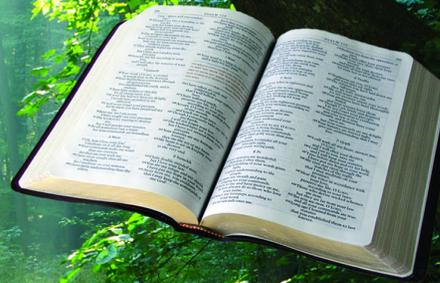


# Christian MONTHLY

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.

August 2014

## Christian Fellowship

Pastor Orval Wirkkala  
Kingston, Minnesota

**S**OME TIME AGO, AN OLDER WOMAN who is young at heart shared with me how much she is enjoying reading the Bible through in a year in a chronological manner. She is using a reading plan that attempts to place the Bible books in the order that the events occurred in history. What has really struck a chord with her is being able to read the psalms that are attributed to the events of the lives of the Old Testament believers. It has made such people as Shepherd Boy and King David more real to her as she has come to know him through not only his experiences but also through his testimonies. For example, the 57<sup>th</sup> Psalm has been connected to the time in David's life when he was hiding in a cave from King Saul, who was seeking to take his life. What he wrote gives us insight into his heart and mind in times of fear and in times of confidence.

David experienced uncertainty and fear of the future as he fled from the attacks of King Saul, which were brought about as a result of Saul's jealousy of David's popularity with the people. He cried out: *Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast (passed by). I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me (avenge, do good, show favor). He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up. Selah. God shall send forth his mercy and his truth. (Psalm 57:1-3)* The experiences of the mountains and valleys of our lives are seen in this psalm, but we are encouraged to call upon our God, to trust Him as we go through even the valleys of life, to praise Him for the deliverance that is coming and to rejoice in His mercy and truth at all times! May we have the assurance today that David likened to being "in the shadow of thy wings."

Our favorite hymns or songs are meaningful because they are linked to times of crisis in our lives. We may enjoy many hymns or songs, but the special ones that minister to us are the ones that the Lord has used to reveal Himself to us when we have been struggling. We are tempted to think that we have gone out of the will of the Lord when trouble comes, but that may not always be the case, for in these times of crisis the Lord is able to reach us because our need is so great that we have nowhere to look but up. Even though we may look down at times, or look away from God's provision of grace and truth in Jesus Christ, nevertheless our face again and again is lifted up so that we may look in faith toward the only One who is able to help in our time of need. When in the midst of fear and uncertainty we are enabled by faith to behold and believe the promises of our Lord toward us, we from the heart break forth in praise and worship, saying, *Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth. (v. 5)*

***My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing and give praise. Awake up, my glory; awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early. I will praise thee, O Lord, among the people: I will sing unto thee among the nations. For thy mercy is great unto the heavens, and thy truth unto the clouds.***  
Psalm 57:7-10

**I**N YOUR TIMES OF CRISIS, how has the Lord ministered to you? Through the Word, through song, through prayer, through a person? Share your experiences of faith, for in doing so you will bring renewed blessing to yourself and encouragement to another. In the confession of our weakness and the acknowledgement of our need for the help of our brother or sister, we are strengthened, we are drawn closer to one another in Christ and thereby our fellowship is strengthened. Be encouraged today through the experience and testimony of David, which He received from our God. ~

