

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.

April 2020

The Seed of Abraham

Pastor Chuck Bylkas
South Range, Michigan

Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

Galatians 3:16-19

THE STORY OF ABRAHAM IS certainly a remarkable one. God called Abraham (then Abram) to leave his home country to an unknown land that God will show him. God promises to make of Abraham a great nation, to make his name great and to bless all families of the earth through him. The problem is that Abraham is already seventy-five years



After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. And, behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.

Genesis 15:1-6

old and has no children. Where will this great nation come from? It is not until Abraham is a hundred years old that God blesses Abraham and Sarah with Isaac. Just when the promise is beginning to come to fulfillment, God commands Abraham to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice. If Abraham does so, what will become of God's promise? In faith, Abraham obeys, but God intervenes to spare the life of Isaac and all of Abraham's descendants to follow.

As compelling as Abraham's story is, God's promise to bless all families and nations of the earth through the seed of Abraham would not be fulfilled until many generations later. The Apostle Paul says that the promise would not be fulfilled by many seeds, but by one seed, "...which is Christ." This is the same seed spoken of in the garden of Eden, who would crush the head of the serpent. This is the same seed that would fall to the ground and die in order to bear much fruit. *And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. (John 12:32)*

During the time of Holy Week and Easter, we celebrate the triumph of the seed of Abraham. Jesus Christ enters into death in order to destroy it. As He goes to Calvary's cross, Christ delivers us from sin, death and the devil. We have the forgiveness of sins by His blood, newness of life and the certain hope of eternal Life, through the death and Resurrection of the seed of Abraham. May God fill our hearts with joy as we celebrate the finished work of Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ!

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man... Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted. (Hebrews 2:9, 14-18)

Yours in Christ.

The True Shepherd

Martin Luther

Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

John 10:1-4

HE WHO WOULD ENTER BY the door must be ready to speak the Word concerning Christ and his word must center in Christ. Let it be called “coming” when one preaches aright; the approaching is spiritual, and through the Word — upon the ears of his hearers, the preacher comes at last into the sheepfold — the heart of believers. Christ says that the shepherd must enter by the door; that is, preach nothing but Christ, for Christ is the door into the sheepfold.

But where there are intruders, who make their own door, their own hole to crawl through, their own addition, different from that which Christ taught, they are thieves. Of these Paul says to the *Romans 16:17-18*: *Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple.* Paul does not speak of opposing or antagonistic doctrines, but of those placed beside the true doctrine; they are additions, making divisions. Paul calls it a rival doctrine, an addition, an occasion of stumbling, an offense and a byway, when one establishes the conscience upon his own goodness or deeds.

Now, the Gospel is sensitive, complete and pre-eminent: it must be intolerant of additions and rival teachings. The doctrine of earning entrance into heaven by virtue of fastings, prayers and penance is a branch road, which the Gospel will not tolerate. But our Church authorities endorse these things, hence they are thieves and murderers; for they do violence to our consciences, which is slaying and destroying the sheep. How is this accomplished? If only I am directed into a branch or parallel road, then my soul is turned from God upon that road, where I must perish. Thus this road is the cause of my death. The conscience and heart of man must be founded upon one single Word or they will come to grief. *All flesh is grass, and all the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field.* (*Isaiah 40:6*)



The doctrines of men, however admirable, fall to the ground, and with them the conscience that has built upon them. There is no help nor remedy.

But the Word of God is eternal and must endure forever; no devil can overthrow it. The foundation is laid upon which the conscience may be established forever. The words of men must perish and everything that cleaves to them. Those who enter not by the door — that is, those who do not speak the true and pure Word of God, without any addition — do not lay the right foundation; they destroy and torture and slaughter the sheep.

Therefore, Christ says further in this Gospel: *But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice.*

The porter here is the preacher who rightly teaches the Law — shows that the Law exists and must reveal to us our helplessness; that the works of the Law do not help us, and yet they are insistent. He then opens to the shepherd, that is, to Christ the Lord, and lets him alone feed the sheep. For the office of the Law is at an end; it has accomplished its mission of revealing to the heart its sins until it is completely humbled. Then Christ comes and makes a lamb out of the sheep — feeds it with his Gospel and directs it how to regain cheer for the heart so hopelessly troubled and crushed by the Law.

