

# 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.**

February 2018

## Arise, Shine

Pastor Chuck Bylkas  
South Range, Michigan

*Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the LORD is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the LORD shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising.*

*Isaiah 60:1-3*

**A**CCORDING TO THE CHRISTIAN CALENDAR, after the Christmas season we celebrate the Epiphany of Our Lord; God making His Son known to the whole world, both Jews and Gentiles alike. The Festival of the Epiphany is the celebration of the visitation of the Christ-child by the wise men. God leads the wise men to His Son by way of a mysterious star that moves through the sky. During this



season, we also hear of the baptism of Jesus. As Jesus comes out of the water, the Holy Spirit descends on Him as a dove, and God the Father speaks: *This is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. (Matthew 3:17)* In subsequent Sundays, we hear how Christ is made known through His teaching and through His miracles. The Epiphany season ends with the Festival of the Transfiguration, where God once again declares that Jesus is His Son and calls us to listen to Him.

Sin distracts us from the things that matter most. It draws our attention to the cares of this world, encouraging us to be guided by feelings, circumstances or reason, instead of

listening to God's Word. Sin clouds our vision of who God is and who we are. Celebrating Epiphany clears our vision by directing our focus back to Christ Himself. The German pastor and theologian Helmut Thielicke gives us this wonderful analogy:

"If I look at a piece of fabric through a magnifying glass, I find that it is perfectly clear around the center of the glass, but around the edges it tends to become distorted. But this does not mislead me into thinking that the fabric itself is confused at this point. I know that this is caused by an optical illusion and therefore by the way in which I am looking at it. And so it is with the miracle of knowledge bestowed upon me by the Christmas event: If I see the world through the medium of the Good News, then the center is clear and bright. There I see the miracle of the love that descends to the depths of life. On the periphery, however, beyond the Christmas light, confusion and distortion prevail. The ordered lines grow tangled, and the labyrinthine mysteries of life threaten to overwhelm me. Therefore our sight, which grows aberrant as it strays afield, must recover its perspective by returning to the thematic center. The extraordinary thing is that the mystery of life is illuminated not by a formula but rather by another mystery, namely, the News, which can only be believed and yes is hardly believable, that God has become a human being and that now I am no longer alone in the darkness."

At the Cross, God dispelled the darkness of sin through the death and Resurrection of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ. We are now forgiven, cleansed by the blood of Christ and quickened to newness of life, so that we might "Arise, shine, for thy Light has come."

*...Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

*Hebrews 12:2*

# The Transfiguration of Our Lord

Pastor Nicholas Kandoll  
New York Mills, Minnesota

*And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid. And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no man any more, save Jesus only with themselves. And as they came down from the mountain, he charged them that they should tell no man what things they had seen, till the Son of man were risen from the dead.*

Mark 9:2-9

**T**HE SEASON OF EPIPHANY begins after Christmas and ends on Transfiguration Sunday, and this is no accident. The word *Epiphany* itself comes from the Greek word for “reveal.” What better way to celebrate the revelation of Jesus Christ to the world than by looking at the transfiguration of our Lord.

For the first time, Jesus reveals Himself in all of His heavenly glory to three of His disciples. Matthew tells us that it happened as He was praying, that His raiment, or clothing, became white as snow. In fact, Mark tells us that His clothes could not be made any whiter. It’s fascinating that not only is our Lord Himself changed, but even His clothes were transfigured before their very eyes. At this time Jesus was then visited by Moses and Elijah. This is interesting because Moses and Elijah represent the law and the prophets which testify of Jesus Christ. Matthew also tells us that they spoke of “His decease which He should accomplish at Jerusalem.” Moses and Elijah appear and speak to Jesus about the cross. The law and the prophets not only point to Christ but also to His finished work on the cross.

