



# St. John Lutheran Church Newsletter

Lutheran Church - Missouri Synod

## **Conducting Services at:**

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972-802-0444 (pastor) 9:30 a.m. Sunday Divine Service & 10:45 Bible Study

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March 2018 A.D.

## **What about 'Christian' Movies?**

As a pastor, I often get questions about new movies that are released under the Christian film genre. In 2014 I received questions about the film, "God's Not Dead." The sequel to this film is due to come out on the 30<sup>th</sup> of this month, so in anticipation of questions about this film, I have included my review of the first film. My review and scriptural principles can be applied to all pop films, books, and music that come out of the 'Christian' genre. Currently, having suffered through the first "God's Not Dead" movie, I have no desire to see the sequel. I hope you find this review helpful; and, as always, bring your questions to me. – Pastor

## **A Movie Review of "God's Not Dead."**

By Pastor T. Clint Stark

September 12, 2014: A few members have asked me my opinion about the movie, "God's Not Dead." Having not seen it, my stock answer was always, "Get your theology from your church and your entertainment from movies. These movies aren't made by Lutherans so they will contradict Scripture since we believe in Scripture alone and they do not. And unlike God's Word, these types of movies (*The Passion, Fireproof, Facing the Giants, Heaven is for Real, etc.*) will be here today and forgotten tomorrow. As He has for thousands of years, God gives faith and salvation through His Word and Sacraments in the Church."

Last night I broke down and watched the movie, so I can now go into more detail about why you should avoid and not promote this movie or others like it. This movie, like the others, does not teach Scripture. It quotes the Bible, but twists it much like Satan did with Jesus in the wilderness. Now, I am not saying that those making money from this movie are intentionally twisting God's Word. I believe they are sincere and sincerely want people to go to a 'real heaven.' The problem is that they are sincerely wrong and don't know how God saves. I will prove this by putting the movie on trial and compare it to what Scripture really teaches:

**Error #1: Theistic Evolution:** As Lutherans, with child-like faith, we believe what God says in Genesis. He says that He created the world in six literal days (24 hour periods) and rested on the 7<sup>th</sup>. This is what God's Word says and we Lutherans believe Him. The movie, though it quotes Genesis, rejects what God actually says. Instead, **the movie teaches big-bang evolution.** The only difference between their view and an atheist's view is that the movie teaches that God caused the big-bang evolution. This is called theistic evolution. This teaching means that God did NOT create Adam and Eve on a real particular day—and there was no Garden of Eden in the beginning. No, they teach that millions of years before a fish turned into a monkey and then eventually you have Adam and Eve. For them, Jesus is not only a descendant of David, but monkeys and fish too. This is an attempt to make the Bible make sense to the hostile atheist-big-bang-evolutionist world and rejects what God so clearly says in His inerrant Word. It is dangerous to monkey around with God's Word.

And, please understand that this is the primary argument of the movie that the student makes to his

atheist professor in their debate. Additionally, getting someone to believe in a generic god who caused the big-bang and started evolution still leads to hell. It isn't that an evolutionist god isn't dead as the movie teaches. It is that Jesus, the eternal Word made flesh, is not dead but alive. There is only salvation in the one true Triune God Who created everything visible and invisible in the actual beginning. This error in the movie actually is a big-bang against true Christian Evangelism and devolves Christian faith.

**Error #2: Name It, Claim It:** *Name it, claim it* refers to the word of faith movement that is prominent in TV Evangelists. It is the teaching that if you just ask God with enough faith, He will do what you ask and believe. If you just believe enough, God will give you more money, heal your disease or fix your car. One example from the movie is that the pastor's car won't start. But, a missionary tells the 'doubting' pastor that if he just has more faith, God will miraculously fix his car (no mechanic needed). I am not denying that God can and does work miracles. But, He doesn't promise to fix your car, health, finances, etc. "if you just have enough faith." This is a dangerous error and has conned many out of money and into despair, "I guess God doesn't answer my prayer because I don't have enough faith." Believe God's written Word, this error contradicts the Bible and actually hurts true Christian Evangelism and harms Christian faith.