# Hewn Stone

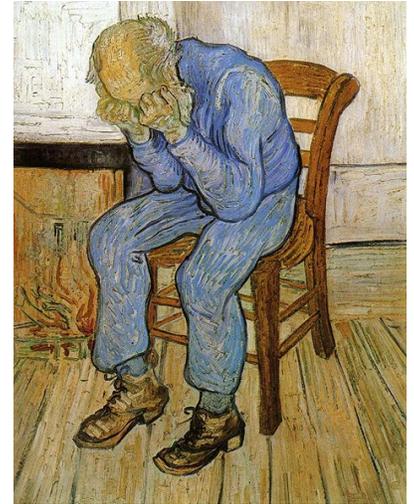
Charles Korhonen  
Tapiola, Michigan

**G**OD DEMANDS UNALTERED WORSHIP. He says that nothing should come between us and Him. *Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God...* (Exodus 20:5) In other words we are not to place our spiritual trust and loyalty in anything or in anybody other than in God. Nor should our faith be attached to the understanding of anyone else, no matter how true they may sound. Jesus warns us that it matters not with whom we align ourselves within this life for their faith will not save us. *Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.* (Matthew 24:40) He brings it so close as to say that we must even hate our own families! Does this mean that we should despise others, even our own family? If we do not use Scripture to explain Scripture we easily could come this conclusion, but the Bible instructs otherwise: *He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.* (Matthew 10:37) Thus, "hate" is not the emotion that we might have toward another but the position of importance that God plays in our life. Jesus amplifies all of the foregoing when He states: *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.* (Mark 12:30-31)

**S**O HOW IS ONE TO WORSHIP GOD? The Bible, given to mankind by God, provides the answer about the way of salvation to those who honestly avail themselves of the Word. It is, however, man's nature not to believe every "jot and tittle" written in the Bible; instead we tend to pick and choose those parts of the Bible which fit our way of thinking. This ought not to be, for *there is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.* (Proverbs 14:12) Clearly, God expected a certain form of worship from man when He instructed the Israelites on the preferred method of worship. *An altar of earth thou shalt make unto me, and shalt sacrifice thereon thy burnt offerings, and thy peace offerings, thy sheep, and thine oxen: in all places where I record my name I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.* (Exodus 20:24) Granted the observable portions of this prescription are of the earth, but it is worship of the heart that interests God. Cain and Abel both offered sacrifices unto God, but it was Abel's sacrifice that God favored. God did not favor Cain's sacrifice because of sin that was still on his heart. *If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door...* (Genesis 4:7)

Moses codified various sacrifices requiring individuals to acknowledge and to confess sin whenever sin became known. *Or if a soul swear, pronouncing with his lips to do evil, or to do good, whatsoever it be that a man shall pronounce with an oath, and it be hid from him; when he knoweth of it, then he*

*shall be guilty in one of these. And it shall be, when he shall be guilty in one of these things, that he shall confess that he hath sinned in that thing.* (Leviticus 5:4-5) Obviously sin has a name. Although God demands confession of the sin that troubles our conscience, it is only when done voluntarily that the confession is accepted. *If his offering be a burnt sacrifice of the herd, let him offer a male without blemish: he shall offer it of his own voluntary will at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the LORD.* (Leviticus 1:3) At the door of the kingdom of heaven a servant of God, the priest in this case, accepts the sacrifice



*Old Man in Sorrow*  
(*On the Threshold of Eternity*)  
by Vincent van Gogh

from the penitent soul for his atonement and sprinkles the blood round about and flays the sacrifice in a prescribed manner before completely burning it on the altar. Cain, as just mentioned, also made a sacrifice, but when he became aware that he had sin on his conscience he became so angry and jealous of Abel, who had a clean conscience, that he eventually slew Abel.

Cain would have been well-advised to immediately confess he had sinned, as did David when Nathan spoke to him. *David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the LORD. And Nathan said unto David, The LORD also hath put away thy sin...* (2 Samuel 12:13) Rather than agree with God and confess his sin, Cain stubbornly, arrogantly and violently stuck with his understanding and tried to suppress or hide his sin in spite of his troubled conscience. These same tendencies exist to this day. *Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron; Forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanksgiving of them which believe and know the truth.* (1 Timothy 4:1-3) As with Cain we also seek for ways to hide our deeds so that confession seemingly becomes unnecessary—to what end? Tailoring God's Word to fit our thinking has consequence. *And if thou wilt make me an altar of stone, thou shalt not build it of hewn stone: for if thou lift up thy tool upon it, thou hast polluted it.* (Exodus 20:25) If one does not accept God's Word as it is but seeks for other explanations to satisfy His righteous demands, all good intentions on our part will be unacceptable as "hewn stone" before God. ~

# Jesus Touched Him

John Ruotsala, Foreign Mission Administrator  
New Ipswich, New Hampshire

*When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.*

**Matthew 8:1-4**

**I**N MATTHEW AND IN SEVERAL of the gospels, an event is told about Jesus healing a man with leprosy. In verse one, we see that when Jesus came down from the mountain, great multitudes followed Him. We come to learn in Scriptures that many who followed Him did so for the wrong reasons. Maybe they came to be healed, maybe they wanted to go where there was a great movement of people, maybe they were curious or wanted to be where their friends were.

