

Epistle to the Watchman  
on  
The Minor Feast of St. Crispin  
25 October Anno Domini 2004

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

Dear Watchman,

No doubt you do remember the occasion and details of your first ascension. 'Twas of such a momentous time in the life of a man that one would not easily forget it. Likely yours occurred in the morning; though, like me, it may have been an evening ascent. So, how long ago was your first ascension? Perhaps it was but a couple months ago. Maybe it was more than 50 years ago. Likely it was sometime in between.

The difficulty of the ascent was not in the plodding of one foot mimicking and mirroring the other, for the climb itself was not especially difficult – two steps here at this place in the open space of Our Redeemer's sanctuary. Two flights of stairs at another before emerging above the altar. Likely most of the others are of some height in between.

Rather, the difficulty is twofold; one is getting to the point where one has ascended and the other is after the ascension places one at the top of the tower to proclaim the Word from the pulpit – that is, to declare that ...

*It is taught among us that we cannot obtain forgiveness of sin and righteousness before God by our own merits, works, or satisfactions, but that we receive forgiveness of sin and become righteous before God by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith, when we believe that Christ suffered for us and that for His sake our sin is forgiven and righteousness and eternal life are given to us. For God will regard and reckon this faith as righteousness, as Paul says in Romans 3:21-26 and 4:5.*

*The Augsburg Confession, Article IV*

This is the Gospel. This Good News you have heard. These Glad Tidings of great joy you speak that others as well as yourself may hear and believe that Jesus is the Christ and believing have Life in His Name. Standing firm on this article on Justification, both they and you are forgiven of all your sins, born again and ordained. In addition, you – fellow watchman – have had the privilege of being ordained again that others, yourself included, may hear this Good News from of old, for *faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God (Romans 10:17)*. Thus the faithful watchmen steadfastly stand fast thereon. Therefore, the Church believes, teaches and confesses that ...

*... 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 first difficulty consists of the qualifications needed to be a watchman and, after that, the Call to be the same. That such an office holder be a man goes without saying, except for such a time as this. Therefore, let this not only be said now, but also again and again and once more, dear watchman, when you proclaim it from your post. The qualifications are authored by the Holy Spirit and come to us through the Word. The watchman must be a man, though not any man will do. He is not just any *he* who ascends to the tower to speak the Word, to sprinkle many nations with the Blood of God, and to see over the people.

*The saying is sure: If any one aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task. Now an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sensible, dignified, hospitable, an apt teacher, no drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, and no lover of money. He must manage his own household well, keeping his children submissive and respectful in every way; for if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how can he care for God's Church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may be puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil; moreover he must be well thought of by outsiders, or he may fall into reproach and the snare of the devil (1 Timothy 3:1-7).*

The qualifications are not only horizontal, dealing with the matters of men, family and community, but also vertical, stewarding under, with and in the Word of God. The Holy Scriptures have come to us, being borne from above via Divine Revelation of the Holy Spirit. These have been etched on stone tablets, inscribed on scrolls and penned on parchment by prophets, evangelists, apostles and amanuenses of the same. Part is the Law that always accuses the old sinful adam, both of the overseen and the overseer. The other part is the Gospel, the Good News that there is the remission of all sins because Christ Jesus has come to be our Mediator and Propitiator. Indeed, the qualified watchman is capable and willing to handle rightly the Word of God ... to distinguish properly Law and Gospel ... to instruct faithfully the people of God ... and to speak forth courageously the Word of God against both foe and traitor.

*For an overseer, as God's steward, must be blameless; he must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of goodness, master of himself, upright, holy, and self-controlled; he must hold firm to the sure Word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to confute those who contradict it. For there are many insubordinate men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially the circumcision party; they must be silenced, since they are upsetting whole families by teaching for base gain what they have no right to teach (Titus 1:7-11).*

Thus the watchman can sing to the people ...