**Error #3: Enthusiasm:** *Enthusiasm* is a technical term that defines a specific heresy. It is used in our *Lutheran Confessions* to demonstrate an error that we reject because it contradicts Scripture. Enthusiasm is the error that the Holy Spirit speaks and creates faith apart from Scripture. We believe what Scripture says, (i.e. Romans 10:17) that God speaks and creates faith only by the Word of Christ. Enthusiasm teaches that the Holy Spirit floats around and speaks to people in their hearts and creates faith apart from Word and Sacraments. This is demonstrated in many scenes in the movie where "God spoke" directly to the person in their heart or feelings to do or say something specific. One example is in a scene when an unbelieving woman interviews a 'Christian' rock band and the drummer tells her that God told him just then that he needed to deliver a message to her. This is dangerous and it leads people away from God's written Word to looking for God to whisper in their ear or write a message in the clouds. This error is also used by TV Evangelists who say, "God told me to tell you to give me all your money." If you hear a voice in your heart telling you that I am being too critical of this movie, that voice isn't from God. God says in Scripture that this error contradicts what He says and actually hurts true Christian Evangelism and harms Christian faith.

**Error #4: Synergism:** Synergism is the error of "decision theology." Think Billy Graham. This also was a prominent teaching in the movie, which contradicts Scripture. We believe what Scripture says—God chooses and saves us by grace alone, through faith alone apart from works. This movie rejects this. It teaches that salvation is up to you. Want to go to heaven? Then all **you need to do** to save yourself is to do the work of asking Jesus to come into your heart. This is taught in the conversion of a Muslim girl listening to Franklin Graham on her iphone and the woman with the rock band that I mentioned earlier. Additionally, the climax of the movie is a scene where the atheist professor is dying and about to take his last breath. The pastor, since God fixed his car, happens to be driving by. The pastor tells this dead-in-trespases sinner that he still has time to be saved, BUT the choice is up to him to **save himself**. They add a big "but" and "if" to the true Gospel revealed in the Bible. Synergy teaches that "God forgives you, IF you ask Him to save you." No. Scripture doesn't teach that "you do your part and then God will do His part." This makes you, not God, responsible for your faith and salvation. "All you have to do is make the right choice." This error contradicts the Bible and actually hurts true Christian Evangelism and harms Christian faith. It makes God "dead" in saving you, and your sinful flesh very much alive and as god.

**Many more errors:** There are many more Theological errors that I could address, like how it confuses Law and Gospel, promotes revivalist style worship, ignores Jesus' actual resurrection, denies original sin, and speaks about Jesus as less than true God--but I think you get the idea that this is movie is a wolf in sheep's clothing that you should avoid. It looks like a sheep and says it is purely Christian and Biblical, but it most certainly is not. Like all other movies, songs, and books in this genre, I speak in the stead and by the command of Christ, "Flee it."

And, not that I need to appeal to other sources besides Scripture, but there are other Christians who are not even Lutheran who are very critical of this movie and give it two thumbs down; *Answers in Genesis*, for example, which confesses a 6-day creation, is very critical of this dangerous and erroneous movie that teaches theistic big-bang evolution.<sup>1</sup>

If you have any questions about this article, I encourage you to speak with me, the one whom God has Called to teach you His Holy Word.

Lord Keep Us Steadfast in Thy Word,  
Pastor

## **Sunday Divine Service at 9:30 a.m. followed by Bible Study and Sunday School at 10:45!**

**New Location Update:** As was reported last month, the elders and council continue vigorously to pursue a new location.

**Wednesday Midweek Lenten Vespers Services at 7:00 p.m.** I will continue preaching through *The Holy 10 Commands*, which I began in Advent. This is the Lutheran tradition—to review the Catechism during Lent.

**Holy Week: Holy Thursday with Holy Communion at 7:00 p.m. & Good Friday Tenebrae at 7:00 p.m. April 1<sup>st</sup> is Easter.**

**Connecting the Dots:** Before service, try reading through the Gospel lesson and see if you can link it to the other lessons, Introit, Gradual, and Collect. (Hint: Start with the Collect as it usually summarizes the theme of the day)

### **Christian Education, Human Care & Evangelism**

**Sunday School:** We have Sunday school in the conference room after service for the little ones. Older children are welcome to attend the Family Style Bible Study. We ordered new curriculum from *Concordia Publishing House*, which will provide more activities and learning for the children.

