will stand a tip-toe when the day is named,
 And rouse him at the name of Crispian.
 He that shall live this day, and see old age,
 Will yearly on the vigil feast his neighbours,
 And say 'To-morrow is Saint Crispian:'
 Then will he strip his sleeve and show his scars.
 And say 'These wounds I had on Crispin's day.'
 Old men forget: yet all shall be forgot,
 But he'll remember with advantages
 What feats he did that day: then shall our names
 Familiar in his mouth as household words
 Harry the king, Bedford and Exeter,
 Warwick and Talbot, Salisbury and Gloucester,
 Be in their flowing cups freshly remember'd.
 This story shall the good man teach his son;
 And Crispin Crispian shall ne'er go by,
 From this day to the ending of the world,
 But we in it shall be remember'd;
 We few, we happy few, we band of brothers;
 For he to-day that sheds his blood with me
 Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,
 This day shall gentle his condition:
 And gentlemen in England now a-bed
 Shall think themselves accursed they were not here,
 And hold their manhoods cheap whiles any speaks
 That fought with us upon Saint Crispin's day.

William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, Act 4. Scene III

Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that in due time He may exalt you. Cast all your anxieties on Him, for He cares about you. Be sober, be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking some one to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experience of suffering is required of your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, Who has called you to His eternal Glory in Christ, will Himself restore, establish, and strengthen you. To Him be the dominion for ever and ever. Amen (1 Peter 5:6-11).

A blessed Feast of Crispian to you and may the peace of the Lord be with you always,

a called servant