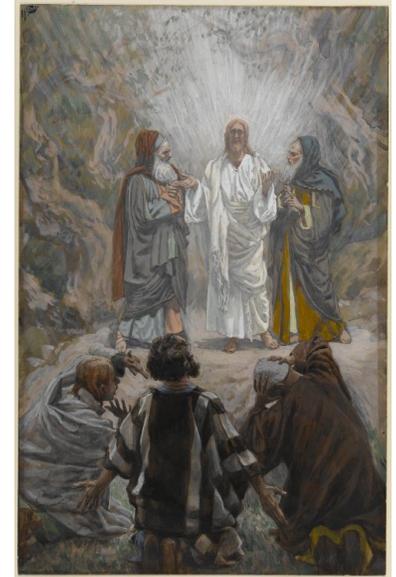
It’s at this time that Peter works up the nerve to speak. He doesn’t understand why Moses and Elijah are there, but he wants to build tents so they can stay up on the mountain and worship. After he finishes making his suggestion a dark cloud overshadows them and God speaks: “This is my beloved Son; hear Him.” From Matthew’s gospel we can see how they reacted to the voice of God. It says they “fell on their face, and were sore afraid.” When they finally look up, Moses and Elijah are gone. It is interesting, the representatives of the law and the prophets disappear, and the disciples see only Jesus.

*Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. (Matthew 5:17)*

*God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds. (Hebrews 1:1-2)*

Our Lord does not take anything away from the law or the prophets; He fulfills them. He is both author and finisher. It’s no accident that they spoke of the work that Jesus would do on the cross, for we remember the words that Jesus said on that fateful day before He gave up His life: “It is finished.” Jesus died on the cross to redeem you, a lost and condemned creature.

May we through the grace of God recognize His heavenly glory that is on display for all of us in His Word and Sacraments. May we, as John said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” Amen.



The Transfiguration James Tissot  
Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

—  
Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,  
Hail th’incarnate Deity!  
Pleased as man with men to dwell,  
Jesus, our Immanuel.  
—  
Charles Wesley—1739  
—

**T**HIS, THEN, IS THE GRACE OF GOD through Jesus Christ our Lord—that we are reconciled to God through the Mediator and receive the Holy Spirit so that we may be changed from enemies into sons, *for as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. (Romans 8:14)* It would take too long to say all that would be truly worthy of this Mediator. Indeed, men cannot speak properly of such matters. For who can unfold in cogent enough fashion this statement, that *the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (John 1:14)* so that we should then believe in “the only Son of God the Father Almighty, born of the Holy Spirit and Mary the Virgin.” Yet it is indeed true that the Word was made flesh, the flesh being assumed by the Divinity, not the Divinity being changed into flesh. Of course, by the term “flesh” we ought here to understand “man,” an expression in which the part signifies the whole, just as it is said, *Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified, (Romans 3:20)* which is to say, no man shall be justified. Yet certainly we must say that in that assumption nothing was lacking that belongs to human nature.

Christ Jesus, Son of God, is thus both God and man. He was God before all ages; He is man in this age of ours. He is God because He is the Word of God, for *...the Word was God. (John 1:1)* Yet He is man also, since in the unity of His Person a rational soul and body is joined to the Word.

St. Augustine, Handbook on Faith, Hope, and Love

# The Word of God

Martin Luther

**T**HAT THE BIBLE IS GOD'S WORD and book I prove thus: All things that have been and are in the world, and the manner of their being, are described in the first book of Moses on the creation; even as God made and shaped the world, so does it stand to this day. Infinite potentates have raged against this book, and sought to destroy and uproot it—king Alexander the Great, the princes of Egypt and of Babylon, and monarchs of Persia, of Greece, and of Rome, the emperors Julius and Augustus—but they nothing prevailed; they are all gone and vanished, while the book remains, and will remain for ever and ever, perfect and entire, as it was declared at the first. Who has thus helped it—who has thus protected it against such mighty forces? No one, surely, but God Himself, who is the master of all things. And 'tis no small miracle how God has so long preserved and protected this book; for the devil and the world are sore foes to it. I believe that the devil has destroyed many good books of the Church, as, aforetime, he killed and crushed many holy persons, the memory of whom has now passed away; but the Bible he was fain to leave subsisting. In like manner have Baptism, the Sacrament of the Altar, of the true body and blood of Christ, and the office of preaching remained unto us, despite the infinitude of tyrants and heretic persecutors. God, with singular strength, has upheld these things; let us, then, baptize, administer the Sacrament, and preach, fearless of impediment. Homer, Virgil, and other noble, fine, and profitable writers, have left us books of great antiquity; but they are naught to the Bible.

