

Christian MONTHLY

DEDICATED TO THE
PROCLAMATION OF THE
WORD OF GOD



Psalm 119:105
Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path.

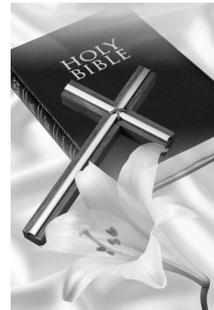
MAY 2011

He Is Risen!

No greater words have been uttered in the history of man. Angels spoke these words to the women who came to Jesus' tomb and found it empty. This is recorded in the Gospel of Luke 24:4-8: *And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments: And as they were afraid, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead? He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. And they remembered his words.* The voices of angels announced the news of the birth of our Lord and now they announce His resurrection. All has been accomplished and the plan of redemption completed.

He is risen indeed!

The resurrection of our Lord is the culmination of His work here on this earth. The suffering and death of Jesus filled His disciples with fear and dread as they thought all hope was lost. Their messianic ideals were shattered and they found themselves without direction in this world. Peter, perhaps, suffered



the most as he thought of his denial of Jesus after his boast of being willing to die with him. Then these women show up with the news, "He is risen," and their world is turned upside down. They soon will understand what exactly Jesus accomplished for them through His death and resurrection. The power of the Holy Spirit will be poured out on them and they will begin to spread the Gospel, the Good News of the kingdom of God. The risen Lord made all of this possible as He breathed on them and commissioned them to go out and preach the forgiveness of sins by the power of the Holy Spirit. The risen Lord brought peace to His disciples and restored Peter. The risen Lord changed His disciples eternally; their world was truly turned upside down and would never be the same. All of Jesus' disciples would die a martyr's death except John; because of the One who arose they understood their lives differently: they did not love their lives unto death but rather gave them up, and in doing so they live eternally with HIM.

**We were destined to die,
but now we live.**

We, as well, have been changed by His resurrection. We don't need to wallow in our sins or fear death. The death and resurrection of our Lord has brought salvation to the world. We were destined to die, but now we live. Paul said in *1 Corinthians 15:20-22*: *But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.* This he said in defense of the resurrection of Christ, saying to the Corinthians that without the resurrection our faith is in vain and we are of all people most miserable, because we would still be in our sins and those who have died in Christ would have done so in vain. "He is risen" means that we are not in our sins, and those who have died in Christ have, in fact, been victorious. We have all been made alive through His resurrection; the victory is ours. *1 Corinthians 15:57-58*: *But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.*

May the words "He is risen" bring us great joy this season as we remember the Resurrection of our Lord and the life we have received through Jesus. He is the First and the Last, The Living One, The One who was dead, but look He is alive forevermore! **He is Risen! He is Risen indeed!**

*Pastor Dennis Hannu
Wolf Lake, Minnesota*



FRUIT OF FAITH

Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you. And when he had so said, he shewed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad, when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. (John 20:19-21)

This Gospel praises the fruit of faith, and illustrates its nature and character. Among the fruit of faith are these two: peace and joy, as St. Paul writes to the Galatians, where he mentions in order all kinds of fruit saying: *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23)* These two fruit are also mentioned in our text. In the first place, Christ stands among the disciples, who sit in fear and terror, and whose hearts are greatly troubled every hour expecting death; to them He comes and comforts them, saying: *Peace be unto you.* This is one fruit. In the second place there follows from this sweet word the other fruit: that they were glad when they saw the Lord. Then He further bestows upon faith power and authority over all things in heaven and on earth, and truly extols it in that He says: *As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.*

Faith is of the nature that every one appropriates to himself the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ; namely, that it is not sufficient simply to believe Christ rose from the dead, for this produces neither peace nor joy, neither power nor authority;

but you must believe that He rose for your sake, for your benefit, and was not glorified for His own sake; but that He might help you and all who believe in Him, and that through His resurrection, sin, death and hell are vanquished and the victory given to you.