Today we can be pretty sure that even in our churches many people are there for the wrong reasons. Even if they are there for the right reasons, maybe they do not yet know Jesus. We leave these things in the Lord's hands, however, because He is fully capable of knowing all things.

Now there came a leper and worshipped Jesus, saying, *Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.*

Leprosy, like sin, was an incurable, very destructive and debilitating disease. I believe there is a picture for us to learn from this disease. Once a person was pronounced unclean by the priest, he or she was shunned forever. They were deemed not suitable to enter into the presence of healthy people. They were rejected of men, they were put away to be alone or with other lepers, they could not

be touched by a single person. They were considered totally unfit.

This is what sin does to mankind. We are totally unfit for heaven, unfit to be in the presence of the Lord. I am not talking only about those who live in outright sin. The Bible says: *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:6)* Therefore, we all have had the sin of leprosy. We all either are, or were, sin-sick, as it says in *Isaiah 64:6: But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags...*

Each one of us needs to fall on our faces, come humbly before Him, and worship the Lord, even as this man did.

You see, when we understand that we are complete sinners, not just a good person who does this sin or that sin once in a while, but rather that we are completely lost and rejected without Christ Jesus, then we will worship Jesus in spirit and in truth.

What did Jesus do when this sinner came to Him? The same thing He does today for all those that come believing that Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. Jesus put forth His hand and touched him, saying, *I will; be thou clean.*

O dear sinner reading this! Jesus loves you! He is still the Great Physician. He is the only One who can make you whole again. He is the only One who can make you acceptable before the Father in heaven. The lifelong plague of sin will be washed away just as the leprosy was gone from the man in our story.

Your trying will not do it. Your works will not do it. Only the precious blood of Jesus and the power of His mighty Name are able to make you whole again. Come to Jesus today, for tomorrow you never know! ~

**A**S I THINK OF ALL THOSE I know who are in need of prayer I picture this: a great storm has swept in and all our little boats are in the middle of it. Some boats are crashing into huge waves, some have lost a rudder, some are swamped and bailing for all they are worth, some have crashed on the rocks and are desperately trying to cling to pieces of their boat as they patch together something they can use to float. Some of us have been rowing so long that our hands are blistered and yet there is no land in sight, but if we stop rowing we will be wrecked. Some boats are far out to sea and they can glimpse the light of the other shore, and some have reached the shore ahead of those who are calling, "Come back!" Through all of this, we know Jesus is in our boat or He is coming to us on the water, but we can't see Him yet or He is still sleeping. As the waves crash and the boats row on, we do not know if or when the storm will blow over, but we DO know that He who sends the storm also calms the storm. Hang on friends! Row, paddle, sail!



*They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters; These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep. For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof. They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end. Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses. He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still. Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven. Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders. (Psalm 107:23-32)*

Karen Helmes  
Brush Prairie, Washington

# Idols Are Helpless

Gwen Wilson  
Ridgefield, Washington

I was paging through the Bible and came across *Isaiah 44*, and as I sang a song at church that spoke of our King coming, this chapter made me think of the foolishness of false gods who do not have anything to do with Jesus or God and how one cannot serve God if they serve idols.

**T**HE LORD IS SPEAKING TO Jacob and Israel whom He has chosen. *Verse 2: Thus saith the LORD that made thee, and formed thee from the womb, which will help thee; Fear not, O Jacob, my servant; and thou, Jesurun, whom I have chosen.* The Lord promises to give water to the thirsty and to water the dry ground. He promises to give His Spirit to their children and also bless them and help them to grow as grass and like willow trees that grow so well by the water.

