

# 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.**

January 2022

## Another Auld Lang Syne

Pastor Jay Weidner  
Laurium, Michigan

**A**S CLOCKS STRIKE TWELVE ON the first of January every year people all around the world break into song, mouthing words to a familiar tune which few people know the full lyrics of and much less know the meaning of the title. “Auld Lang Syne” means simply “old long since” and is equivalent to saying, “days gone by.” So, on the first day of the year, we sing of the past and reminisce looking to the future. This past year is not hard to say goodbye to for many people. So many have suffered great loss due to the COVID-19 virus and this seminary has been no exception. Last October, right after I had written the November newsletter, I learned of the passing of our dear brother, gifted pastor and instructor, Elmer Yliniemi. It was too late to include a tribute to him in that letter, so I’m doing that now.



Pastor Elmer Yliniemi

I remember when I first came to seminary when we were still located in Plymouth, Minnesota, and classes were held in the back Sunday School room of the Plymouth Apostolic Lutheran Church. One day a man of quite imposing stature came to teach a class on the history of Apostolic Lutheranism. He was serving congregations in Minnesota in parts of the state that, at that time, I had never heard of. Immediately, I was

struck by his obvious, deep interest in the material he was teaching. That was my first experience with Elmer and I often told him that his class was one of my favorites and that it was so helpful in understanding the background of the movement that I was now associated with. People often still tell me that I know so much about the history of Laestadianism and the various Apostolic Lutheran groups; I don’t, but Elmer did, and I listened. When people talk to me about the topic, they think

I’m answering them but I’m not, Elmer is. His interest was strong, and we were greatly blessed to receive that information and pass it on.

One of the other things I deeply admired about Elmer was his candor. He would speak to us openly about his experiences as a missionary and as a pastor. We learned so much from him in short order, as he pulled no punches sharing the good and the bad of his many experiences. He was candid, even brutally honest at some points, and he prepared us in a most marvelous way with the truth as we went on to experience Christian ministry in our own right, every day equipped with the knowledge passed down by one who had walked the path before us. I used to always greet him when he would come to teach his class at the seminary, as he did for many years, as the “bishop of Spruce Grove.” It was a bit of fun but honestly rings so true when one reads the qualifications for the office in 1 Timothy. Elmer was all of that, and much more, to those of us who were blessed to be his students. An example of the good, and faithful shepherd whose instruction we were wise to follow.

Every day, at the opening of our instruction for the day, Elmer would have us sing a hymn from the old, red *Hymns and Songs of Zion*. That first day when I met him, we sang I Know Whom I Have Believed (376 in the blue *Hymns and Songs of Zion*). On October 23, 2020, Elmer realized the fullness of the chorus of that song:

**But “I know whom I have believed,  
And am persuaded that He is able  
To keep that which I’ve committed  
Unto Him against that day.”**

We thank God for God’s faithfulness that gave Elmer such a gift through Jesus Christ our Lord. Likewise, we thank God for Elmer’s faithful carrying out of his calling through which he witnessed to His Savior every day. Our deepest condolences go out to Miriam and all of Elmer’s family. May God comfort you as you feel the sting of your loss but also bless you as you know of Elmer’s victory in Jesus.

May God bless us all with such a steadfast faith as we start a new year. Another Auld Lang Syne.

God’s peace.

# The Naming of Jesus, as Was the Custom at Circumcision

Martin Luther

**F**INALLY, IT WAS THE CUSTOM to give the child its name in circumcision, as we see here and in the instance of John the Baptist, to whom his name was also given in his circumcision. However, just as Christ was not obliged to be circumcised and this sign was empty in this case, so also His name had been given to Him before by the angel, so that He did not obtain it by circumcision. This was done and is written, to the end that He should be altogether free from the law and from sin above all other men, and only serve us by submitting to the law and becoming like unto us in order to redeem us from it, as St. Paul said in the last Epistle: "He was born under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law," Galatians 4:4-5.