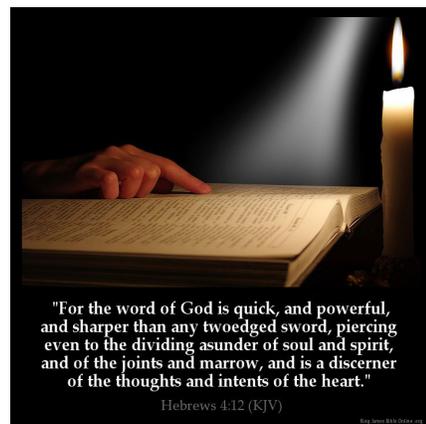
While the Romish church stood, the Bible was never given to the people in such a shape that they could clearly, understandingly, surely, and easily read it, as they now can in the German translation, which, thank God, we have prepared here at Wittenburg.

The Holy Scriptures are full of divine gifts and virtues. The books of the heathen taught nothing of faith, hope, or charity; they present no idea of these things; they contemplate only the present, and that which man, with the use of his material reason, can grasp and comprehend. Look not therein for aught of hope or trust in God. But see how the Psalms and the Book of Job treat of faith, hope, resignation, and prayer; in a word, the Holy Scripture is the highest and best of books, abounding in comfort under all afflictions and trials. It teaches us to see, to feel, to grasp, and to comprehend faith, hope, and charity, far otherwise than mere human reason can; and when evil oppresses us, it teaches how these virtues throw light upon the darkness, and how,

after this poor, miserable existence of ours on earth, there is another and an eternal life.

We ought not to criticize, explain, or judge the Scriptures by our mere reason, but diligently, with prayer, meditate thereon, and seek their meaning. The devil and temptations also afford us occasion to learn and understand the Scriptures, by experience and practice.

Without these we should never understand them, however diligently we read and listened to them. The Holy Ghost must here be our only master and tutor; and let youth have no shame to learn of that preceptor. When I find myself assailed by temptation, I forthwith lay hold of some text of the Bible, which Jesus extends to me; as this: that He died for me, whence I derive infinite hope.



"For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart."

Hebrews 4:12 (KJV)

We must make a great difference between God's Word and the word of man. A man's word is a little sound, that flies into the air, and soon vanishes; but the Word of God is greater than heaven and earth, yea, greater than death and hell, for it forms part of the power of God, and endures everlastingly; we should, therefore, diligently study God's Word, and know and assuredly believe that God Himself speaks unto us. This was what David saw and believed, who said: "God spake in his holiness, thereof I am glad." We should also be glad; but this gladness is oftentimes mixed up with sorrow and pain, of which, again, David is an example, who underwent manifold trials and tribulations in connection with the murder and adultery he had committed. It was no honeymoon for him, when he was hunted from one place to another, to the end he might after remain in God's fear. In the second Psalm he says: "Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling." ~



What a blessing if Christians have both, if they can not only go peacefully to church, and if they also have a church where God's Word is preached in its purity and the Sacraments are administered according to Christ's institution! Such a church, be it ever so small and plain, is worth more than all the glittering palaces of the great and rich of this world. Such a church is the place where the poor sinner can not only talk with God but also where God speaks to him through the mouth of a man; where God through His Word not only shows him the way to heaven, but also where the very heaven of grace and salvation opens wide to him. Whoever enters into such a church has reason to say with Jacob, "How dreadful (awesome) is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!" (Genesis 28:17)

C.F.W. Walther

# Our Jesus

Gwen Wilson  
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children,

Hello to each of you. I pray that you are well. Another year has passed and we begin a new one, and I pray that God and Jesus are yet most important in your life. We know why Jesus came to this earth: to save the people from their sins. He came to do good but is so rejected by mankind.