*Verse 6: Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God.*

*Verse 9: They that make a graven image are all of them vanity; and their delectable (very pleasing) things shall not profit; and they are their own witnesses; they see not, nor know; that they may be ashamed.* The people who serve idols in the end will be put to shame. An idol does not see, hear, know or help. All the workers who create idols will be ashamed. The man who works with fire and tongs, and shapes metal into shapes. The man who works with wood, who grows trees for good wood. He cuts the trees down and some of the wood he burns to warm himself and cooks bread and meat, and with the leftover wood he carves a god to worship. He falls down before it and says, "Deliver me; for thou art my god."

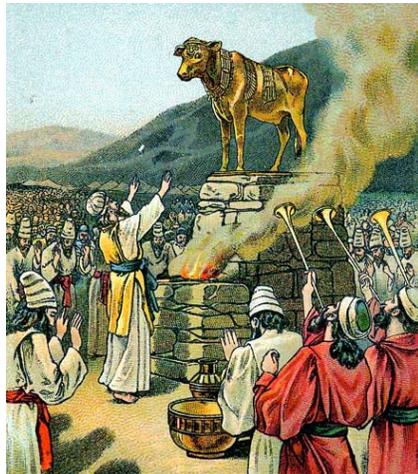
The Bible says these people have never understood and they have closed their eyes and their hearts so they cannot understand. This is a very sad state. Idols or false gods cannot save one's soul nor offer help or comfort in any way. They are helpless.

The Lord says, in *verses 21-22: Remember these, O Jacob*

*and Israel; for thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant: O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me. I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee.* I love those last two verses. There is so much love in them, as the Lord pleads with His people to serve Him only. This next verses are also beautiful and full of our great King and His creation and the people He loves and created.

*Verses 23-24: Sing, O ye heavens; for the LORD hath done it: shout, ye lower parts of the earth: break forth into singing, ye mountains, O forest, and every tree therein: for the LORD hath redeemed Jacob, and glorified himself in Israel. Thus saith the LORD, thy redeemer, and he that formed thee from the womb, I am the LORD that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by myself.*

The Lord has not needed anyone to help make the world and all that is in it. He has done it alone. He frustrates those who think they know more than He does and He makes their knowledge foolish. He stands behind the words of His true servants and His messengers. He will raise up the fallen and if it His desire to dry up the seas, He can do that, too.



**T**HE LORD LOVES HIS PEOPLE whom He has created, and you children are just a few of them. He wants His children to serve and worship Him only and not to turn to false gods or idols, as **they are helpless**. An idol will **never** help a person with anything. Not anything. They cannot hear, **Jesus hears**. They cannot speak, **Jesus can**. They cannot feel our troubles, **Jesus can**. They cannot forgive, **Jesus can**.

They cannot save, **Jesus can**.

I pray that as long as we who believe have life and breath, that we will serve God and Jesus only and pray to remain in true faith.

Christians are so blessed to have such a great God. Children, your God and Jesus love you so much. Don't ever forget that. I leave you in His care. ~

## I Waited for the Lord My God—*Psalm 40*

I waited for the Lord my God,  
Yea, patiently drew near,  
And He at length inclined to me,  
My pleading cry to hear.

He took me from destruction's pit,  
From out the miry clay;  
He set my feet upon a rock,  
And steadfast made my way.

A new and joyful song of praise  
My thankful heart He taught,  
A song of glory to our God  
For all that He has wrought.

And many who behold how good  
The Lord has been to me  
Shall learn to fear, and in His Name  
Their trust shall henceforth be.

Author Unknown

# “...She’s Gone to a Better Place”

Alvar Helmes  
Battle Ground, Washington

**I**T HAS BEEN ALMOST EIGHT YEARS since my wife, Nancy, passed away. We had been married for 55 years. Since then, I have lived with my daughter, Cara, here in Battle Ground, Washington. Staying as active as possible is probably the best remedy for loneliness, but that is not always the easiest thing to accomplish. We were told after Nancy's cancer surgery in July 2005 that she had perhaps a year to live. I immediately thought, "How can they be so sure?" She could certainly live much longer than that! But the doctor's prognosis turned out to be quite accurate.