For when death fell upon Him and slew Him, and yet had no right or cause against Him, and He willingly and innocently submitted and suffered Himself to be slain: death became liable to Him, did Him wrong and sinned against Him, and completely exposed itself, so that Christ has an honest claim upon it. Now the wrong which death became guilty of toward Him, is so great that death can never pay nor atone for it. Therefore it must be subject to Christ and in His power forever: and so death is overcome and killed in Christ. Now Christ did not do this for Himself, but for us, and has bestowed upon us this victory over death in baptism. Therefore all who believe in Christ must also be lords over death, and death must be their subject, nay, their criminal, whom they are to judge and execute; even as they do when they die and at the last day. For by the gift of Christ death has also become guilty to all those, who have received this gift from Christ.

Behold, this is the sweet and joyous redemption from death through Christ; these are the spiritual victories of Joshua over the heathen of Canaan, notably the five kings, upon whose necks the princes of Israel put their feet by his command, Joshua 10.

So also circumcision did Christ wrong, for He was not subject to it.

Therefore it is justly subject to Him and He has power over it, has conquered it, and has granted to us, that it must cease and has lost its right over those who believe in Christ. He has released us from circumcision only by submitting to it innocently and by bestowing His right against it upon us.

Behold, this is putting Christ under the law, in order that He might redeem those who were under it, Galatians 4:5. Moreover, He has subjected Himself to all other laws, to none of which He was bound, being Lord and God over all. Therefore they have all fallen into His power, have done Him wrong, and must now justly be subject to Him.

Now all this He has also given to us. Therefore if we believe in Christ, and the law would endeavor to punish us as sinners, and death would insist upon it, and try to drive the wretched conscience to hell; and if you then hold up to them in turn their sin and wrong, which they have done to Christ, your Lord: do you not suppose that they also shall be put to shame and be more afraid of you than you of them? Death

shall feel its guilt and flee in disgrace; the law shall be compelled to give up its terror and smile friendly upon Christ. In this way sin must be banished by sin. The sins, which they have committed against Christ and now also against you on account of your faith, are greater than those which you have committed against them. In this case God, the just Judge, will not suffer that a great thief should hang a little one; on the contrary, if the great one is to be free, much more must the little one go free. Of this St. Paul says, Corinthians 15:55-57: "O death, where is thy sting? The sting of death is sin; but thanks be to God, who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ; for death is swallowed up in victory." Behold, is not this a precious redemption from the law through Him, who innocently subjected Himself to the law?

***His name is rightly called on this day Jesus, that is interpreted, Savior: for Savior we call one who saves, redeems, brings salvation and is of help to everybody; this one the Hebrew language calls Jesus.***

Praise God, what an exceedingly rich and mighty thing faith is! It indeed makes of man a god, to whom nothing is impossible, as Christ says, Mark 9:28: "If thou canst! All things are possible to him that believeth," Therefore it is also said in Psalm 82:6: "Ye are gods, and all of you sons of the Most High."

His name is rightly called on this day Jesus, that is interpreted, Savior: for Savior we call one who saves, redeems, brings salvation and is of help to everybody; this one the Hebrew language calls Jesus. So the angel Gabriel spoke to Joseph in sleep, Matthew 1:21: "She shall bring forth a son; and thou shalt call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins." Here the angel himself explains why He is called Savior, Jesus, namely, because He is help and salvation to His people. We have now heard how this comes to pass through faith, to which He gives all His right and possession, that He has over sin, death, and the law. He makes it righteous, free and blessed.

Now as circumcision signifies our faith, as we have heard: so the naming of children signifies that by faith we have a name and are known before God. For God knows none of those who do not believe, as is said in Psalm 1:6: "For Jehovah knoweth the way of the righteous; but the way of the wicked shall perish." And in Matthew 25:12: "Verily, I say unto you, I know you not." What then is our name? Doubtless as Christ gives us all that is His, so He also gives His name to us; therefore we are all called Christian from Him, all God's children from Him, all Jesuses from Him, all Savior from Him, and whatever is His name, that also is ours; as St. Paul writes, Romans 8:24: "In hope were ye saved," for ye are Jesuses or Saviors. Behold, there is therefore no measure to the dignity and honor of a Christian! These are the super abundant riches of His goodness, which He pours out upon us, so that our heart may be free, joyous, peaceable, and unterrified; and willingly and cheerfully keep the law. Amen.