This is signified by Christ entering through closed doors and standing in the midst of His disciples. This denotes nothing else than that He is standing in our hearts; there He is in the midst of us, so that He is ours, as He stands there and they have Him among them. When He thus stands within our hearts, we at once hear His loving voice saying to troubled consciences: "Peace, there is no danger; your sins are forgiven and blotted out; they shall harm you no more."

**"Peace, there is no danger;
your sins are forgiven..."**

The Lord entered through barred doors, going through wood and stone, leaving everything whole, breaking nothing, yet getting in among His disciples. This illustrates how the Lord comes into our hearts and stands in us, namely, through the office of the ministry. Therefore, since God has commanded men to preach His Word, one should in no wise despise a mortal man into whose mouth He has put His Word; lest we get the idea that every one must expect a special message from heaven, and that God should speak to him by the word of His mouth. For if He imparts faith to any one, He does it by means of the preaching of man and the external word of man.

This is going through closed doors, when He comes into the heart through the Word, breaking or displacing nothing. When the Word of God comes, it neither injures the conscience, nor deranges the understanding of the heart and the external senses; as the false teachers do who break all the doors and windows, breaking through like thieves, leaving nothing undamaged, and perverting, falsifying and injuring all life, conscience, reason, and the senses. Christ does not do thus. Such now is the power of the Word of God. Thus we have two parts, preaching and believing. His coming to us is preaching; His standing in our hearts is faith. For it is not sufficient that He stands before our eyes and ears; He must stand in the midst of us in our hearts, and offer and impart to us peace.

For the fruit of faith is peace; not only that which one has outwardly, but that of which Paul speaks to the Philippians (4:7) saying it is a peace that passes all reason, sense and understanding. And where this peace is, one shall not and cannot judge according to reason.

Martin Luther

PLEA FOR DONATIONS

Dear Readers,

Over the past 2 years the finances of the *Christian Monthly* have suffered due to a combination of increased publishing and mailing costs and a decreasing number of subscriptions. Over the past several months we have considered alternative solutions and continue to work on several possible improvements that could help our finances.

As a short term measure we are making a plea to the readership of the *Christian Monthly* for your financial support. Please consider making either a one time donation or a monthly pledge to help alleviate the financial strain that we continue to experience.

"...so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7)

Donations can be mailed directly to:

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Please mark your check/money order "donation" so we know it is a donation and not any other payment.

This is also a friendly reminder to all subscribers to renew their subscriptions now.

The times of financial hardship that we live in force each of us to evaluate the things we do and how we do them. As the stewards of this publication we know that we must act responsibly also. Your consideration and financial support will make a difference to the future of the *Christian Monthly*.

*In behalf of the ALC Book Concern and Central Board, thank you,
Anders Sundqvist, Manager*

STEWARDSHIP

The word "stewardship" is derived from the word "steward." The dictionary definition of "steward" is: *a person morally responsible for the careful use of money, time, talents, and resources, especially with respect to the principles or needs of a community or group.* This word has regularly been used in Christian circles (and with good reason) referencing how we should be good stewards of our *money, time, talents, and resources* in serving the Lord. As a group of churches, we must collectively be good stewards of these gifts from God. The *time, talents, and resources* perhaps are easier to understand and carry out than the issue of *money*.

Time: God created time and we are stewards of it; this is the most precious resource we have. We need to order our time according to God's purposes and values, or redeem the time wisely as *Ephesians 5:15-16* says: *See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil.* We can all understand how time impacts us and how easy it is to waste the time that God has allotted to us. Too often we find ourselves involved in pursuits that are not beneficial to the kingdom of God here on earth, or to our well-being. Of course we need time for relaxation and exercise that is beneficial to us, and we spend time caring for and supporting our families and maintaining our homes, but we can all, I'm sure, think of incidents in our lives when we have later thought that what we did was surely a waste of time, and more beneficial things could have been done.