If you cannot be a watchman,  
    Standing high on Zion's wall,  
Pointing out the path to heaven,  
    Offering life and peace to all,  
With your prayers and with your bounties  
    You can do what God demands;  
You can be like faithful Aaron,  
    Holding up the prophet's hands.

*[The Lutheran Hymnal, #496, stanza 3]*

But even this the watchman may not sing to the people unless he be rightly called and ritely received. For we believe, teach and confess that ...

*It is taught among us that nobody should publicly teach or preach or administer the sacraments in the Church without a regular Call.*

*Augsburg Confession, Article XIV*

*We say that no one should be allowed to administer the Word and the Sacraments in the Church unless he is duly called. ... We know that the Church is present among those who rightly teach the Word of God and rightly administer the Sacraments.*

*Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XIV*

Thus you may say, *The Word of the LORD came to me: "Son of man, speak to your people and say to them, 'If I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from among them, and make him their watchman' ..."* (Ezekiel 33:1-2). The Church calls you to be the watchman standing high on Zion's wall. Yet this is not the Church's doing only, for do you not recall what the Lord says? *Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the House of Israel; whenever you hear a word from My mouth, you shall give them warning from Me* (Ezekiel 3:17). Jesus gifts you as a watchman to the Church and the Church takes you from among themselves and makes you their watchman. This ordination is not only from the One or just simply from the other. Rather, it is a both/and – both from the LORD and from His Church – that is, the Church calls and ordains you in the Office that Christ gifts to His Church. The giving of watchmen to the Church by the LORD is the work of Jesus and the calling of the watchmen by the Church is the work of the Holy Spirit. This is marvelous in our eyes. Therefore, beloved watchmen, *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).

Therefore, you have been duly called and ritely installed. What does this mean? Ponder again what the Christ has called you unto and what His Church, according to the command of Her Lord, has conferred to you; that is, the people of the Church have made you their watchman. 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."

Thus, after the arduous preparatory *oratio* and *meditatio* combined with your particular *vocatio* as a watchman, which you confirmed in the presence of many witnesses, you arrived at the proclamation point following your first ascension. Then commenced, and continues to commence, the *tentatio* at the top of the tower from which you preach the Word from the pulpit as the Christ's watchman in His stead and by His command. What do you say? Here is the second difficulty. What do you speak?

*Son of man, speak to your people and say to them, "If I bring the sword upon a land, and the people of the land take a man from among them, and make him their watchman; and if he sees the sword coming upon the land and blows the trumpet and warns the people; then if any one who hears the sound of the trumpet does not take warning, and the sword comes and takes him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. He heard the sound of the trumpet, and did not take warning; his blood shall be upon himself. But if he had taken warning, he would have saved his life" (Ezekiel 33:2-5).*

Dear watchman, your Call is to proclaim the Truth – to preach the Word – to speak to God's people. Be the watchman and preach the Word loud and long, fearlessly and faithfully. One such Word is the Law of Jehovah in which man is commanded what to do

and not to do – what to speak and not to say – what to think and not to ponder. To transgress the holy will of God is sin *and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death (James 1:15)*. The end is certainly coming for all and most certainly for each one. This the LORD God Almighty has declared and such a sudden event may be for all tomorrow or for any one today. The Law of God always accuses the old sinful nature and ought to be trumpeted as such – warning all in order that each one may be warned. Anything less than the sobering, divine reaction against the transgressors of the Law is no warning, but rather, the lulling, cajoling, anemic, enthusiastic, utterance of man’s attempt to heal the underlying abscess by the cosmetic preaching of “*Peace! Peace!*” *When there is no peace (Jeremiah 6:14)*.

Such ones who believe, teach, preach and confess in this wide way are no better than a blind watchman (Isaiah 56:10) who ...