# The Master's Call

Oscar Wilson  
March 1976 CM

*How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! ...So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.*

Romans 10:14-15, 17

**T**HERE IS NOTHING IN THE whole world more important and urgent and the preaching of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ Himself initiated this ministry by proclaiming, *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.* (Mark 1:15)

The first messengers were His chosen disciples whom He had called from different secular occupations, and He calls them to a task they had never known before. *Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.* (Mark 1:17) Jesus was filled with compassion when He saw the multitudes, and they fainted and were scattered as sheep having no shepherd. He said to His disciples, *The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.* (Matthew 9:37-38) But Jesus lays down a limitation of their work: *Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.* (Matthew 10:5-7)

Gentiles were once shut out from the message of the Gospel. Israel, being the first chosen people of God, was to hear the call of the Master. And upon their rejection of the call, it was directed to the Gentiles, according to the divine commission of Jesus. As we read again in the Scriptures, *He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.* (John 1:11-12)

Thus, we see that not until Jesus had risen from the dead and had completed His mission on earth, did He charged His apostles to go out into all of the world. We read in the book of Acts after the conversion of Saul, how the Lord speaks to Ananias, *Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.* (Acts 9:15-16)

As we observe the earthly life of our Lord with the disciples, we also notice that they were not left to choose their own methods or to adopt their conception of the task pertaining to the saving of the lost souls. Being not their own work but the work of God, it could not be done without this authorization; otherwise it is devoid of God's promise. Jesus said to Peter, *And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.* (Matthew 16:19)

After the completion of His work here on earth and upon His resurrection from the dead, He appears to His own behind the closed doors and proclaims unto them His great commission: *Peace be unto you: as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and*

*saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost: Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained.* (John 20:21-23) Now all restrictions and limitations have been removed. *And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.* (Luke 24:47)

We are living in the latter day. Time is short but precious. Multitudes throughout the world are yet to hear and are waiting for the message of the Gospel. The same call and the authorization of the Lord Jesus rings out to us. This proclamation is clear and concise. Moved by His love and Spirit and in obedience to His Word, the message remains simple, sincere and true: the kingdom of God has drawn nigh and God summons men to repentance and faith.

In the light of His Spirit we find ourselves to be so inadequate, so weak and unworthy. Yet the first step of obedience is one's faith in God. We have been bought with a price, redeemed by His blood of atonement. In His precious and holy Name and blood we have believed in God's forgiveness of all our sins. *And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins.* (Ephesians 2:1) Yet why does unbelief and doubt often slow us in the work of God? We are slow to renounce our worldly attachments and to give up the obstacles which separate us from the will of God.

Yet we do hear the Master's call. We do not belong in the sheltered seclusion of our own selves. In journeying to the fields of labor we are often subjected to many inconveniences, even hardships and trials. We hesitate in making any sacrifices unless we received personal satisfaction and enjoyment from this.

The kingdom of God is in the midst of our enemies, and whosoever refuses to suffer this does not really want to be of this kingdom. Also our work takes us away from home into strange areas and into difficult situations. According to God's will and the commission of Christ, as we have already learned, Christendom is a scattered people, scattered like seed *into all the kingdoms of the earth.* (Deuteronomy 28:25) But He has promised, *I will gather them; for I have redeemed them, and they shall return.* (Zechariah 10:8, 9)

This work is therefore the responsibility of the entire Christian Church. The support, love, prayers and sacrifices of all believers are needed in order to fulfill the divine requirements of Him who has gone before us and has nourished His own sheep by the still waters of life and in the green pastures of His saving grace.

Into my mind come the words of the songwriter, "Lost in the night doth the heathen yet languish, waiting for morning the darkness to vanquish—Will not day come soon? Light o'er the land of the heathen is beaming, Rivers of life through its desserts are streaming—Come and save us soon!"

God alone knows where the promise lies. Ours is only to show obedience to Him. He will provide. Let us pray for this love and concern for them who are "lost in the night," and for unity and understanding in the encampment of God's own children. Let us walk worthy of the vocation *wherewith ye are called, With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* (Ephesians 4:1-3) ~



# Jesus, Twelve Years Old and Filled with Wisdom

Gwen Wilson  
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children,

I would like to wish you all a very blessed New Year in the Lord. It has been quite a year for everyone. I do pray the new year is good. The most important thing is to keep Jesus in your heart and in your life. God controls everything and we can rest in that.