The lamb then hears Christ's voice and follows it. It has the choicest of pastures, and knows the voice of the shepherd. But the voice of a stranger it never hears and never follows. Just as soon as one preaches to it about works, it is worried and its heart cannot receive the teaching with joy. It knows very well that nothing is accomplished by means of works; for one may do as much as he will, still he carries a heavy spirit and he thinks he has not done enough, nor done rightly. But when the Gospel comes — the voice of the shepherd says: God gave to the world his only Son, that all who believe on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. Then is the heart happy; it feeds upon these words and finds them good. The lamb has found its satisfying pasture; it wants none other. Yea, when it is given other pasture, it flees from it and will not feed therein. This pasture always attracts the sheep, and the sheep also find it. God says in the prophecy of *Isaiah*: *So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.* (*Isaiah 55:11*) ~

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. (*Romans 5:1-2*)

BUT, ON THE OTHER HAND, the sense is not that faith only in the beginning lays hold of righteousness and salvation, and then resigns its office to the works as though thereafter they had to sustain faith, the righteousness received, and salvation; but in order that the promise, not only of receiving, but also of retaining righteousness and salvation, may be firm and sure to us, St. Paul, *Romans 5:2*, ascribes to faith not only the entrance to grace, but also that we stand in grace and boast of the future glory, that is, the beginning, middle, and end he ascribes all to **faith alone**.

Formula of Concord

Good Friday and Resurrection Sunday Are Always Together

Pastor Bryan Wolfmueller

When Jesus talks about Good Friday, He almost always talks about Easter as well. Consider the following three texts from the Gospel of St. Matthew, called Jesus' three "passion predictions."

From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. (Matthew 16:21)

The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. (Matthew 17:22-23)

Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again. (Matthew 20:18-19)

The way the Lord Jesus gives it to us, the cross and the empty tomb are bound together, Good Friday and Easter Sunday are one event, Jesus' death and resurrection are two sides of the same coin. What God has joined together, no man can separate.

There are two dangers here, one is that in our remembering of the Lord's cross and death we would forget about His resurrection. As we solemnly celebrate Jesus' suffering, the scourging and spitting and whipping and weeping, the beating and bleeding, we do not pretend or try to forget Easter. This would tend toward melancholy gloom, as if the Lord would hand us over to sadness.

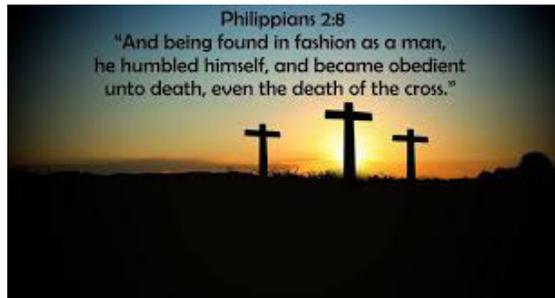
On the other hand, in the glorious light of Easter, we might be tempted to forget or 'get over' the mocking and the scourging and the shame of the cross. These always, into eternity, belong together. It is the resurrected Jesus who says to St. Thomas, *Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. (John 20:27)* St. John sees the ascended Jesus in heaven as a Lamb as it had been slain. *(Revelation 5:6)* Jesus is always, even after the resurrection, even in heavenly glory, the crucified Jesus.

We, therefore, cannot separate Easter from Good Friday or Good Friday from Easter. On Good Friday the Son offers Himself for the sins of all the world; on Easter Sunday the Father shows to all the world that He is pleased with the Son's sacrifice and has forgiven all sin. On Good Friday Jesus destroys death and defeats the devil; on Easter death and the

devil are made a public spectacle. On Good Friday the victory of Easter is hidden; on Easter Sunday the victory of the cross shines forth.

May the Lord grant to us, His church, that as we celebrate the great events of our redemption, even the Lord Jesus' death and resurrection, that our hearts would be filled with gratitude and thanksgiving, rejoicing that the Lord Jesus suffered, died, was buried, and rose again on the third day for us, and for our salvation. Amen.