**FYI: Sunday morning Adult Catechesis should wrap up in the next couple weeks. We look forward to Adult Confirmation!**

**Wednesday Morning Bible class** has started a new study on Apologetics (defending the faith). This will help strengthen our faith, and prepare us to give a reason for the hope that we have to the dying world (evangelism). Additionally, **we have changed the start time to 11:15 a.m. for those who work in Frisco** and could attend over their lunch break.

**Youth Catechesis** leading to confirmation on Wednesday Evenings.

**Private Confession and Absolution offered all-week upon request.**

Gents, let's continue get together **EVERY Thursday** at 6:30 AM for a **Men's Study and Breakfast at IHOP** (2480 Preston Rd, Frisco, TX 75034). We'll start the day off right with good food and fellowship as we read through our Lutheran Confessions. **YOU CAN JOIN ANYTIME! Come learn about our Lutheran Confessions from Scripture Alone!**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://answersingenesis.org/reviews/movies/gods-not-dead-movie-review/>

**Issues, Etc.** is a radio talk show hosted by LCMS Pastor Todd Wilken and produced by Lutheran Public Radio in Collinsville, IL. You can listen at your convenience at [www.issuesetc.org](http://www.issuesetc.org) and on the Lutheran Public Radio mobile app. You can **listen to Lutheran music** at [www.lutheranpublicradio.org](http://www.lutheranpublicradio.org)

**Children's Bulletins Available:** *Lessons for Lambs* is not meant to serve as a way to keep kids busy and quiet during the service, but rather to involve them in what's going on in the service so they can begin thinking about it. The bulletins are geared toward kids in 2nd through 6th grades with varying degrees of independence. They could certainly be used with younger kids, in part, with help from their parents.

**Got questions?** Check out the rotating tracts/pamphlets on the table in the narthex each week by former LCMS President Berry. Take one for yourself or a friend. Doctrinal questions are timeless! You may also download them for free here: <https://www.michigandistrict.org/about/beliefs/whatabout>

**Home Devotional Resources:** <http://mlchouston.org/about-us/memorial-moment> & <http://steadfastlutherans.org/2017/02/lambs-at-pasture-daily-devotions-for-the-family/>

**Sermons on our website:** If you miss a sermon, you can always hear it on our website. This is also a great way to reach out to family and friends: "Hey, check out my pastor's sermon. I think you would appreciate it. It comforted me." Then it might make it easier to invite them to come to church with you in the future.

**Evangelism:** Sharing our website with others is a great way to let others to learn about us. **Church Business Cards** still available for you to take. Let's get our name out there and invite others to hear the sweet Gospel! **Evangelism Tracts using the Small Catechism AVAILABLE!**

**Service opportunities: Helping to plan activities outside and inside of our congregation:** Would you like to help plan outreach opportunities for our congregation—from service events to simply participating in community events? Would you like to help plan and organize fellowship opportunities for our congregation—anything from potlucks to polka? If you have an interest in serving, please speak with an elder.

**Thanks for supporting this great local organization!**



Bring your donations to Church or drop them off directly to the food pantry, located at 9085 Dogwood (next to Frisco Resale) which is open Mon., Tues., Thurs., Fri. from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. and Wed. from 9-6 p.m.

Click [HERE](#) to see a list of the most needed items to help those in need here in our community.

# **Christian Stewardship -Time, Talent, and Treasure**

**Weekly Stewardship bulletin sentences from synod our in our bulletin most weeks—check them out.**

**Amazon Smile:** Don't forget you can support our church by designating St. John through *Amazon Smile*.

**Prayer:** Please continue to pray for our congregation as we establish ourselves and plan for 2018, looking for a new venue. Also, please take home your bulletin and pray during the week for those who have requested our prayers.