I want to share with you the only account of Jesus' boyhood that is recorded in the Bible, found in *St. Luke 2:40-52*.

**I**'M SURE YOU REMEMBER THE account in the Old Testament in Exodus when the Israelites left Egypt for good and Moses led them. Remember how Pharaoh kept refusing to let the people go, and God sent ten plagues upon Pharaoh's people? The last plague was that the angel of death was to come, and the oldest child in each home was going to die.

The night before this was to happen, the Israelites were instructed to kill a perfect lamb, cook it, eat it and put its blood on the outside door posts and across the top door post of their houses. God told Moses that when this was done the death angel would not bring any death to that home. It would "pass over" that house. It went just as God planned. His people were safe, but in Pharaoh's people, the oldest child died, even in Pharaoh's house. This killing of the lamb was to be a yearly celebration from this point on for all generations of God's people.

The Christmas story told of Jesus' birth and as all children do, He grew and He became strong in the spirit and was filled with wisdom. Jesus reached the age when He was to go with Joseph and Mary up to Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover.

*Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem after the custom of the feast. (Luke 2:41-42)*

It was major event to be going and they had to travel three days to Jerusalem. They would walk and there were many other travelers and acquaintances along with them. They would stop by the side of the road and picnic along the way. At night if the weather was favorable, they would sleep under the stars, or perhaps there were homes where they could stay. It was definitely a journey that was very memorable.

When they were gathered together during the feast days, they would once again be reminded of the flight from Egypt so MANY hundred years before. They would thank God for protecting them.

Jesus was God's Son, and God was with Him and protected Him from being killed by Herod, helped Him to grow strong in spirit, made Him wise, and God's grace was upon Him.

After the feast days were over Joseph and Mary started their walk back home. There were many people with them all traveling together. Joseph and Mary had supposed that Jesus was among the people, not bothering to check to make sure He had come along. It was only after traveling for a whole day and having stopped to rest for the night, did they realize that Jesus was not with them. He had actually stayed behind in Jerusalem. After looking for Him among the crowd, and not finding Him, they turned back to Jerusalem.

They looked for three days around the city of Jerusalem and finally found Jesus in the temple, sitting in the middle of doctors (wise men), listening to them and asking them questions. *And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers. And when they saw him, they were amazed: and his mother said unto him, Son, why hast thou thus dealt with us? behold, thy father and I have sought thee sorrowing. (Luke 2:47-48)*

Jesus' parents were very worried about their son as they had no idea what had happened to Him. That is just how we as parents are, as we love our children and don't want any harm to come to them. And quite often it is too that children will do things that would worry their parents but they don't think about that.

What was Jesus' reply to his parents? *How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not (did you not know) that I must be about my Father's business (doing God's work)? (Luke 2:49)* They did not understand what Jesus said, and Mary could only think about in her heart.

God had work for Jesus to do already at twelve years of age. Jesus was being obedient to His Father's will.

Jesus was also obedient to His parents and He saw their love for Him and their desire to have Him come home with them. He went home with them to Nazareth.



*Jesus Found in the Temple, James Tissot  
Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons*

*Jesus increased in wisdom and stature (height), and in favour with God and man. (Luke 2:52)*

Jesus was a child like any other child in many ways, but we know that He was sent to earth in a very special way and for a very special purpose. He began His Father God's work at this early age but went home with His parents and was obedient to them. He grew up to be a man and did the work God had for Him, and that was to teach the people about God and Himself and to die on the cross. He came to give His life in death, so that we would be saved.

We can't thank Him enough for this sacrifice. I pray we will follow Him all our days and one day get to live with Him forever.

I'm thankful we were able to remember His birth once more even this Christmas, and my prayer would be that we would remember it in our hearts and minds all throughout the year, and be thankful. Children, serve the Lord and He will help you to grow in Him. **HAPPY NEW YEAR!**

*God's peace.*

# When Forgiveness Is Suffering

Jill Carattini, A Slice of Infinity

Submitted by Alvar Helmes; Battle Ground, Washington

**I**N FOUR HORRIFIC MONTHS IN 1994, at the urging of the Rwandan government, the poorer Hutu majority took up bayonets and machetes and committed genocide against the wealthier Tutsi minority. In the wake of this unspeakable tragedy, nearly a million people had been murdered.