Talents: The talents we possess have been given to also be used for His kingdom. The talents have not been given to us equally, but no matter what talent God has given us, it should be used for His glory. It doesn't matter if our talents are used on simple tasks or on more complicated ones. They are to somehow be used in the furtherance of the kingdom of God according to the abilities and capabilities given to us. It is for each one of us to be aware of the talents that we have and to use them beneficially in His work here on earth. *Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God. (1 Corinthians 10:31)*

Resources: In addition to the resource of time, God has also given us other resources to draw upon in this life. These could be things that lie ready for use or can be drawn upon in time of need. We also have what are commonly known as "inner resources" that provide a source of strength or ability within ourselves, sometimes beyond what we thought we even possessed. It is something we turn to in critical times of need, praying to seek from Him as written in *Ephesians 3:20-21: Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.*

Money: And finally we come to the issue of money, which is the most difficult to deal with. Somehow it hits a sensitive spot with us when it is discussed as a need in the church so that God's work can be carried on. We can think that whatever money we have earned is ours to do with as we please—we worked hard for it; therefore, we'll spend it as we wish. But this is not the biblical expression of the use of money.

In the Old Testament, the Jews were obligated to give the firstfruits of their labor (literally their money) to the priest in the temple (house of the Lord). It is commonly thought that this amounted to ten percent. *The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the LORD thy God. (Exodus 23:19) Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase. (Proverbs 3:9)* The firstfruits in the biblical sense of the Old Testament is the first produce, the first receipts of labor, the first income that one receives in the year. It is the fruit of our labor before it is committed or applied elsewhere. In other words, giving financially to the Lord's work should be the first item considered. In a sense, the firstfruits can be considered to be a form of tithing.

The New Testament is silent on the amount of tithes that a Christian should be giving to the church. *Romans 12:8* says *...he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity* (or liberally). In other words, giving should be done willingly, not grudgingly. Giving to the Lord's work should be done thankfully, always considering the blessings that God has bestowed on our lives.

The biggest "giver" of blessings was God Himself. *John 3:16* reads: *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only*

begotten Son... Where would we be today without the gift of the Son? Where would we go for consolation when needed? Where would we go for help in our trials and temptations? The true Christian values God and His Word above all things. We express that value by bringing the fruit of our labor, whether it's called firstfruits or tithe, to the Lord.

...He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:6-7)

*Alvar Helmes
Battle Ground, Washington*

JOHN THE BAPTIST

Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.

Luke 3:8

 The searching ministry of John the Baptist was a clarion call to reality. Formalism in religion apart from true heart-exercise is an abomination in the sight of God. He is not served by the work of men's hands or glorified by the declarations of their lips if the inward attitude is not right. All men are called to abase themselves before Him, and take the place of confessed sinfulness, seeking divine grace for deliverance through the Savior He has provided. Jesus Himself must be the **object of faith**. It is He alone whose work could meet the claims of God's righteousness. In Him the Father is fully satisfied, and all men everywhere are called to put their trust in Him. While it was not given to John the Baptist to unfold the Gospel in all its blessed detail, he nevertheless directed the people to that One whose mission it is to save all who believe in Him.

H.A. Ironside



THE THIRD DAY

Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand; By which also ye are saved, if ye keep in memory what I preached unto you, unless ye have believed in vain. For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures.

1 Corinthians 15:1-4

Fitting indeed, then, and wholly consonant was the death on the cross for us. We can see how reasonable it was, and why it is the salvation of the world could be accomplished in no other way. Even on the cross He did not hide Himself from sight; rather, He made all creation witness to the presence of its Maker. Then, having once let it be seen that it was truly dead, He did not allow that temple of His body to linger long, but forthwith on the third day raised it up, impassable and incorruptible, the pledge and token of His victory.

It was, of course, within His power thus to have raised His body and displayed it as alive directly after death. But the all-wise Savior did not do this, lest some should deny that it had really or completely died. Besides this, had the interval between His death and resurrection been but two days, the glory of His incorruption might not have appeared. He waited one whole day to show that His body was really dead, and then on the third day showed it incorruptible. The interval was no longer, lest people should have forgotten about it and grown doubtful whether it were in truth the same body. No, while the affair was still ringing in their ears and their eyes were still straining and their minds in turmoil, and while those who had put Him to death were still on the spot and themselves witnessing to the fact of it, the Son of God after three days showed His once dead body immortal and incorruptible; and it was evident to all that it was from no natural weakness that the body which the Word indwelt had died, but in order that in it by the Savior's power death might be done away.