*... sees the sword coming and does not blow the trumpet, so that the people are not warned, and the sword comes, and takes any one of them; that man is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at the watchman's hand. So you, son of man, I have made a watchman for the House of Israel; whenever you hear a word from My mouth, you shall give them warning from Me. If I say to the wicked, “O wicked man, you shall surely die,” and you do not speak to warn the wicked to turn from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood I will require at your hand (Ezekiel 33:6-8).*

You are your brother’s watchman. If you fail to preach the Word of Law you are a slayer of souls. Such a dumb watchman will hear the LORD God Almighty speaking words similar to those uttered from of old, “*What have you done? The voice of your brother’s blood is crying to me from the ground. And now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand*” (Genesis 4:10-11). If the blood of Abel – who died the first death – cried out to God for vengeance, what will the blood of your brother – who dies the second death – cry out for? It is a fearful thing to enter eternity bearing the mark of Cain and moaning the ineffectual, commanding cries of Lady MacBeth: “Out damned spot! out, I say.”

*But if you warn the wicked to turn from his way, and he does not turn from his way; he shall die in his iniquity, but you will have saved your life (Ezekiel 33:9)*. You and I are not responsible for making the Word work. Our Call is to preach the Law in order that others may turn from their wicked ways; that is, that they may repent of their Sin and of their sins. Voice the Word that as it confronts and condemns your neighbor also accuses you, that not only your neighbor, but also you may be sorry for your transgressions of God’s holy commandments. Therefore, even if the other might die in his iniquity, you will have preached sufficient Law to cause you to repent and seek the Divine pardon that will save you. Then will the sentences of the contrite be spoken: *I have sinned against the Lord (2 Samuel 12:13)*. *Men, what must I do to be saved? (Acts 16:30)*. *Brethren, what shall we do? (Acts 2:37)*. *Wretched man that I am; who will deliver me from this body of death? (Romans 7:24)*. *And you, son of man, say to the house of Israel, “Thus have you said: ‘Our transgressions and our sins are upon us, and we waste away because of them; how then can we live?’” (Ezekiel 33:10)*.

Thus far the alien work of the watchman and now may begin and now will commence that which is our proper work – to proclaim the Gospel. The moment has come for the first Word to cease and for the second Word to be announced. Stand in the tower of God’s pulpit and as you over-see the Lord’s people, say to them, “Hear the Word of God: *‘As I live,’ says the LORD GOD, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O House of Israel?’*” (Ezekiel 33:11).

We shall now set forth from the Word of God how man is converted to God, how and by what means (namely, the oral Word and the holy sacraments) the Holy Spirit wills to be efficacious in us by giving and working true repentance, faith, and new spiritual power and ability for good in our hearts, and how we are to relate ourselves to and use these means.

It is not God’s will that anyone should be damned but that all men should turn themselves to him and be saved forever. *As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live (Ezek. 33:11). For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes on Him should not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16).*

To this end, in His boundless kindness and mercy, God provides for the public proclamation of His divine, eternal Law and the wonderful counsel concerning our redemption, namely, the holy and only saving Gospel of His eternal Son, our only Saviour and Redeemer, Jesus Christ.

*The Formula of Concord, Solid Declaration, Article II*

Repentance consists of two parts – sorrow for sin and faith in Christ. Both of these are gifts of the Holy Spirit Who works both through the Law to accuse, convict and condemn all and through the Gospel aid, comfort and console those who look to Christ Jesus as *the Lamb of God Who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29)*. The Law has been demonstrated and declared in this epistle. The faithful soul awaits the Good News.