Our Jesus:

- \* Healed the sick
- \* Gave sight to the blind
- \* Always offered encouraging words
- \* Cast out devils
- \* Healed the lame
- \* Healed lepers
- \* Made water into wine
- \* Raised Jairus' daughter and Lazarus from the dead
- \* Stilled the storm
- \* Fed thousands with little
- \* Walked on water
- \* Said "Peace be unto you" many times
- \* Searches and finds the lost sheep
- \* Healed Peter's mother-in-law of a fever
- \* Healed two blind men
- \* Gave His own life on the cross



Jesus went about doing good, loving people, showing kindness, and forgiving. His heart was full of grace, and the greatest thing of all was that He gave His life for all mankind so that we can be granted eternal life.

In return for all of Jesus' love, so much of mankind has turned their back on Him, despised His teachings, hated Him, cursed Him, and in the end wanted Him killed. Oh, they killed Him and they thought they had finally gotten rid of Him. But the good news is that they could not "get rid of Him." He was in the grave but He arose again the third day. He lives forever.

I pray that you children will always love and serve Jesus. He LOVES you so much. God bless each of you as you endeavor to follow the Lord. You will be blessed.

God's peace.

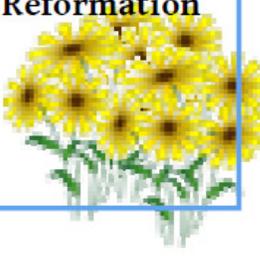


**“God writes the Gospel not in the Bible alone,  
but on trees  
and flowers  
and clouds  
and stars.”**

**Martin Luther—Father of the Reformation**

The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handywork.  
Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.  
There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard.

Psalm 19:1-3



# The Witness of the Spirit

Pastor Orval Wirkkala  
Kingston, Minnesota

**H**AVE YOU HEARD THE SAYING, “No man is an island”? This statement reflects the truth that we have been created for relationship by our Creator. After the fall of mankind into sin, this harmonious relationship between ourselves and our Creator was changed, so by nature we try to hide from Him and we experience difficulty being transparent within our human relationships.

Paul addressed the rupture that occurred between God and mankind in Ephesians, and the separation that existed between the Jews and the Gentiles. He explained that through the cross of Christ ALL of mankind has been reunited (there is no longer a differentiation between Jew and Gentile), which means God is now friendly toward ALL and seeks to gather all unto Himself through His Son, Jesus Christ.

It is vitally important that we recognize the work of God through Christ, why it had to be done, and how God reconciled all humanity so He could dwell in those who receive this gift through His Spirit. The Church is God’s dwelling place through the Spirit. *Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. (Ephesians 2:19-22)*

Paul asks that we would be strengthened by same Spirit that came to us when we believed, that Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith, that we being rooted and grounded in love would together be able to comprehend (in part) the unfathomable love of Christ. Why so? That we would be filled with all the fullness of God!

God’s grace came to us, by faith we have access to it in Christ, and God’s love for us is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Through the collective and ever growing comprehension of this love, we are being filled with the fullness of God.

A Christian man living alone in a cold climate experienced long periods when he was not able to visit anyone and no one could visit him.



Automobile travel was impossible, and it was dangerous to travel by ski or snowmobile. He spent nearly every day in the Word, communing with his Father and his Savior. He spent hours in prayer to his Father. He often experienced the uplifting of God through the Spirit of Christ who lived in him, but he longed to have fellowship with a brother or sister in Christ, with whom he could share the everyday things of life, the joys and sorrows.