St. Athanasius

Dear Children,

Hello to each of you and I pray that you feel God close by. He loves and cares about His own and He loves little children. I found this poem about children. I thought you would like it.

LITTLE THINGS

When I was very young, they say I said:

"The world's so big and I'm so small.

I'm afraid that I might fall."

Then my mother took my hand and told me this:

"My child you must not fret;

It seems God loves all the little things,

Like moss, He plants near cool clear streams,

In shade from summer sun.

To little squirrels He gives the trees,

On which to have some fun.

He must have planted columbine

Beside the honeysuckle vine,

For bees to get their nectar from.

Who but He would think to sow the violets in our lawn?

Remember all last winter how

He let us feed the little fawn.

Then there's the moth and miller

And the fuzzy caterpillar,

Who—for whatever the reason—

Are changed into something more beautiful,

To finish out the season.

Oh my child, I know it's true.

God loves and cares for little things,

Such as me and you."

Willard Thornley

I wanted to also share something from the Bible about little things, from *Proverbs 30:24-28*:

There be four things which are little upon the earth,
but they are exceeding wise:

The ants are a people not strong,
yet they prepare their meat in the summer;



The conies are but a feeble folk,
yet make they their houses in the rocks;
The locusts have no king,
yet go they forth all of them by bands;
The spider taketh hold with her hands,
and is in kings' palaces.

Big or little God made us all and He made all things. And when He made all things, He saw that it was good.
Children are special.

*God's peace to you,
Gwen Wilson*



MOTHERS IN THE BIBLE

Who was the first mother on this earth? Read *Genesis 3:20* for the answer.

Another mother named Hannah had a son, Samuel. She had prayed much for a child and God gave her a son. When he was still very young, his mother brought him to the temple so that he could serve the Lord with Eli, the high priest. Read what Hannah said about her child in *I Samuel 1:27-28*. Notice one little deed of motherly love in *I Samuel 2:19*. Samuel grew to be a great prophet or servant of the Lord.

You all know who Jesus' mother was, don't you? Remember the precious Christmas story in *Luke, chapter 2*. When Jesus was on the cross He did not forget His mother. Even though He was suffering greatly, He saw to it that His mother would be cared for. Read what He did in *John 19:26-27*.

This Jesus, who knows what it is to be a little child and who also knows a mother's heart, has promised to be with you, mothers and children, even unto the end of the world.

To Him be glory, honor and thanksgiving, now and forever!

Children's Page, May 1969 CM

Happy Mothers Day!

EARNEST OF THE SPIRIT

Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest of the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 5:5)

"Earnest" is the word used for the pledge, usually money, given at the point that a much larger deal is finalized. It is often used in real estate deals, or in an exchange of a large amount of money. When all the details of a contract are agreed upon, and the contract is signed, the earnest money is given to verify that the grantor will fulfill their side of the bargain.

In my life oil companies have made an agreement to, perhaps, drill an oil well on my land. They used to give a dollar in earnest money to verify that they were truly going to keep their side of the agreement, that they would pay me the funds they promised. In the last few years, they have instead put in the agreement that the earnest money would be paid, according to our law, prior to them going on the land.

When we apply this knowledge to the Holy Spirit and our salvation, it gives sobering warnings. We know that, unlike the oil deal, we cannot say, "I will wait and receive the Holy Spirit along with all the rest of the glory offered when I get to heaven. I'll just believe here and get the Holy Spirit when I arrive in eternity." God has not set salvation out this way. The whole deal, so to speak, must be completed here. The "earnest" of the deal, the Holy Spirit, must be received in the time of grace.