The Lord's Blessings in Christ.



Man and His Saviour

WHAT DO YOU THINK OF our need of the Lord Jesus? For my part, my soul is like a hungry and thirsty child, and I need His love and consolations for my refreshment; I am a wandering and lost sheep, and I need Him as a good and faithful shepherd; my soul is like a frightened dove pursued by the hawk, and I need His wounds for a refuge; I am a feeble vine, and I need His cross to lay hold of and wind myself about; I am a sinner, and I need His righteousness; I am naked and bare, and need His holiness and innocence for a covering; I am in trouble and alarm, and I need His solace; I am ignorant, and I need His teaching; simple and foolish, and I need the guidance of His Holy Spirit. In no situation, and at no time, can I do without Him.

Do I pray? He must prompt and intercede for me. Am I arraigned by Satan at the Divine tribunal? He must be my advocate. Am I in affliction? He must be my helper. Am I persecuted by the world? He must defend me. When I am forsaken, He must be my support; when dying, my life; when mouldering in the grave, my resurrection.

Well, then, I will rather part with the world, and all that it contains, than with You, my Saviour; and, God be thanked! I know that You, too, are neither able or willing to do without me. You are rich, and I am poor; You have abundance, and I am needy; You have righteousness, and I sins; You have wine and oil, and I wounds; You have cordials and refreshments, and I hunger and thirst. Use me then, my Saviour; for what ever purpose and in whatever way You may require. Here is my poor heart, and empty vessel; fill it with Your grace. Here is my sinful and troubled soul; quicken and refresh it with Your love. Take my heart for Your abode; my mouth to spread the glory of Your name; my love, and all my powers, for the advancement of Your honor and the service of Your believing people. And never suffer the steadfastness and confidence of my faith to abate, that so at all times I may be enabled from the heart to say: Jesus needs me, and I Him; and so we suit each other.

Christian Scriver, Magdeburg—1671

Submitted by Ralph and Barbara Somero; New Ipswich, New Hampshire

Easter

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children,

Hello again. Wherever you are I hope you are having a very good day. May God bless your day. Once again we come to that time of year we call Easter, when Jesus was hung on the cross to die for every person in the world, so that we might be saved.

JESUS HAD BEEN PREACHING AND TEACHING the people about His Father-God, and spending time with His disciples for three years before He died. He taught His disciples all they needed to know about His Father-God's plan of salvation, so that they would be able to keep on preaching God's Word and spread that good news to all nations because Jesus would not be with them in person. The disciples had a very important job to carry out, and God helped them do His will. The Holy Spirit that was given to them after Jesus rose from the grave.

God's plan for Jesus' life was a perfect plan. Jesus had to die for you and me and all people so that if we believe in Him, we would go to heaven. Jesus' blood washes away all our sins, whether big or small. (There is not really a size to sin because sin is just sin. All wrong is wrong.) Jesus makes us free from sin forever.

The Bible says: *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)* Just think, our God loves us more than our moms, dads, family, friends, or anyone. You can always be sure of God's love. Each of you are very precious to Him.

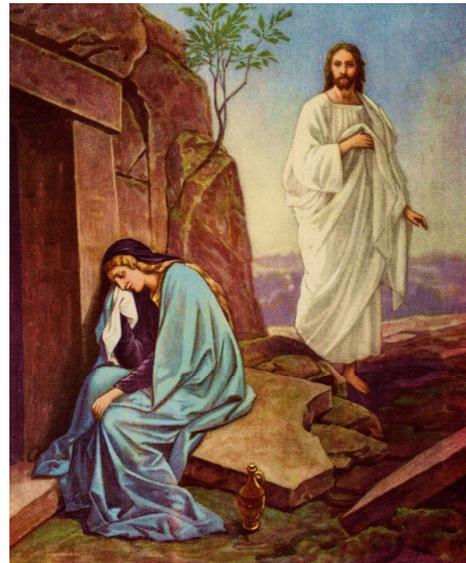
As we look in the above Bible verse we can know that God only had one Son, and that was Jesus. Jesus was in heaven with God forever and He waited for the day that God would send Him down to earth to teach the people about God and then die for the people.

