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**WORSHIP THE LORD: THE VOICE OF CHIEF ALCHESAY**

*I rejoiced with those who said to me, “Let us go to the house of the LORD”* (Ps. 122:1).

Over the span of 125 years, many Lutheran churches were built and thousands of services were conducted on both reservations. The real impetus for public worship came not from mission boards or missionaries but from the needs and desires of the Apache people themselves.

In 1920, Chief Alchesay, along with many other Apaches, wanted a church in Whiteriver. Consequently, missionary E. E. Guenther started to process the necessary governmental “red tape” which required an official petition from the Indian Office signed by a “goodly number of representative Indians” (E. Guenther 1956-1957:16). Easier said than done. When Guenther handed Alchesay the petition, the chief was concerned and said:

**I cannot sign your paper; I believe what you say, but I do not trust writing on**

**paper. I signed a paper once for the Government and found that it gave a white**

**man permission to round up all our bronco ponies for a [measly]** **fourteen dollars**

**a head. Now you will understand why I cannot sign your paper; paper can lie.**

Alchesay would not sign and neither would any other Apache out of fear of being exploited by the Government. Guenther explained to Alchesay that the words on the paper were his words and had not been touched by Government hands. With that Alchesay said,“**Good***.* **I will tell my people to sign your paper. Then you come back to me and I will put my thumb print on the bottom.”** Everyone in the North Fork area (where Alchesay was chief) signed, as did every subchief on the reservation. Alchesay put his thumbprint on the paper.

When the Whiteriver church was dedicated on Easter Sunday, 1922, Alchesay was given the key and he unlocked the front door. During the service he was baptized first, followed by 100 Apaches. The old chief encouraged everyone present to attend this church regularly for it was the only one on which he had given his thumbmark of approval.

The next year Alchesay walked up to the altar carrying an infant, “**his son”**, as he called him. He watched as the baby was baptized and, in compliance with the chief’s wishes, the child was named after him, Arthur Alchesay Guenther, and became a child of God through the Sacrament.

Chief Alchesay died on August 6, 1928. Many years later Missionary Arthur Alchesay Guenther learned the rest of the story from the last living child of Chief Alchesay, Bertha (Alchesay) Burnett. She reported:

**That (church key) became one of his most valuable possessions. He never**

**gave** **it away but always kept it. When he was dying in 1928, he made a last**

**request** **that the key to “his” church be put in his hand. This was done, and**

**there it stayed when he died and it was buried with him** (A. Guenther 1975:87).

And THE WORD OF THE LORD GROWS.

**QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED**

1. Why do you think that Alchesay wanted a church in Whiteriver?

2. In what ways is church a key?

3. On his death bed, what was important to Alchesay? Why?

4. Alchesay referred to the Whiteriver church as “his.” Does this indicate an attitude of pride since he was instrumental in starting the congregation or does it have a deeper spiritual meaning?

**WORSHIP IS A GIFT FROM GOD**

In Old Testament Times

1. Read Deuteronomy 5:12 and Leviticus 23:3. What was the Old Testament requirement?

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2. How did Old Testament believers approach worship?

a. Read Psalm 122:1. They \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ at the thought of going to church.

b. Read Psalm 26:8. David, the author of this Psalm, says he \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ being in

God’s house.

c. Because of circumstances, sometimes Old Testament believers were not able to go to

church.

1) Read Psalm 42:4. How did they feel about missing church? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

2) Read Psalm 84: 1-2, 4, 10. What emotions did they feel as they looked forward to going to church once again? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

In New Testament Times

1. Read Hebrews 10:25. What were New Testament believers directed to do?

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2. New Testament believers were in the habit of going to church or worshiping with one another.

a. Read Luke 4:16. Who attended church regularly? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

b. Read Luke 24:53. Who worshiped together? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

c. Read Acts 2:46. Who worshiped together? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**WORSHIP PROVIDES MANY BLESSINGS**

1. Read Romans 10:14. At church we have a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ who gives us

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Word.

2. Read Luke 22:19-20. In church we receive the Sacrament of the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

3. Read Acts 20:28 and 1 Peter 5:2-3. In church we have a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ who provides

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_and sets an \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

4. Read Hebrews 10:24-25. In church we receive \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ from one

another.

5. What other blessings do we derive from attending church \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

6. Consider this summary statement from Professor Emeritus, John Brug, from our Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary.

… our churches hold a special place in our hearts. There we have been

baptized, confirmed and married. There we have witnessed these events

in the lives of our loved ones. There we have heard words of comfort at

the death of family members and friends. From those pulpits we have heard

God’s word. At that altar we have received Christ’s true body and blood,

which was given and shed for our forgiveness. We too can say, “How lovely

is your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty” … may we never … deprive ourselves

of the joy of joining fellow believers in God’s house (Brug 1989:55).

**QUESTIONS TO BE ANSWERED**

1. Question. Why do you think that Alchesay wanted a church in Whiteriver?

a. The closest church to Alchesay at that time was 5-6 miles away at East Fork. It wouldn’t have taken him too long to get to East Fork on horseback, but it was quite a walk. Was that the reason he wanted a church in Whiteriver?

b. Who did he want the church in Whiteriver to serve?

2. Question. In what ways is church a key?

a. The church, named Open Bible, unlocked the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to the people.

b. What took place in Open Bible on that Dedication Sunday in 1922 and the next year?

We might say that the church was a key in that it unlocked \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Luther remarked that in some ways we may consider

the church to be our mother. How so? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

3. Question. On his death bed, what was important to Alchesay? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Why? \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

4. Question. Alchesay referred to the Whiteriver church as “his.” Does this indicate an attitude of pride since he was instrumental in starting the congregation or does it have a deeper spiritual meaning?

CLOSING PRAYER

God is here! As we his people Meet to offer praise and prayer,

May we find in fuller measure What it is in Christ we share.

(Christian Worship, Hymn 532)

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