**Interested in serving as a Church Greeter?** Please speak to an elder.

**Building Fund:** As reported at the last Voters' meeting, we have started a building fund, for our long-term goal of a permanent location. If you would like to contribute to the fund, please write, "Building Fund" on your check/envelope along with the amount. If the check is more than the designated amount, it will post to weekly offering.

## **The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod**

### **Stewardship Ministry**

#### **March 2018 Newsletter Article**

Hudson Taylor, a Nineteenth Century British missionary to China, is reported to have said, "God's work, done in God's way, will not lack God's supply." To know God's way, we need to know His Holy Word. Or to say it another way: you need to know your Bible.

St. Paul, before he spends two chapters on giving, wrote that every thought is to be taken captive to the obedience of Christ (2 Cor. 10:5).

Doctrine matters. And doctrine matters because the Scriptures matter. And the Scriptures matter because this is where we learn the teaching of Christ. Our thoughts must be brought into line with the teaching of Scripture so that our work is what God wants done and so that we do this work in His way.

A good tree bears good fruit. A bad tree bears bad fruit. We have been made good trees in holy baptism. We are fertilized and pruned for bearing good fruit by constantly hearing God's Word preached and taught in sermon and Bible Class and in receiving the life-giving, faith-sustaining food of the Lord's Supper. Remember your doctrine, hold on to the Lord's teaching, and your thoughts will be taken captive to the obedience of Christ.

Bringing every thought captive to the obedience of Christ is recognizing that God does provide. The Lord's Prayer teaches us to pray for daily bread. Praying this day in and day out reminds us that the Lord is the giver of our daily bread, and that we are to give thanks for His daily provision of it.

God is rarely early and never late in His work, as Abraham learned, "on the mount of the Lord it will be provided" (Gen. 22:14). The Lord's generosity forms our generosity in return. Thus, we set aside for the work of God a generous, first-fruits, proportion of the daily bread that God has given to us. This act of trust in the Lord's provision is the working out of our faith in Him.

When budgetary discussions pop up, our natural reaction is to point fingers. But remember your doctrine, and what

your mother taught about pointing fingers. Our first natural reaction is not always right. In fact, when our thoughts are brought into captivity of Christ, our first reaction should be repentance.

It should raise questions in our own lives. As good trees in Christ who are to bear good fruit, we should ask whether our thoughts are taken captive by obedience to Christ. Have we given generously? Have we given our first-fruits? You know. And God knows. "For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is loyal to Him" (2 Chron. 16:9).

God will provide. He always has and He always will. He gives His meat in due season. He has not left you as orphans, but has grafted you into His own family. You belong to Him. Remember this, letting this thought dwell in you richly. And you will then be rich toward others.

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**What should I be doing as a steward of the gifts the Lord has given me?** Our *Small Catechism*, from Scripture, shows us our duties in our God-given vocations. Each month, I plan to cycle through parts of the *Table of Duties*:

### **Table of Duties Monthly Review: To Youth**

Young men, in the same way be submissive to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that He may lift you up in due time. **1 Peter 5:5-6**

### **Table of Duties Monthly Review: To Widows**

The widow who is really in need and left all alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help. But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives. **1 Tim. 5:5-6**

### **Table of Duties Monthly Review: To Everyone**

The commandments ... are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." **Rom. 13:9** I urge ... that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone. **1Tim. 2:1**

*Let each his lesson learn with care,  
and all the household well shall fare.*

## **Other News**

For current events, please visit our website or see the church calendar. You can sync our calendar to your computer or smart phone. <http://stjohnfrisco.org/st-john-church-calendar/> & <http://stjohnfrisco.org/category/events/>

**St. John Shooting Club (SJSC):** If you'd like to join the mailing list for details, please contact Mike Troncalli, 214-274-5215 (voice or text), [president@sjlcfisco.com](mailto:president@sjlcfisco.com).

We thank *The Roy D. and Ingaborg G. Randolph Memorial Endowment Fund* for its continued support in 2018. We received a generous gift of 25K. Praise the Lord!

## **Other Articles**

<https://blogs.lcms.org/2018/65338>

<https://steadfastlutherans.org/2018/02/book-review-thank-praise-serve-and-obey-by-william-weedon/>

*To God be the Glory!*