But the doctrine of the Law and of sin and the doctrine of the Gospel about the remission of sins on account of Christ are not merely to be recited as history, but an accommodation or application of both the Law and the Gospel must be made to the hearers, in order that when sin and the wrath of God against sin have been shown from the Law, the wrath of God may be declared to sinners for judgment to damnation unless they are reconciled to God. However, let the Pauline exhortation: *“Be reconciled to God,”* be formed from the Gospel, as also what is found in Ezekiel: *“Why will you die, O House of Israel?”* And let it be shown that it is the will of God that everyone should accept in faith and apply to himself the benefits of Christ’s suffering set forth and offered in the Gospel. The Gospel declares that those who so believe are reconciled to God and receive remission of sins. In order that this proclamation may be efficacious for the remission of sins, Christ adds His Holy Spirit to the ministry by breathing on them (John 20:22). For the Gospel is the power of God to salvation for the

believer (Rom. 1:16), that is, the weapons of the ministry are strong and mighty through the working of the Spirit (2 Cor. 10:4). However, those who do not believe, that is, who either from Epicurean security or from a Pharisaic opinion despise the application of reconciliation which takes place by faith on account of Christ when the message of the Gospel is accepted, to them the wrath of God and eternal damnation is proclaimed. In this way, by the public and general proclamation of repentance and remission of sins, the ministry, or rather, God Himself through the ministry and in the ministry, looses and binds, remits and retains sins.

*Examination of the Council of Trent* by Martin Chemnitz  
Part II, page 561

Therefore, *hearkening to the voice of the faithful watchmen who invite to come up to Zion (Jeremiah 31:6)*, the plea of the faithful sojourner to the watchman is to hear the Good News and the reply of the faithful watchmen is to tell the Glad Tidings of great joy .

Watchman, tell us of the night,  
What its signs of promise are.  
Traveler, o'er yon mountain's height,  
See that glory-beaming star.  
Watchman, doth its beauteous ray  
Aught of joy or hope foretell?  
Traveler, yes; it brings the day,  
Promised day of Israel.

Watchman, tell us of the night;  
Higher, yet that star ascends.  
Traveler, blessedness and light,  
Peace and truth, its course portends.  
Watchman, will its beams alone  
Gild the spot that gave them birth?  
Traveler, ages are its own;  
See, it burst o'er all the earth.

Watchman, tell us of the night,  
For the morning seems to dawn.  
Traveler, darkness takes its flight;  
Doubt and terror are withdrawn.  
Watchman, let thy wanderings cease;  
Hie thee to thy quiet home.  
Traveler, lo, the Prince of Peace,  
Lo, the Son of God is come!

*[The Lutheran Hymnal, #71]*

Behold, the Call of Christ is to console His Church – and each soul therein – that the grace, mercy and peace of God exceeds the sin of man:

*“Comfort, comfort My people,” says your God. “Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins” (Isaiah 40:1-2). “As I live,” says the LORD GOD, “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O House of Israel?” (Ezekiel 33:11).*

Dearly beloved, why will you die when Christ has died your death? Why will you die when your sin has been taken from you by Jesus and nailed to the cross where the complete, awful price has been paid in full by our Redeemer? While the temporal consequences of your sins may accompany you to the grave, the eternal consequences of the same need no longer plague your days or haunt your nights. In order that you might not die in your iniquity, the Father required your blood at the nail-pierced hands of His Son. Christ is both the Scapegoat bearing your sins into the wilderness where He defeats Satan and returns as your Champion, and also the Passover Lamb Whose Blood was shed as the Sacrifice to permit you entry into the Holy of Holies. Jesus has borne the transgressions of the world on the cursed tree when, as both the High Priest and the Sacrifice, He offered Himself for you having become obedient unto death, even death on the cross. Sin, death and the devil could not hold him and He left them behind in the tomb when He rose again from the dead.