I clearly remember when Nancy lay in a coma at a hospice house, and she had only hours left to live. I was holding her hand when she passed away. I immediately said quietly, "Wake up! Wake up!" The attending nurse who was also at the bedside said, "She's gone... but she's gone to a better place," meaning heaven, of course.

**S**INCE THAT TIME I HAVE been primarily involved in supporting the indigenous mission work in India that my family started in 1998, first as a mission hospital. The mission work was then expanded to a Christian outreach ministry to the poor and destitute and to the many orphans that wander the streets after being abandoned. The population of India is more than 1.2 billion and about 80% of the country is considered poor. India is primarily a Hindu nation and the people worship idols of their gods. There are millions of different gods in their religion. They also worship things in nature, such as trees and rocks.

The Foreign Mission of the ALCA is active in many different countries but often runs short of working funds or funds for expansion of their effort. I've thought many times about the millions of people around the world that still have not heard the Word of God, or even the name Jesus. I ask of you to help with this foreign mission effort by donating to the ALCA Foreign Mission as you are able to do so. There could be literally thousands and thousands of additional souls converted to Christianity by the efforts of the Foreign Mission for which it could be said of them when they die, "...she's (or he's) gone to a better place." ~

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# Olli Puljula

Aatu Laitinen

*Excerpts from Memoirs of Early Christianity in Northern Lapland*

**I**N THE VILLAGE OF ALAKYLA in Kittila lived Olli Ala, or Puljula, with his wife and numerous children, and he was known by all to be very friendly, cheerful and always prepared for company.

For nine years he had struggled with the law in an awakened state, without finding rest to his soul. When he went to the Lord's Supper, he searched himself whether he had a guileless repentance and the right true faith. These he did not have in the least; he already imagined himself to be prescribed for eternal suffering. Finally, a teaching began to be openly heard that one can believe on Jesus, even as an impossible sinner, and he was exhorted to receive grace and to believe it, as one of such.

With much difficulty and under fear he felt that he had believed, and now fear overtook him that he had committed a greater sin. Many are my sins, and to hell I must go; will it make any difference even if this sin and hypocrisy are added on to the rest, he thought, and did not feel any particular change in his soul. Thus he went to his work, in which on this occasion nothing became accomplished.

**I**N THE SOLITUDE OF THE FOREST, an important conversation with God took place; he sighed in his sorrow, contemplating this matter of forgiveness. But suddenly—wonder of wonders! the heavens opened to him, the Son of God from heaven seemed to descend into his heart, and the waters of the river of life began to flow. The glory of God, and grace in its brilliancy, enlightened his entire being, so that he could do nothing but wonder and thank the most high and excellent God in heaven.

Then he also made his promise to the Lord, who pardoned the greatest sinner on earth, that he would always want to reveal and preach to others this gracious name of Jesus for their salvation, as long as the tongue in his mouth was able to move. Through the help of God he was able to fulfill this promise, always believing in grace for grace in his precious Redeemer.

**O**NCE, POSSIBLY IN 1903, Puljula visited in Rovaniemi. Justification before God, or the experiences of the new birth, were in that time the topics of discussion in the circle of Christians; the 'heart's roots' of believers were investigated.

Someone was sure that in the confession of his sins, and in the belief of their forgiveness, occurs the justification of the sinner. In other words, everyone who has confessed his sins, the congregation has granted him forgiveness for them, and he begins to follow the believers, him God has justified.

Puljula was asked for his opinion. The old man became thoughtful, but the reply was not forthcoming. The meeting began; Puljula requested the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount to be read, and his discourse centered on the justification before God.

**I**T MAY HAVE BEEN THE SAME EXPERIENCE mentioned above that he recalled in this manner: "I endeavored to believe my sins forgiven, which I had long ago confessed to God and to men, in the order that they came upon my conscience, but I still was not satisfied with my soul's condition. I still longed for something which I still lacked, and prayed that God would enlighten me.