Jesus taught the people a lot about love, and that is God's greatest commandment. We read in *Mark 12:30-31: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment. And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.* Jesus would wish for us to love Him first and then we can love other people. Jesus loved us first and died for us, and now we can love Him. He puts that love in our hearts.

Before Jesus died He was betrayed. His hands were put in handcuffs by the soldiers when they found Him in the garden where He prayed before dying. He was beaten so much that He wasn't recognizable (think about that for a moment). He was made fun of, slapped, spit upon, had a crown of thorns pressed down on His head. He was stripped of His clothes, had a purple robe put on Him to look like an earthly king, and made fun of again and again. Lastly, He was made to carry His cross (some writers say it was the upper beam, and even that was heavy) to the hill called Golgotha, or The Place of the Skull. There the soldiers nailed His hands and feet to the cross. Just before He died, Jesus felt so alone, and He was, because even God His Father had to turn His back on Jesus and forsake or abandon (stop looking out for) Him. This was Jesus' last will of His Father that He was to accomplish, and in

this moment He was bearing ALL the sins of the whole world – ALONE. God the Father could not help Him with this. The Bible tells us: *And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? (St. Matthew 27:46)* After Jesus had died, a soldier with a spear pierced Jesus' side, and blood and water came out.

A Jew named Joseph begged Pilate to let him take Jesus' body down from the cross as it would soon be the Sabbath and the body must be put in a grave before the Sabbath. Pilate gave permission. Jesus was taken down and put in a new grave that belonged to Joseph, where no man had laid. Read St. Luke 23:50-56. Jesus was buried in a cave-like place, but He did not stay there.



The third day after Jesus' death He arose, just as He said He would. Jesus had said: *The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again. (Luke 24:7)*

Jesus arose the victor over death and the grave and went to heaven to be again with His father. He is waiting there (Remember He was with His Father before coming to the earth as a babe!) until God sends Him to come to take us to live with Him forever. He loves us so much that He wants us to come live in heaven. He has prepared a beautiful home for us where there is no pain, sadness, or hurts of any kind. There is only peace, joy and happiness that is everlasting.

We can be very thankful that Jesus died for us. He loves us so much! We should thank Him every day and pray that He will show us how to be loving to those around us, and continue to show us truths that keep us on the way to heaven.

May you remember Jesus this Easter season in your own special way, and keep wanting to love Him. When Jesus lives in our hearts by faith, we are SO blessed. Faith is a gift from God through the Holy Spirit.

Hallelujah! Christ is risen. I wish you all a very blessed Easter!

God's peace.

An Admonition to Stand Firm in the Faith

Paul Kretzmann

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Hebrews 10:19-25

THE NECESSITY OF HOLDING FAST the profession of faith: On the basis of the entire doctrinal discussion as the author brought it in the first part of his letter, he now offers various admonitions, since it is self-evident with a Christian that sanctification follows justification. The connection with the pictures of the entire preceding section is very skillful: Having, then, brethren, confidence for the entrance into the Most Holy Place in the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, through His flesh, and a High Priest over the house of God. Because Christ Jesus, as the true High Priest, through the one sacrifice of Himself, has perfected us forever, therefore the writer may freely talk to us in this strain. It is the form of address which always makes an impression and usually has the desired result in the case of Christians. Our confident expectation of entering into the most holy place of heaven is not based upon any merit or worthiness in ourselves, but upon the blood, upon the merit of Jesus, for Jesus Himself is the new, the living Way. If we are but united with Him in the intimate fellowship of faith, then our way, with Him, will lead us through the veil of His own flesh into the very presence of the divine glory. For just as the high priest of old pushed aside the veil which barred the way into the Most Holy Place, so Jesus laid aside the mortality of His flesh, the weakness of His earthly life, and opened unto us heaven itself, giving us free access to the Throne of Grace (Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:31; Luke 23:45). Nor is that all. Not only did we have, when Jesus was living here on earth, but we have even now, a great High Priest over the sanctuary of heaven; for it is now that Christ is performing that part of His work which assures us of the fact that the mansions above are ready for our occupancy; for He is our Advocate with the Father. And who else would be qualified to plead our cause in the same measure as He to whom we owe our salvation? Knowing this, we have boldness and confidence of faith. We know that the way is prepared for us, and that we may enter into the sanctuary of heaven, into our home above, whenever the Lord calls us.