Over the long winter he grew disheartened as he had fellowship in solitude with the Lord, though he knew the Scriptures that stated very clearly that *the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God. (Romans 8:16)* Though he daily experienced the witness of God’s Spirit with his spirit, he began to doubt whether the Spirit lived in

him. As doubt took a deeper grip in his mind and inner soul, he began to think: *Does anyone care about me? Where is God in my life?* Knowing the Scripture, his mind went to the Psalms and he poured out his heart to heaven: *Psalm 77: I cried unto God with my voice, even unto God with my voice; and he gave ear unto me. In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord: my soul ran in the night, and ceased not: my soul refused to be comforted. I remembered God, and was troubled: I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. Selah. Thou holdest mine eyes waking: I am so troubled that I cannot speak. I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. I call to remembrance my song in the night: I commune with mine own heart: and my spirit made diligent search.*

Essentially he thought: “Life isn’t like it used to be. It was simpler years ago. Why can’t it be like that again? I want answers. I want relief...” Crying in his loneliness and confusion, and not even able to pray, he poured out his heart in honest transparency before God, asking aloud the questions that come from a lonely, despondent, needy heart:

Have You cast me off forever? Will you no longer show favor to me? Is Your mercy gone forever? Does Your promise fail forever? Have You forgotten to be gracious? In Your anger have You closed Your tender mercies?

In this state he wondered: “Do I even have the Holy Spirit within me anymore? Why would I ask such questions if God still lived in me?” Then he thought, “I am going to visit my brother who lives 60 miles away on the other side of the mountain. I am going to pour out my heart and ask him if he thinks the Holy Spirit still lives in me.”

He fired up his snowmobile, making sure it had gas and emergency supplies, and began the trip over the mountain. After a cold ride, he neared the cabin of his brother. He knocked, the door opened, and his brother threw out his arms in a welcome embrace of love. The two talked of the cold weather, and of the long winter. Then his brother began to share that which he had been meditating upon: the amazing Transfiguration of our Lord. He excitedly asked his visitor, “May I read it for the both of us?”

His visitor replied, “Please do.” The lonely man listened to the account of the Transfiguration in which Jesus appeared with Moses and Elijah as they talked of His exodus from this world via the cross.

He listened to the account in which for a moment God shone through the physical body of Jesus from the inside out. He considered Peter’s response to honor all three equally. He heard how the bright cloud overshadowed all of them. He heard how the Voice spoke out of the cloud: *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. (Matthew 17:5)* He heard how the disciples, hearing the Voice, fell on their faces and were sore afraid.

Then in a manner that the visitor could not explain, he found himself with the disciples, awed and humbled by the events on the Mount, overcome by reverence toward a holy God who loved him such that He would humble Himself to rescue him from sin and bring him to life. As he lay on his face in reverence and awe, he felt a hand on his shoulder and heard a voice speak: “Arise, and be not afraid.”

He lifted his eyes to see the brother he had come to visit. He was looking into the face of Jesus. The touch of Jesus came



through his brother, who was part of the body of Christ, the Christian Church. He felt encouraged and strengthened. His soul revived as faith in the finished work of Christ

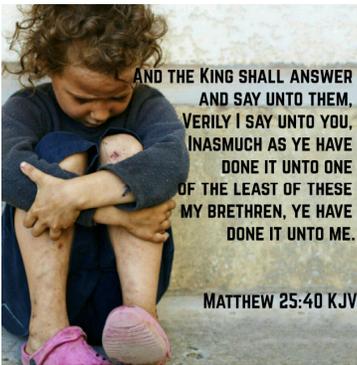
burned again in his heart. As they rejoiced in the goodness of Christ and the unity of the Spirit of God in Christ, they praised God for the fellowship He had created for them.

They parted ways, and the man went rejoicing homeward, flying over the snow with a renewed song in his heart. He understood that God dwells by His Spirit in hearts individually, but also in the collective hearts of all believers, as a *building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*

As the traveler sped home, he looked at his infirmity through the lens of God's promises, saying with the Psalmist:

*And I said, This is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High. I will remember the works of the LORD: surely I will remember thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all thy work, and talk of thy doings. Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God? (Psalm 77:10-13)*

*For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. 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. (Ephesians 3:14-21) ~*



## Christian Charity

C.O. Rosenius

*For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.*

**Matthew 25:35-36**

**F**ROM THE DEEDS LISTED HERE by Christ we can learn something about the field and extent of Christian charity. We notice that Christ supports an activity turned outwards. He not only speaks about the good things everybody can do inside His house, but He also says, *I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.*