In your Baptism you have participated in the crucifixion of Christ and have died with Him and that death is now past you. When you were baptized by God you participated in the Resurrection of Jesus. You died and rose again. Whether male or female, slave or free, Jew or Gentile, infant or aged, you are now a son of God and a co-heir of heaven. Jesus has redeemed you. He has called you by name. You are His. In His absolving Word you are forgiven of all your sins in the Name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Ghost. Why would you die when the LORD God Almighty's desire for you is to be in His Presence and commune with Him? He has surely not spoken falsely when He says, *Take, eat; this is My Body given for you. Take, drink; this is My Blood of the New Testament which is shed for you for the remission of sins.*

These are the gracious and merciful promises of Yahweh and faith trusts such Word of God. Promise and faith – these go together. Promise and faith – *solī Deo gloria!* To doubt this Good News of God is to believe not in the ability of the Holy Spirit's workings, to lack faith concerning the sufficiency of the Son's atoning Sacrifice, to doubt the Father's eternal desire to forgive. *“As I live,” says the LORD GOD, “I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways; for why will you die, O House of Israel?”*

By swearing that He has no pleasure in the death of the wicked, God shows that He requires the faith with which we believe Him when He swears and are sure that He forgives us. Even by themselves, the authority of the divine promises ought to be sufficient for us, but this promise is confirmed with an oath. If anybody, therefore, is not sure that he is forgiven, he denies that God has sworn to the truth; a more horrible blasphemy than this cannot be imagined.

*Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article XII*

Since you, your people and I are, until our dying breath, both sinner and saint, the proclamation of sin and grace is to continue. The preaching, teaching, believing, confessing and practicing of Law and Gospel remains the Song of the watchmen in the LORD's watchtower set in His vineyard (Isaiah 5:2). The wretched sinful nature in each saint seeks to cast off the robe of Christ's righteousness and replace it with the robe of man's righteousness woven by the threads of pedigree and good works. Hammer this point home ... that one is saved by good works is a lie, and that once saved, always saved is false doctrine. Also, today is the day of salvation and the opportunity to repent and believe the Gospel remains for as many days as God graciously grants and mercifully permits. This day that you are reading this is the day of hope. Sinners who repent and trust in Christ as Mediator and Propitiator are accounted as righteous.

*And you, son of man, say to your people, "The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him when he transgresses; and as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall by it when he turns from his wickedness; and the righteous shall not be able to live by his righteousness when he sins. Though I say to the righteous that he shall surely live, yet if he trusts in his righteousness and commits iniquity, none of his righteous deeds shall be remembered; but in the iniquity that he has committed he shall die. Again, though I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' yet if he turns from his sin and does what is lawful and right, if the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has taken by robbery, and walks in the statutes of life, committing no iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of the sins that he has committed shall be remembered against him; he has done what is lawful and right, he shall surely live" (Ezek. 33:12-16).*

Surely you recall these truths re-stated centuries later by Jesus when He taught by asking:

*"What do you think? A man had two sons; and he went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work in the vineyard today.' And he answered, 'I will not'; but afterward he repented and went. And he went to the second and said the same; and he answered, 'I go, sir,' but did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the harlots go into the Kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the harlots believed him; and even when you saw it, you did not afterward repent and believe him" (Matthew 21:28-32).*

O LORD God Almighty – Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier – Thou art the Author of Life, the Defeater of Death and the Sustainer of all things visible and invisible, Thou hast given Thy Word which is true and certain, which bespeaks what is Thy eternal desire and which hath cometh unto us by Thy holy prophet that, oathng by Thy very existence, Thou desireth not and taketh no pleasure in the death of the wicked, of which I most certainly am surely one. I am the brother of Cain and Judas deserving to be driven away from Thy Presence in this life and to go to mine own place after this death. I am sinful from the moment of this life's conception and have and do sin much

and deserve nothing but Thine eternal wrath and everlasting condemnation. Added to this is the awful knowledge and admitted confession that I will sin today and will do the same for as many days and nights as I draw breath in this world. Wretched man that I am. Yet Thou hast said that Thou takest not pleasure in the death of the wicked and, therefore, Thou takest no pleasure in my death.