"Years passed. On a certain day I was hauling a load of wood out of the woods, and there thought about the matter of absolution and my own inward condition. Sorrow weighed upon my mind, and I was not able to detect the reason. My conscience did not accuse me of any particular sin. Then appeared before me to the eyes of my soul the bleeding Savior, hanging on the cross. I understood that there was the conciliator of my sins, the Savior of my soul, and my Pardoner. This heavenly light penetrated into the depths of my soul. Unspeakable joy and rejoicing now filled my heart; sorrow and sighing had departed from there. Overcome by supernatural feeling I arrived in my home yard.

"I did not even have the presence of mind to release the horse from its harness; my hurry was to rush into the house to notify the home folks of these great tidings of salvation, that Jesus is the Savior of sinners, who by His death on the cross has paid my penalty of sin, and has opened even for me, the greatest sinner, a way to heaven. From house to house, for weeks I went around proclaiming these tidings of joy." And the old man concluded his explanation decisively with the words: "This is justification before God."

On this occasion someone complained that the new awakened of the locality spoke to the believers who were old Christians very condemningly. "I have never been spoken to as severely as I truly deserve," was his reply...

He always assured that God turned everything for the best to His own. "If you have adversity, don't become overly grieved; remember that better times are ahead. Also, don't become proud during better days, for you may become subjected to heavy trials. Strive, only a day at a time, and you will be able to avoid many great pains of the soul, doubts, and worthless sorrows."

He also reminded how the Apostle John in his latter days, carried into the Ephesus church because of his infirmity, still exhorted the Christians, even though unable to preach any longer, with the words: "Children, let us love one another." When asked why the elder always reminded them with the same words, he replied: "When we have love, we have everything."

**T**HE REDEMPTIVE WORK OF JESUS, the full payment of our debt of sin on the cross, and the power of the resurrection he taught to regard as the chief object. This is to be appropriated through faith, for inward and outward righteousness, though the feeling of impossibility in a penitent sinner makes the entry through the

strait gate difficult to the way of life. On this he exhorted to strive to the end in order to be saved, cost what it may, regardless of the offense of the closest friends who still want to become left in the love of the world. If we are persecuted and hated, let us place love against enmity, like the martyr Ignatius who dined and hosted his persecutors though they treated him mercilessly, and had come to take him to be torn apart by beasts. Hatred will perish, but love goes to heaven...

**W**E HAD BEEN TOGETHER IN CLOSE CONTACT for a period of thirty years, always single minded in doctrine and the questions of life. He was equipped with the gifts of long suffering and patience, and had taken heed of the Redeemer's words: "Be merciful, even as I am merciful," and therefore he was not hasty in making judgment...

A short while before his death, Olli Puljula came to the reading classes at Lakiniva to bid his last farewell. For the conclusion of the classes he delivered his last sermon at Rovaniemi, where he had so long preached the Word of God. "Dear children, believe in Jesus, and we will come together in heaven, even though I will soon be placed under the earth." Happiness radiated from his face in his hope of being placed in the grave beside his mate. With her and their children they had joyfully cared for the Christians.

**H**E SUCCUMBED TO THE SLUMBER of death at his home on May 24, 1911, at the age of 87 years. The funeral was conducted by the rector with a sermon selected from Rev. 14:13. A large multitude of friends sang by his graveside, with the tongue of the heart, praises to the Lord. Beautiful is the memory of the elder. ~



## The Good Shepherd—Psalm 23

Martin Luther

**T**HE VOICE OF THIS SHEPHERD, with which He speaks to His sheep and calls them, is the Holy Gospel. It teaches us how we may win grace, forgiveness of sins, and eternal salvation: not by the Law of Moses, which makes us even more shy, unstable, and discouraged, though even in times past we were excessively timid, shy and frightened; but by Christ who is the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls (1 Peter 2:25). For Christ has sought us miserable, lost sheep and has brought us back from the wilderness; that is, He has redeemed us from the Law, sin, death, the power of the devil, and eternal damnation. By giving His life for us He has obtained for us grace, forgiveness of sin, comfort, help, strength, and eternal life against the devil and all misfortune. To the sheep of Christ this is a dear, sweet voice. They are sincerely glad to hear it, for they know it well and let themselves be guided by it. But a strange voice they neither know nor hear, because it sounds unfamiliar; and they avoid it and flee from it (John 10:5.)