This being the case: Let us keep approaching with a true heart, in full assurance of faith, sprinkled in our hearts from an evil conscience, and having our bodies washed with clean

water. Using a term which is taken from the Old Testament cult concerning the regular and repeated entering of the priests, their drawing near to the altar to perform the work of their office, the inspired writer urges us, as true priests of the New Testament, to approach to the Lord with the confidence of faith. With a true heart we should come, not with hypocritical sanctimoniousness, but disposed in such a manner as to be really interested with the whole soul in the worship of the Lord, seeking His grace. In full assurance of faith we should draw near, not in absolute certainty, but in firm reliance upon the salvation earned by the blood of Jesus, since the correlate of faith is always the Word of the Gospel with its message of redemption. For that reason faith is not a subjective matter, not a matter of feeling and disposition, but an objective certainty which clings to the promises of the Lord. We should come having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience; being assured that the filth of our hearts has been washed away by the blood of Jesus, we can prepare our hearts for the work of priests to the almighty Lord (Exodus 29:4; 30:20; 40:30), even as our bodies are washed with clean water, the cleansing water of Baptism having washed away all our sins (Ephesians 5:26; Titus 3:5). Thus prepared, we are privileged at all times to approach the heavenly temple and the eternal altar by a new and living way, enter its inner sanctuary by faith, and present ourselves in the presence of God.

All Christians may be so firm in their faith and in their hope because this hope has such a firm foundation, one that does not rest upon the uncertain sands of human opinion or protestations of friendship, but upon the faithfulness of our Lord.

This being the situation, it follows: Let us hold fast and unbending the confession of our hope, for faithful is He that promised, and let us consider one another for the purpose of inciting to love and good works, not forsaking the assembling together, as is the custom of some, but admonishing one another, and this the more so, in proportion as you see the day drawing near. ALL Christians may be so firm in their faith and in their hope because this hope has such a firm foundation, one that does not rest upon the uncertain sands of human opinion or protestations of friendship, but upon the faithfulness of our Lord (1 Corinthians 1:9; 10:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:24). We are not yet enjoying the fullness of the blessing which He has held out before us, we are not yet experiencing the consummation of our salvation, but God's promises cannot fail, not one of them will ever fall to the ground. But while we are still walking in the flesh, we must take into account our own and our neighbor's weakness, and for that reason, in a tactful way, incite and stimulate one another to love and excellent works (1 Thessalonians 5:11). This constant stimulation and emulation cannot take place, of course, where the Christians do not meet together, both for public worship and for other assemblies in which the weal and woe of the work of the Lord is discussed. The writer, therefore, urges the believers not to neglect such meetings.

Even in those days, as the writer is obliged to remark, some of the members of the congregations had the bad habit of staying away from such meetings of edification, probably with the plea of pressure of business or from fear of persecution, just as it is today. The nearness of the last day, however, and the remembrance of the account which we shall be obliged to render on that day should make us willing and eager to heed the admonition here given. If people professing the Christian faith neglect churchgoing and

attendance at the meetings set aside for mutual encouragement and admonition, they not only give offense to the weak in faith, but are themselves endangering their Christianity, their faith. The change from faith to unbelief often comes on so gradually, so imperceptibly, that the damage is done before the deluded victim is aware of it. Faithfulness in the regular use of the Word and the Sacrament should characterize all true Christians. ~

I've an Address in Canaan

Gordon Kuusisto
New Ipswich, New Hampshire

When I stumble one last time
Into the arms of God,
When I climb up in the clouds
On those celestial stairs;
I'll see all my fruitless doubts
And all my wasted fears;
I will see my Savior's face
And feel my grief disappear.

I've an address in Canaan
On a street that I don't know;
It's the place that I've been waiting
So very long to go.

As I pass into Zion
I'll thank God for my victory;
I will look with tearless eyes
And walk on feet not hurting.
I'll step onto Jordan's shore—
It won't matter anymore;
All my slate will be wiped clean
For He's settled all the score.