This, Thy Word spoken from Thy heart, causeth me to pause and ponder what this means and how this is done. For surely the hand of judgment must fall upon the head of the guilty, and blood must flow to cover this world's sin, mine included and mine especially, for Thou hast said through Thy holy writer that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins. Alas! for of myself, I am lost. But Thou desirest not the death of anyone, me included. Thou, Holy Father, hath sent Thine Only-Begotten and Eternal Son to be the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world, mine included. Thou, Holy Jesus, art the Passover Lamb, Whose infant Blood was shed to fulfill the Law on Thy eighth day and Whose same Blood, years later on the last day of Thy humiliation, when as both the Victim and the Priest, Thou offered to cover the sins of the world, mine included. Thou, Holy Spirit, Who didst hover over the waters when the Word spoke in the beginning and over the waters of the Jordan when the same Word made flesh was baptized, hath moved the hand of the prophet not only to reveal that Thou desirest not the death of anyone, but Thou hast revealed and do testify that Jesus is the Christ the Son of the Living God, through which Word Thou giveth and worketh faith to trust such Word of God and he that believeth the same hath that which is promised; namely Life in His Name and forgiveness of sins. This I do believe and trust.

O Lord, through Thy Church that hast called me to be Thy watchman and placed me in this pulpit. There is no small fear and trepidation when I ponder what Thou hast required of those whom Thou hast sent, saying, "As My Father hath sent Me, even so, send I you" and I meditate on the apostolic command to take heed to myself and to all the flock over which the Holy Ghost hath made me an overseer, to feed the Church of God, which Thou, O Christ, hath purchased with Thy own Blood. I read Thy Call to me extended through Thy congregation and know that, of myself I am utterly unable. Therefore, grant unto me courage to speak Thy Law as Thou wouldst have it spoken. Grant unto me grace to announce Thy absolving Gospel as Thou wouldst have it declared. Grant unto me wisdom to know which Word to speak when, and when to speak each Word. May the people's blood never be required at my hand. Rather, may Thy Word, O God, be preached that the Blood of Christ cover all the people.

Be Thou with and bless all my brother watchmen, that they too, might be blest with Thy Spirit-given courage, grace, wisdom, compassion, strength and

fortitude. May not my blood be required at the hand of my brother. Therefore, O Lord, grant to my brothers in the Ministry of the Word, the love to confront me when I have erred, either by ignorance, on account of weakness or through designs, and departed from the Truth in doctrine or practice. Bestow Thou upon me Thy Spirit-wrought ability to receive such brotherly correction and admonition that I confess my sin, hear Thy Absolution and be forgiven in Thy Name. Likewise, grant unto me the loving heart needed to confront my erring brother that the same end be accomplished. May we stand together in Thy Word, speaking against the foes outside Thy Church and the false brethren and traitors within, warning Thy people of the same, and may we declare with one voice the Light of Thy Holy Scriptures which exposeth sin and giveth Life, salvation and forgiveness. Thus, according to Thy Word spoken just prior to Thy Ascension, may repentance to the forgiveness of sins be proclaimed in Thy Name to all nations.

These things I pray that Thou wouldst grant, along with whatsoever else is good, right and salutary for me, for Thy watchmen and for Thy holy people, in the Name of the Father and of the † Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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Beloved watchman, read the following to the Church and then let the holy people of God respond by singing the Song of the Second Advent.

*Awake, awake, put on your strength, O Zion; put on your beautiful garments, O Jerusalem, the holy city; for there shall no more come into you the uncircumcised and the unclean. Shake yourself from the dust, arise, O captive Jerusalem; loose the bonds from your neck, O captive daughter of Zion. For thus says the LORD: "You were sold for nothing, and you shall be redeemed without money." ... Therefore My people shall know My Name; therefore in that day they shall know that it is I who speak; here am I." How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings, who publishes peace, who brings good tidings of good, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns." Hark, your watchmen lift up their voice, together they sing for joy; for eye to eye they see the return of the LORD to Zion. Break forth together into singing, you waste places of Jerusalem; for the LORD has comforted His people, He has redeemed Jerusalem" (Isaiah 52:1-3, 6-9).*