The pasture in which Christ feeds His sheep is also the dear Gospel, by which our souls are fed and strengthened, preserved from error, comforted in all temptations and sorrows, protected against the devil's wile and power, and finally saved from all need. But His sheep are not all equally strong; in part they are still lost, scattered hither and yon, wounded, sick, young and weak. He does not reject them for that reason but actually gives more attention to them and also cares for them more diligently than He does for the others who have faults. As the prophet Ezekiel says, He seeks the lost, brings back the strayed, binds up the crippled, and strengthens the sick (Ezekiel 34:16). And the young lambs that have just been born, says the prophet Isaiah, He will gather in His arms and carry so that they may not grow tired, and will gently lead those that are with young (Isaiah 40:11). All of this, Christ, our dear Shepherd, effects through the office of preaching and the holy Sacraments. ~

*O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God! Behold, the Lord GOD will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.*

Isaiah 40:9-11

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## Times and Seasons—and Rainbows

Lois Matson  
Yacolt, Washington

*By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house....*  
(Hebrews 11:7)

The writer to the Hebrews states that Noah, in reverent fear and having been warned by God about future events, built an ark which resulted in the salvation of his family.

No event like the flood had ever happened in the history of the world. This was something new. Genesis 2:5-6 says that rain had not yet fallen at that time, but a mist came up and watered the ground. There had never been a rainbow. There had never been a catastrophic earth-covering flood.

On the very day that Noah and his family entered the ark, *the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights... And the waters prevailed exceedingly upon the earth; and all the high hills, that were under the whole heaven, were covered.* (Genesis 7:11-12, 19)

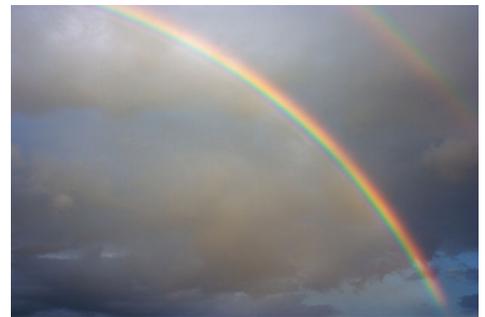
The ark that Noah had built floated safely on the waters and, in God's time, the floods began to recede. At the proper time, Noah, his family and the animals came out of the ark. Think of their joy at being freed from the confines of the boat. I'm sure dry land had never looked so good!

Noah built an altar to the LORD, and offered burnt offerings on it. When the LORD smelled the pleasant aroma of the offerings, He said in His heart, "I will never again curse the ground because of man, because the intention of his heart is evil from his youth. I will never again strike down every living creature as I have done. **While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease.**" (Genesis 8:22)

We expect to plant in the spring and to harvest in the fall. We expect cold weather in winter and warm weather in summer. We expect the seasons to progress in their orderly fashion: spring, summer, autumn, winter. We expect night to follow day. These aren't new things. The times and seasons will be with us as long as the earth stands, because God has spoken it. His Word is true and His promise is sure.

*And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you; And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth. And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.*

*And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. **And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: And I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth. And God said unto Noah, This is the token of the covenant, which I have established between me and all flesh that is upon the earth.*** (Genesis 9:8-17)



The rainbow is the token of God's covenant, a reminder TO HIM that He will never flood the earth again. Never before the great flood—or since—has water covered the entire face of the earth. And it never will in the future, as long as the world remains. He will never break His covenant. ~



As puppies are born blind, so also is man blind from birth and remains so until the day when Jesus comes with salve to open his eyes.

L. L. Laestadius