I've an address in Canaan
On a street that I don't know;
It's that place that I've been waiting
So very long to go.

Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Hebrews 10:19-25

He Lives, and So Shall We!

We remember Saint Matthias who was chosen to replace Judas Iscariot:

“He lives, and so shall we! The torments of the enemy surround me; the words of the wicked break me to pieces. I am shamed and disgraced by their shouts and accusations. I have been knocked down and dragged about the city with violence, for my foes have stripped from me my glory and taken the crown from my head. I am assailed on every side; the slings and arrows have found me again and again as the enemy encamps around my tent and builds siege ramps against me. However, because He lives, so shall we! O Lord, my God, I cried to You for help, and You have healed me! O Lord, You have brought up my soul from Sheol; You have restored my life from the pit. I will extol You, O Lord, for you have drawn me up! You will not let the foe gloat and rejoice; the enemy shall not proclaim victory. I sing praise to You, O Lord; I give thanks to Your holy name, for because You live, so shall we! There is weeping in this world, it is true. There is the violence and the vileness of the evil one. There is the struggle with sin and the battle of unrighteousness. There is still fainting, anger, the pursuit of evil, and the walk of death. The destruction of the flesh and the worm of the grave still await us. However, He lives, and so shall we! Christ has come to be our Redeemer. Salvation belongs to the Lord, who will not let His Holy One see decay. The One who was stripped of His glory and crowned with our shame has tasted death. He has died in our place and was buried in our grave; He has been entombed in our dark night. Yet He lives- and so shall we! He has overcome and risen. He has conquered and come forth. He has burst out and lives! He lives, and so shall we! ‘I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God’ (Job 19:25-26). Is there profit in my death? Will my dust praise God from the pit? Can the bones of Sheol call upon the name of the Lord? O Lord my God, I give thanks to you; I call upon Your name; I praise You forever. He lives, and so shall we!”

Almighty God, You chose Your servant Matthias to be numbered among the Twelve. Grant that Your Church, ever preserved from false teachers, may be taught and guided by faithful and true pastors; through Jesus Christ, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. Amen.

Courtesy of Wittenberg Academy

And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also. At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.

John 14:16-21

Feeding the Flock

Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington

AFTER JESUS HAD RISEN FROM THE DEAD, He showed Himself to His disciples several times. The third time, recorded in John, chapter 21, was when the disciples were fishing on the Sea of Tiberias.

Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James and John, and two others were together, when Peter said to his friends, "I'm going fishing." At least some of these men had been fishermen by vocation before Jesus called them to follow Him, and perhaps they were feeling at loose ends now that they weren't physically following Jesus around as He ministered and taught.

The disciples told Peter, "We're going with you." They went out in a boat and fished all night and caught nothing. As day was breaking, Jesus stood on the shore, but they didn't know it was Jesus.

He called to them, asking if they had any fish. When they answered in the negative, Jesus said, "Cast the net on the rights side of the boat, and you will find some."

They did as they were instructed, and now they weren't able to pull in the net because there were so many fish. John, the disciple whom Jesus loved, said to Peter, "It is the Lord!"

When Peter heard this, he quickly put on his outer clothing and threw himself into the sea, likely in his urgency to reach the shore and see Jesus. The other disciples brought the boat in, dragging the net.

When they got to land, there was a fire with fish on it, and bread. Jesus told them to bring some of the fish they had caught. Peter went aboard and hauled the net full of large fish to shore. It must have been a splendid catch because someone counted the fish, all 153 of them. And even with that many fish, the nets didn't break.

Jesus told them to come and eat. None of the disciples dared to ask Him, "Who are You?" because they knew it was the Lord. Jesus served them bread and fish, and they ate.

After they had finished eating, Jesus said to Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?" and Peter answered, "Yes, Lord. You know that I love You." Jesus told Peter, "Feed My lambs."

Jesus asked Peter a second time, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Again Peter answered, "Yes, Lord. You know that I love You." Jesus said to Peter, "Feed My sheep."