Zion hears the watchmen singing,  
And all her heart with joy is springing,  
She wakes, she rises from her gloom;  
For her Lord come down all-glorious,  
The strong in grace, in truth victorious,  
Her Star is risen, her Light is come.  
"now come, Thou Blessed One,

Lord Jesus, God's own Son,  
Hail! Hosanna!  
The joyful call We answer all  
And follow to the nuptial hall."  
*(The Lutheran Hymnal, #609, stanza 2)*

So here we are, fellow watchman. You man the tower on Zion's wall where you have been called to serve. I man the watchtower here on Zion's wall where I am called. We can look out and see each other standing steadfast and together. Do you see what I see?

Look, outside the walls. Foes. Enemies. There are all those false gods and shameless liars, the doctrines of man and the false practices of these latter days. Adam's heart and man's will ... Dame Reason and Master Emotion ... unionists and universalists ... seekers and Sikhs ... Brahma and Buddha ... synergists and syncretists ... CWs and JWs ... modalists and millennialists ... New Age-ism and old paganism ... civil religion and a choice society. But wait. Looming and drawing near is a sword; rather, a scimitar. This trojan horse – filled with Allah's activists who zealously put Mohammed's doctrines into practice – is being welcomed from afar and tolerated by the naï ve.

Now look, inside the walls. Traitors. False sons within her pale. Do you see what has taken place, and what is continuing to take place? Joining their spirits even as they embrace one another – with an Imam on one hand and the representative of the Antichrist on the other – the hearts of man and the prayers of idolaters are offered to the gods. Of those who engage in such sins against the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandments, the LORD God has said: *When you spread forth your hands, I will hide my eyes from you; even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood (Isaiah 1:12).*

These egregious, manifest sins sown by false teachers and practitioners – which are encouraged and tolerated by lying leaders who bestow permission for spiritual fornication – have spread corporately and are leavening the whole lump (Galatians 5:9). The time is at hand when 52% of an assembly will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears for something new, they have accumulated for themselves leaders, teachers and popes to suit their own likings according to the question of old, *Did God say, "You shall not eat of any tree of the Garden?" (Genesis 3:1).* This manufactured majority has turned away from listening to the truth (2 Timothy 2:3-4) and now calls upon all to trust man. Instead of declaring, *Thus says the LORD*, the assembly resolved to place man's by-laws above God's Word and to say, "The synod has spoken."

Faithful brothers join with those of the past, especially the blessed reformers, in believing, teaching and confessing that it is necessary to stand against such popes of the past and the present and to warn that ...

If the Roman See judges it right that all nations should acknowledge her as mistress of the faith, she ought to take pains that learned and uncorrupt men make investigation concerning matters of religion. For what will the world judge if at any time the writings of the adversaries be brought to light? What will posterity judge concerning the reproachful judicial investigations? You see, O Campegius,

that these are the last times, in which Christ predicted that there would be the greatest danger to religion. You, therefore, who ought, as it were, to sit on the watch-tower and control religious matters, should in these times employ unusual wisdom and diligence. There are many signs, which unless you heed them, threaten a change to the Roman state. And you make a mistake if you think that Churches should be retained only by force and arms. Men ask to be taught concerning religion.

*Apology of the Augsburg Confession, Article VI  
Triglot Concordia, page 289*

The railing at and the rejection of those watchmen who insist on the teaching the Word of God in its truth and purity will only increase. So be it. *Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so men persecuted the prophets who were before you (Matthew 5:12)* as well as the apostles, the martyrs, the reformers, especially Martin Luther. You are called to confess and teach that the congregational consequences of the departure from God's Word to man's councils are declared in Holy Writ and demonstrated time and again in history. What does the faithful watchman say? This: "Listen, O syncretists and idolaters, as well as all you supporters of the same, you are warned. If you die in your iniquity, your blood is not on our hands. We join with the Apostle Paul who said to those who opposed the preaching of Christ, '*Your blood be upon your heads! I am innocent*'" (Acts 18:6).