It is strange that there can be different opinions among Christians as to whether we should seek the distressed or only wait for them to turn up at our door. One complains that he is tied to a household vocation and so he is deprived of opportunities to do good deeds. He does not see that it is exactly at home among those nearest to us that we should do most of our good deeds. At the same time there are others also who want to be Christians, but who reject downright all extensive activities and want to limit their charity to the ones nearest to them. But where one does not seek a secret defense for one's own laziness, but really wants to see the truth, the words of Christ: "I was sick and in prison, and ye came unto me," and the general commandment of love: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," (Matthew 22:39) will no doubt convince you that every Christian should serve all men according to opportunity and capability. We should not only serve those belonging to our household and our friends, for "do not even the publicans the same?" (Matthew 5:46) No, we should also serve those outside. At the time of Christ there was a man who was trying to escape the commandment of love for one's neighbor, and who replied, "And who is my neighbor?" But in the parable about the good Samaritan, Christ showed that even where there is such a distance in all respects, as between Jews and Samaritans, we should still serve all human beings.

Therefore, you should do good deeds, well-pleasing to God, when you first make friendship with your Savior by faith and attend to your vocation at home with patience and faithfulness, whether as father, housewife, or as a child or servant. In all cases we have many good deeds to do, and they often demand much patience and mortification of the flesh. If you remain faithful in them, all of them will please God, because He Himself has commanded and ordained them. If in addition you can serve those outside the home in spiritual and bodily needs, the sick, the poor, the ignorant, then one day Christ will praise these deeds. He will say, *I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.*

In brief, "the deeds of a Christian have no name," says Luther. That is, a Christian does not do any special deeds like the hypocrites who choose a certain deed, and except for this one deed, one does not get any other good from them. But a Christian has love and therefore does all sorts of good deeds, according to the words of Christ, *All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them. (Matthew 7:12)* He has great grace in that he lives in friendship with God and under an eternal and perpetual forgiveness, even as long as God approves of the Surety, the beloved Son. In addition, Christ looks at our small deeds with such a pleasure that He wants to say, *Ye have done it unto me.* How sweet it is then, to look at Him in great and small and say to oneself: "For the sake of the Savior I now want to give this poor man an article of clothing. For the sake of the Savior I want to say a wholesome word to this ignorant man. For the sake of the Savior I want to have patience with this trying fellow, and show him a happy face and give him a good word. For the sake of the Savior I want to trouble myself with visiting this and that wretched person. And so on."

When I have the consolation and love of faith in my heart then all this is a pleasure. Nevertheless, when the Lord lists what we have done to Him, we shall think that we have not done anything and reply: "When were we lucky enough to be allowed to serve You?" But then He will protest and declare, *Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. (Matthew 25:40)*

# He Loves Us!

Lois Matson  
Yacolt, Washington

Love is a funny thing. Love can be defined in two different ways: objectively and subjectively.

- **Objective love** is real, *factual*, and not dependent on feelings.
- **Subjective love** is based on emotions, on *feeling* loved.  
How does God objectively *prove* His love to us? At times, how do we subjectively *feel* that God loves us?

**W**E FIND OBJECTIVE PROOF IN the Bible of the love of God for all humans. John, AKA the Apostle of Love, wrote often of the love of God. This well-known verse assures us of God's love for all of us: *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)* John also wrote in his first letter: *Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:10)*

The love of God for sinners is seen in the sacrifice of His own Son. This sacrificial love is not dependent on our feelings. Our salvation by faith in the crucified Lamb of God was planned from before the foundation of the world, but as we mark time, God's love for us, in fact and for real, began at the conception of Jesus in the womb of His mother, through His birth in Bethlehem and growth in Nazareth, His ministry in Galilee and the surrounding area, His death outside Jerusalem, His resurrection from the tomb, and His ascension near the Mount of Olives. It happened in historical time, at the appointed time.

What about *feeling* the love of God? Subjectively, the love of God for His children can feel... uncomfortable.