In August of 2003, driven by overcrowded prisons and backlogged court systems, 50,000 genocide criminals, people who had already confessed to killing their neighbors, were released again into society. Murderers were sent back to their homes, back to neighborhoods literally destroyed at their own hands, to live beside the few surviving relatives of the very men, women, and children they killed.

Now more than twenty years later, with eyes still bloodshot at visions of a genocide it failed to see, the world continues to watch Rwanda with a sense of foreboding, wondering what happens when a killer comes home; what happens when victims, widows, orphans, and murderers look each other in the eyes again; what happens when the neighbor who killed your family asks to be forgiven. For the people of Rwanda, the description of the Hebrew prophet is a reality with which they live: "And if anyone asks them, 'What are these wounds on your chest?' the answer will be, 'The wounds I received in the house of my friends.'"<sup>(1)</sup>

How does a culture bear the wounds of genocide and the agony of forgiveness?

For Steven Gahigi, that question is answered in a valley of dry bones which cannot be forgotten. An Anglican clergyman who lost 142 members of his family in the Rwandan genocide, he thought he had lost the ability to forgive. Though his inability plagued him, he had no idea how to navigate through a forgiveness so costly. "I prayed until one night I saw an image of Jesus Christ on the cross... I thought of how He forgave, and I knew that I and others could also do it."<sup>(2)</sup> Inspired by this vision, Gahigi somehow found the words to begin preaching forgiveness. He first did this in the prisons where Hutu perpetrators sat awaiting trial, and today he continues in neighborhoods where the victims of genocide live beside its perpetrators. For Gahigi, wounds received in the house of friends can only be soothed with truth-telling, restitution, interdependence, and reconciliation, all of which he finds accessible only because of Christ.

In some ways, the work of reconciliation that continues to take place in Rwanda in lives on every side of the genocide may be difficult to describe apart from the cross of Christ. While it is true that forgiveness can be explained in

therapeutic terms, that the act of forgiving is beneficial to the forgiver, and forgiveness releases the victim from the one who has wronged them, from chains of the past and a cell of resentment; what Rwandans are facing today undoubtedly reaches something beyond this.

While forgiveness is certainly a form of healing in lives changed forever by genocide, it is also very much a form of suffering.

Miroslav Volf, himself familiar with horrendous violence in Croatia and Serbia, describes forgiveness as the exchange of one form of suffering for another, modeled to the world by the crucified Christ. He writes, "[I]n a world of irreversible deeds and partisan judgments redemption from the passive suffering of victimization cannot happen without the active suffering of forgiveness."<sup>(3)</sup> For Rwandans, this is a reality well understood.

And for Christ, who extends to the world the possibility of reconciliation by embodying it, this suffering, this willingness to be broken by the very people with whom He is trying to reconcile, is the very road to healing and wholeness and humanity. "More than just the passive suffering of an innocent person," writes Volf, "the passion of Christ is the agony of a tortured soul and a wrecked body offered as a prayer for the forgiveness of the torturers."<sup>(3)</sup> There is no clearer picture of Zechariah's depiction of wounds received at the house of friends than in a crucifixion ordered by an angry crowd that lauded Christ as king only hours before. And yet, it is this house of both murderous and weeping friends for which Jesus prays on the cross: Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do.

Far from the suggestion of a moralistic god watching a world of suffering and brokenness from a distance, the costly, unsentimental ministry of reconciliation comes to a world of violence and victims through arms that first bore the weight of the cross. For Steven Gahigi, who facilitates the difficult dialogues now taking place in Rwanda, who helps perpetrators of genocide to build homes for their victims' families, forgiveness is indeed a active form of suffering, but one through which Christ has paved the hopeful, surprising way of redemption. Today, wherever forgiveness is a form of suffering, Christ accompanies the broken, leading both the guilty and the victimized through valleys of dry bones and signs of a coming resurrection.

(1) Zechariah 13:6. (2) Johann Christoph Arnold, *Why Forgive?* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis books, 2010), 202. (3) Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 125.

## 2022 Apostolic Lutheran Church Calendars

You may now order the Apostolic Lutheran Church calendar for the year 2022. The price for each calendar is **\$6.00** to cover the cost of printing and mailing. Do not send your payment with your order. An invoice will be included with the shipment for payment to be mailed to the Federation accountant.