*"Were they ashamed when they committed abomination? No, they were not at all ashamed; they did not know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; at the time that I punish them, they shall be overthrown," says the LORD. Thus says the LORD: "Stand by the roads, and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way is; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls. But they said, 'We will not walk in it.' I set watchmen over you, saying, 'Give heed to the sound of the trumpet!' But they said, 'We will not give heed.' Therefore hear, O nations, and know, O congregation, what will happen to them. Hear, O earth; behold, I am bringing evil upon this people, the fruit of their devices, because they have not given heed to My Words; and as for My Torah, they have rejected it.*

*Jeremiah 6:15-19*

Dear watchman, we are brothers in the Ministry of the Word. Therefore, we stand steadfast in the Truth, support one another and encourage each other by saying in such times of trial and tribulation, "For *who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?*" (Esther 4:14b). If either of us falters by weakness or departs from the good confession by design, the other is expected to admonish and, if necessary, confront. Such an activity of the Law is truly an act of love. To neglect this brotherly duty is to deny the reality of the sword that is coming, as well as to forfeit the opportunity for the gracious absolution that follows the confession of sin. In other words, *brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Look to yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the Law of Christ (Galatians 6:1-2)*. We are brothers in the cloth and we stand firm for the pure Truth of God's Word even as we must stand united against the lies of men and the deeds of devils. *Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! (Psalm 133:1)*.

Today is October 25th and is the Feast of St. Crispin who is 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 speech that follows is from the 1<sup>st</sup> quarto of the play published in 1600. (Note that, in the text, the symbol “f” is the lower case “s.”) St. Crispin's Day Speech is a magnificent summons – stirring the hearts and steeling the resolve of the faithful brethren who are called to be and to remain a “bond of brothers” who do, indeed, have a “fomacke to this feaft.”

### ST. CRISPIN'S DAY SPEECH

*War.* O would we had but ten thousand men  
Now at this instant, that doth not worke in England.

*King.* Whoe that, that wifhes fo, my Coufen Warwick?  
Gods will, I would not loofe the honour  
One man would fhare from me,  
Not for my Kingdome.  
No faith my Coufen, with not one man more,  
Rather proclaime it preſently through our campe,  
That he that hath no fomacke to this feaft,  
Let him depart, his paſport fhall bee drawne,  
And crownes for conuoy put into his purſe,  
We would not die in that mans company,  
That feares his fellowſhip to die with vs.  
This day is called the day of Cryſpin,  
He that outliues this day, and fees old age,  
Shall ftand a tiptoe when this day is named,  
And rouſe him at the name of Cryſpin.  
He that outliues this day, and comes fafe home,  
Shall yearly on the vygill feaft his friends,  
And ſay, to morrow is S. Cryſpines day:  
Then fhall we in their flowing bowles  
Be newly remembred. Harry the King,  
Bedford and Exeter, Clarence and Gloſter,  
Warwick and Yorke.  
Familiar in their mouthes as houſhold words.  
This ftory fhall the good man tell his ſonne,  
And from this day, vnto the generall doome:  
But we in it fhall be remembred.  
We fewe, we happie fewe, we bond of brothers,  
For he to day that fheds his blood by mine,  
Shalbe my brother : be he nere fo baſe,  
This day fhall gentle his condition.  
Then fhall he ftrip his ſleeues, and fhew his ſkars,

And say, these wounds I had on Crispin's day:  
And Gentlemen in England now a bed,  
Shall think themselves accursed,  
And hold their manhood cheap,  
What any speak that fought with us  
Upon Saint Crispin's day.

William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, Act 4. Scene III  
(source: The British Library)

*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 Crispin to you and, as you prepare for your next ascension, may the peace of the LORD be with you always,

a brother watchman