***My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord; neither be weary of his correction: For whom the Lord loveth he correcteth; even as a father the son in whom he delighteth.***

**Proverbs 3:11-12**

In writing about the chastisement of the Lord, the writer to the Hebrews cites the verses from Proverbs:

*Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have*

*not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. (Hebrews 12:1-11)*

Our earthly parents corrected us for our own good, disciplining and teaching us. They did this because they loved us and wanted the best for us.

God our Father deals with us as children, correcting us and bringing us to repentance. Though it may *feel* grievous, we can delight in His correction. We know that His judgments are good and right, and He chastens us for our profit, that we might be partakers of His holiness. Though we may be uncomfortable during the chastening, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

*I know, O Lord, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me. Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant. Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law is my delight. (Psalm 119:75-77)*

Objectively, God has shown us His tender mercy through sending His Son that we may live. Subjectively, He shows His love by correcting us, and by teaching us to delight in His law. Let us lay aside every weight and sin that besets us, and run with patience the race set before us. ~



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Lois Matson, Editor  
Email: cm@apostoliclutheran.org  
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Postal Mail to:  
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THE BOOK CONCERN  
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Phone: (360) 896-7344  
Email: books@apostoliclutheran.org

**Apostolic Lutheran Church of America**

www.apostoliclutheran.org

Western Mission: western@apostoliclutheran.org

Eastern Mission: eastern@apostoliclutheran.org

Foreign Mission: foreign@apostoliclutheran.org

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## Jesus Came to Gift Us

Pastor Ron Holmgren  
Hockinson, Washington

*If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. **Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:** Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

Philippians 2:1-8

**J**ESUS SET HIS HEART AND MIND on the things of others. He came to earth to gift us. It's *extra nos*; it's "outside of us." God in Christ was reconciling the world to Himself, acting on His own, coming to serve others, putting aside His own needs for the needs of others. This admonition of Paul is borne out in its perfection in Christ Jesus, our Lord. He's come to gift us, but what has He come to give us? What does the Church today expect of Him? What went wrong that week between Palm Sunday and Good Friday? On the surface, it looks like something went terribly wrong. The people praised Him as He entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, and they cried "Crucify Him!" on Good Friday. What went wrong? Nothing *went* wrong; everything was wrong to begin with! The people didn't know why they were praising Him; they had other expectations. The Christian Church struggles with this.

Luther examines these questions: Why did He come? What is the gift that He brought from heaven? Even before He came, and before He died, and brought the gift of life eternal—salvation—the Word—to us, many philosophies of men addressed many other subjects. This is what Luther wrote:

He's not concerned with teaching us how to farm, how to plow, sew, harvest, how to be a housekeeper, pile up money, conduct war, or rule over land or people. All such things He entrusts to earthly kings and lords. Our Christ King, on the other hand, wants us to know how to inherit the kingdom of heaven, how to be saved, and how to become eternally rich, so that we may finally enter that better life.

## The Heritage of the Children of God

Steven E. Anderson  
Greer, South Carolina

*There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.*

Romans 8:1-4

**C**ONTINUE YET ON THE JOURNEY, ye soldiers of the cross. The cross will remain precious as long as we find the flesh, world and devil to be real enemies. Lay not down your arms, but be valiant in fight, *for the battle is the Lord's.* (1 Samuel 17:47) All who have learned of God will find themselves upon this way, loving all that God has revealed and given unto man in His Word, yet despising and seeking deliverance *from the body of this death.* (Romans 7:24)

Both the Law and the Gospel are eternal. It is not God's Word which must remove or change, but rather it is man who must be changed and come into a right relationship with God's Word. The preaching of the Law reveals our sin in contrast to God's holiness. The preaching of the Gospel reveals free forgiveness of all sin by virtue of God's love for us. The Law written upon the hearts of the believers causes an earnest desire to love both God and our neighbor. This comes by the indwelling Spirit, Who works in us, *That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.* (Romans 8:4) Now we are in right relationship with the Law. God no longer sees our sin, but is satisfied when He tries the reins of our heart, for He finds there the very virtues of Christ. This is indeed the heritage of the children of God, and our end is sure, for we also testify of Him who goes before us in battle, and confess with good hope in warfare, *But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.* (1 Corinthians 15:57)