Again a third time, Jesus asked Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love Me?" Peter was grieved that Jesus had asked him a third time "Do you love Me?" and he answered, "Lord, You know everything! You know that I love You." Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep."



Peter did feed the flock of Jesus, but not with his own words. He fed the flock with the Word of God, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, beginning with his first sermon at Pentecost. Before his death as a martyr, he wrote two letters that we read to this day, First and Second Peter.

Not surprisingly, in his first letter, Peter gives the same instruction that Jesus had given to him that day near the Sea of Tiberias. He urges the elders to "feed the flock of God."

*The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: **Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.***

Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. (1 Peter 5:1-7)

We are God's flock, the sheep of His pasture. How important it is that the flock of God be fed with the pure milk of the Word (1 Peter 2:2). We long for that good food which will help us grow and sustain us in our life of faith.

*Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; **we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations. (Psalm 100) ~***

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Pastor Jason Salmi
Vancouver, Washington

And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Whosoever cometh to me, and heareth my sayings, and doeth them, I will shew you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great.

Luke 6:46-49

JESUS ONCE TOLD A PARABLE of two men who each built a house. The first of them dug down deep until he had hit solid bedrock, upon which he was able to lay a good and strong foundation. And only after he was sure of his foundation, did he then build his house upon it, trusting that it was able to weather any storm.

The other man did not dig down to the bedrock. Instead, he simply began building his house on top of the ground, and did not have any foundation under it.

Eventually, the inevitable storm broke, and each of the houses was tried. For the man who was inside of the house which was on the sure footing of a foundation built on top of immovable rock, the storm, though fierce, posed no real cause for concern. As Jesus put it, "When a flood arose, the stream broke against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built." This man had chosen wisely to trust in that which could not be moved.

For the other man, however, the situation turned out quite differently. When he saw the skies change, and the foreboding menace of the approaching storm, he had great reason to be concerned. Of his house, Jesus proclaimed, "When the stream broke against it, immediately it fell, and the ruin of that house was great."

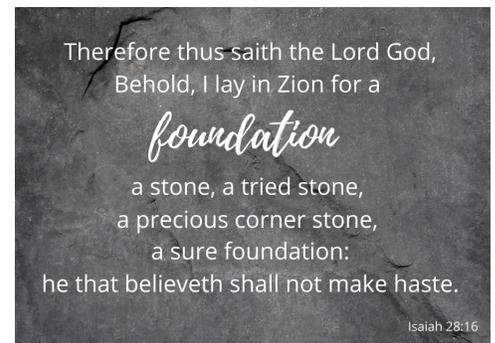
When the skies were clear and the sun shone brightly, both houses would have appeared to fulfill their intended purpose admirably. It was only when they were tried, that the crucial difference between the two was revealed. The one stood... and the other fell. The one man had chosen wisely and was rewarded, while the other had been foolish and suffered the loss of everything.

How many people do we know who seem to have it all together? Whose lives appear to be well-planned and on-track? We should always try to keep in mind that appearances can be deceiving. That the foundation upon which our lives are built matters more than what our lives look like from the outside.

The Bible speaks of a day when, what each and every one of us has built, will be tried. This day is called the Day of the Lord. The day when Jesus Christ will return in glory, and what is concealed to us now, will be revealed before all.

On that day, there will be no greater concern than what we have built our life upon. There is only one rock, and there is only one foundation which will hold in that day. The Apostle Paul tells us (in 1 Corinthians 3:11) *for other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ*. If you build your life upon Him and His words, you need fear no testing, because He is a rock which cannot be moved.

May God richly bless you today.



He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. (Psalm 2:4)

LET US LAUGH AT RAGING SATAN and the world, yes, even at sin and our conscience in us. Truly, because the punishment of the godless is delayed up to now, it is certain that God is also laughing, God, who is in heaven and cannot be driven from there by impious men. Therefore He rightly laughs at their vain attempts. We may think that we would also laugh if we were seated in such a high place and a fortress so fortified... But these thoughts reveal our lack of faith. For all of us who believe in Christ are most truly in that same heaven in which the Lord dwells, if not in the flesh, nevertheless in faith and in the Word.

[God] hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:6-7)

Martin Luther