Is it possible to believe and not have the Holy Spirit? Scripture shows this is possible. In Acts 8:4-16, we read of Philip and the people of Samaria. They believed Philip concerning the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus, and they were baptized. They did not receive the Holy Spirit, however, until Peter and John came and laid hands on them. In Matthew 25:1-13, we read of the ten virgins. We see that the end of the five foolish virgins, who did not have the oil of the Holy Spirit in their lamps, was not good. It is possible to believe and have an appearance of Christianity and still not have the Holy Spirit.

How, then, does one receive the Holy Spirit? God gives the Holy Spirit. He does this in slightly different ways, as we read in Acts, especially chapters 8-10. God always imparts His Holy Spirit through His servants through preaching and/or the

laying on of hands. Why? Because His Spirit abides in the hearts of living Christians on this earth. When God prepares a heart to repent and believe the preached Gospel that Christ's death and shed blood is the payment to cover their sins, that Christ's resurrection opened the way to heaven for them, God will impart His Spirit into that heart.

How do we know that we have the Holy Spirit living in our hearts? First, the Holy Spirit will never differ from the Word of God; they are one and the same. Next, we see that fruit will become evident, as we read in *Galatians 5:22-23*: *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.* Our flesh will try and mimic these fruits with natural, fleshly imitations, but these are shallow compared to true fruit.

1 John 4:1-3 tells us: *Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: And every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world.*

Our faith is evident by the works that show forth. *But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? ...For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. (James 2:20, 26)*

We must be very careful. In *John 6:28-29* the disciples asked about this work. *Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent.* Our job is to believe on Christ! We read in *John 14:12*: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father.*

Let us look at the life of Christ to see what His works were. First, He constantly listened to, and was obedient to, the will of the Father. The greatest work He accomplished was our salvation. This work is finished, and we can add nothing to it. Almost the first words Christ spoke are recorded in *Matthew 4:17*: *From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say,*

Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. At the end of the Gospels He instructs that repentance and remission of sin be preached throughout the world. During His life, He healed any heart that was truly seeking and said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." He showed and instructed how the love of God manifests itself in, and to, humans. He warned of dangers to our faith, but mostly He taught the importance of repentance, and where remission is to be found.

The works that show forth from a heart in which the Holy Spirit abides are not our works, but Christ

We speak of Christ...

showing forth. We speak of Christ, that the light of the Word would reveal the need for repentance. We speak of Christ and what He accomplished on the cross, that hearts would believe that their sin debt is paid. We speak of Christ, that hearts could know where He is found—at that altar of mercy in the hearts of living Christians. We speak of Christ and His shed blood, that forgiveness can be proclaimed. We speak of Christ and His fullness, that by faith we receive and believe Him, and the salvation He has offered, full and free. We live charitably, as 1 Corinthians 13 teaches, because the love of God is come alive in our hearts, causing actions in our lives that reflect Christ, and not our flesh. Then others will see the love of God and be drawn to Christ. We tell others what Christ has done for us so people would see the graciousness of God.

When a life shows forth these works of Christ, the Word assures us that the Holy Spirit abides in that heart. No matter how weak and contrary our flesh is, the Holy Spirit has the power to overcome it.

Let us walk prayerfully, desiring to be attentive to that Spirit, for it will guide unerringly if we but listen. When it shows us we've sinned, let us come boldly, as Paul says, to that altar of mercy, where we can hear that God's grace is still available for us. We can walk with joy knowing that the earnest of the spirit is directing our path towards heaven, and our salvation is sure. Amen.

*May the peace of God abide in all our hearts,
Shane Juuti
Gimlet, Alberta, Canada*

VALLEY OF HOPE

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Psalm 23:4



When you're on the top of a mountain on a clear day you can almost see forever, and you feel great! You might say, "I've made it to the top," or "I feel a little closer to God." However, where there are mountains, there are valleys too. You can't see far in a valley when clouds hang low. Life is that way. I heard someone say the other day, "When we don't seem to know where God is, He ALWAYS knows where we are!" He knows not only where we are and what we're doing, He even knows our thoughts better than we do. He knows what we are going to pray about before we do. He sees our end of life and our beginning.

O LORD God of hosts, who is a strong LORD like unto thee? or to thy faithfulness round about thee? Thou rulest the raging of the sea: when the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them. (Psalm 89:8-9) There's a comforting reminder! Jesus calms the storm. He calms the fears of our hearts. When we pray, we may just give up at times and say, "I've prayed so much already and there's still no answer," but Jesus has already prayed for us! He is our help and defense in every storm. *For the LORD is our defence; and the Holy One of Israel is our king. (Psalm 89:18)* As Abraham of old walked with God and He led the way, we by faith must take His hand also.

The darkness lurks; unbelief and evil are all around! The evil one is working six times harder in these end times. The root of evil seems to come up in our own sinful flesh far too often. That's when we must remember we were bought with that great price—Jesus gave His life for us. He conquered death, hell and the devil! My dad, the late Frederick Johnson, often quoted, "He wore a crown of thorns, that we may have a crown of life in heaven." The promises of Jesus are everlasting and sure, and we can be safe trusting in them.

Jesus said, *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)* We don't have to fear what's next on our path, because Jesus knows the way we are to go. He said, *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen. (Matthew 28:19-20)*

We have been given the gift of grace with hope of life eternal. God has opened up the way, through the work of Jesus Christ, so we can come to Him and approach the throne of grace with our problems or when we give Him thanks and praise. Remember that the grace of Jesus is sufficient; it needs nothing more. What a place of safety! Whether we are in a valley walking with Him or on the mountain, He is going before us and we can see His staff ahead if we start to lag behind. Jesus said, *I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. (John 10:14)* We have the assurance, for Jesus lives in our hearts when we believe, that even our myriad sins are forgiven in His name and precious shed blood. Then the bright and warm rays of sunshine are able to fill our hearts each day, even if clouds hang low, when we walk with Jesus in a valley of hope!

*Love and God's peace,
Carol Levijoki
Camp Verde, Arizona*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

My family and I would like to thank you for the many prayers, thoughts, and cards on our behalf. We truly know all things are in God's hands. He knows our future better than we know our past. We pray for strength and faith to believe unto the end.

*God's peace and much love,
Stewart & Cora Seppanen and family
Vienna, South Dakota*

facebook status updates

Brandon Matson: You never know what to expect when you let God guide you!

Adrienne Hilman: I have yet to meet a gift giver as gifted at giving gifts as the Lord! His mercies are new every day. And His timing is impeccable.

JoAnn Sakrisson: "As all of us prepare our hearts and minds for worship, my prayer is that we go, first and foremost, expecting to encounter the glory of God. I pray that God would expand our want to sing of who He is and hear of what He's done. I pray that we go ready and willing to feel the grief of our wreckage so that we can feel the glory of His rescue."
Tullian Tchividjian

Linda Wirkkala: "God is, and all is well." John G. Whittier

Clint Matson: We must change how we think if we want to change how we feel. This is precisely what God wants us to do (Philippians 2:1-5). So take each day one step at a time, meditating on Gods Word when the worries and anxieties of this life come along.

Dakota Karlsen: "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, and that His justice cannot sleep forever."
Thomas Jefferson

Rachel Matson: Lord, tonight I'm thanking You for family who are also friends. It's the best way to have them, and I'm guessing You knew that. So, thanks. =)

Jeanne Sikkila:

God is dear

Heaven is near

Earth is a foreign land beneath my feet.

On that day

When He shall say

"Come home, My bride!" the words will sound so sweet.

"Even so, come, Lord Jesus!"

FISHERS OF MEN

And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. (Matthew 4:19)

Recently as I was passing a small pond, I noticed a tree that had fallen into the water and was sunken. Because it was a sunny day, I was able to see it and other things on the bottom of the pond. I remembered when fishing as a youngster that I often would get my hook caught on such things. This was inconvenient and often caused extra work. I would much rather have been able to keep fishing and not have to deal with the tangles caused by the obstructions. Perhaps a nice, sandy bottom with no rocks, sticks, trees or roots would be a nicer place to fish. I did not know at the time that fish live where the obstructions are because they can find food and shelter there.

Sometimes we would like fishing for souls to be easy as well. We would like all of our plans to go perfectly with no problems or struggles. But this is not reality! When we are true fishers of men, the servants of our Lord Jesus, we quickly find that all is not perfect. The devil places snags in our way to try to stop us, just as he did with the Apostle Paul. As in natural fishing when the fish are hiding under the logs, behind the rocks, or in the fallen trees, the lost souls are found where the fishing is the hardest. These lost souls can be in the slums, in the gutters of drunkenness, filled with evil spirits, or even dwelling near the edge of death. They might be in a faraway place or living close to us.

If you are not a believer, God is calling you! A Christian is ready to reach out to you in love. May God grant you the desire to repent and turn from your sinful and dead-ended ways. Are you living in the mud of the bottom (dirty) places today? Are you tangled in the deep and dark sins of this world? Perhaps you have started to hear the call and can feel the heat of the sun (Son) already starting to melt your heart. Keep seeking the Lord. The Bible promises that if you seek, ye SHALL find.

Dear Christian, do not be discouraged when the going gets tough. That could mean the lost ones are very near. Keep fishing! The fishing is best in the hardest places to reach—that is where the lost souls are found.

Remember in the Bible account, when the fishing nets were full, Jesus said to bring Him the fish. *Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. (John 21:10)* Remember to always point to Jesus and lead the sinner to Him. Jesus is the Savior; He keeps calling and calls even today: *Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. (John 21:12)*

Dear pastors and believers, be encouraged during the hard times and hard work of fishing for souls! The fish are not yours; they belong to the Lord. As believers, we are only poor fishermen beggars showing other poor souls where to find the food, the answer, and the remedy for the pain of sin and shame. Jesus Christ, yesterday, today and forevermore! Amen!

John Ruotsala
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CHRISTIAN MONTHLY

Vol. LXVII—No. 5

Subscription Rate: 1 Year

US: \$12

Canada: \$18 (Payable with US money order only)
(Washington residents add your local sales tax)

Foreign: \$25

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and Book Concern orders to:**

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General Disclaimer: The material in the *Christian Monthly* is reviewed for scriptural soundness and to ensure that it does not conflict with the teachings of the Apostolic Lutheran Church of America. Publication does not imply that other material by included authors has been so approved.

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The Christian Monthly (ISSN 0009-5494) is published monthly for \$12 per year by the Apostolic Lutheran Book Concern, 19113 NE 144th Street, Brush Prairie, WA 98606.
Periodical postage paid at Battle Ground, Washington.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the above PO Box 2126 address.

See how nature now rejoices
 In this sunny month of May;
 Still to God from all its voices
 Giving praises day by day.
 In the glad green woodland alleys
 Every bird its anthem trills!
 While flocks feeding in the valleys,
 Herds upon a thousand hills,
 Join with every creature living,
 Here on land, in air, or sea,
 In one great worldwide thanksgiving,
 Yielding praise, O God, to Thee!
 All around us swells the chorus
 From this goodly world of ours,
 And earth's altar stands before us
 Sweet with incense from her flowers.
So, with nature still confessing
 His great goodness, let us pay
 Grateful homage for each blessing
 Of this sunny month of May.

Author Unknown

From the Mouth of Babes

◆ A mother and her children were driving along in the car. When they stopped at an intersection, the older boys, trying to be helpful, announced from each side of the car, "It's clear my way!" "It's clear my way!" A little voice in the back seat said, "It's clear God's way!"

◆ A little one came by his mother and gave her a kiss. She commented, "You always have a kiss for me." He replied, "I know, God just keeps giving me more!"

◆ A younger brother sat listening to his older siblings talking about exciting times when they were younger. With no memories of that time, the little boy asked, "Was I there?" His older brother said, "No." Looking disappointed and worried, the younger boy asked, "Where was I?" "**You were in God's plan,**" was the answer. The little one smiled with contentment as if he hadn't missed a thing!

A Reader in New Hampshire