Please send your order in one of the following ways:

By email: [jmiller@mtu.edu](mailto:jmiller@mtu.edu)

By phone: (906) 334-2424

By postal mail: Jennifer Miller, 18020 S Lake Rd., Pelkie, MI 49958



# The Theology of the Gospel

Rev. Scott R. Murray  
Memorial Moment Devotional

ONE OF MY DAUGHTER'S OLD boyfriends pulled off a big surprise by arriving on her college campus without her knowing he was coming. When he arrived on the campus later on a Friday evening, he called her phone and remarked that the stars were beautiful that night where he was. He suggested that if she went out of the dorm to look into the sky, they could look at the same stars together. When she stepped out of the door of the dormitory, her boyfriend was standing right there talking to her on the phone. Needless to say she was deeply shocked. She thought he was hours away in another city. In reality, when she felt most separated from him, he was actually closest.

We live like my daughter thinking that God is far from us, especially when we suffer afflictions and trials. We presume that God could not be gracious toward us. If He truly loved us, these things would not be happening to us. He often hides Himself in our suffering and trials. That is His way. Has He not cloaked His own precious Son, begotten from eternity, in human flesh? Hidden this way, He offered Himself into the hands of those who hated Him, that they might slay Him on the cross, in our place. He did not judge according to sight. He saw the casual brutality of the Roman legionaries who tended the execution ground. He did not judge according to what He heard, because He was cursed by those who ought to have trusted Him as their Lord. Even the malefactor who died next to Him cursed Him. He did not judge by what He felt even in the midst of the cry of dereliction. He who was abandoned by His Father for us, refused to believe that He had been abandoned by His Father. He who felt this to His very core, refused to believe what He felt. Isaiah says of Him: *He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.* (Isaiah 53:11) Even in His excruciating anguish He sees the goal of His work: the acquittal of sinners.

This is the theology of the gospel, which is the theology of the cross and the theology of the promises. This theology turns us outside of ourselves, our feelings, our trials, our sufferings, and places us in Christ. Therefore, because of the

promises of our salvation made sure in Christ, we dare not judge our status in God's sight on the basis of what we see. We cannot know how God feels about us on the basis of our feeling about ourselves, or anybody else's. We cannot know the speech of God, except by listening to the gospel which trumps every accusation, whether human or divine. No curse remains against us, for He has taken the whole curse into Himself. He promises. This is the theology of the gospel. ~

**Martin Luther**

"In every work and thought, particularly in sufferings, when Christians are afflicted, if you are a believer, you are not able to judge about your life and actions. Otherwise you will err. You are mute, foolish, tried, and a captive; and you can neither speak nor judge correctly concerning your affairs. It is written: 'Wait for the Lord' (Psalm 27:14), and do not be offended, murmur or despair. For you do not give the right name to your works or afflictions. Your judgment is false. Your speech is wrong. Your wisdom is foolish. However, it is the will of God that the old man should be destroyed and the flesh put to death; but while it is being destroyed and killed, it speaks falsehoods and makes foolish judgments.

"In this manner God allows Joseph to be crucified, cast into prison, and to suffer reproach, which is simply to be destroyed, removed, wiped out. For all these things do not happen otherwise in the world. But before God that same suffering is to send him for salvation.

"This way of speaking is peculiar to and customary for God. Moses does not speak in this way. Nor do the lawyers and the philosophers. **But it is a theology of promises; they are words of God, who makes promises which He causes to resound among His angels in heaven.** We, however, do not understand them until His counsels are completed. For this reason the counsel of the Lord is praised so often in the prophets. In Psalm 107:11 it says they spurned the counsel of the most High.

"Therefore, these matters must be taught for our instruction, in order that we may know what the theology of the Gospel is." (Martin Luther, *Lectures on Genesis*, 45.6)

## Contentment

ONE OF THE things the elders taught is an inner peace and contentment with God's will and purpose in our lives. Many, especially young people, struggle with lack of purpose and direction, so you can make good money, buy big trucks or fancy cars, chase around, and then get married and have children, but have no purpose. It's not necessarily that they don't believe but they are inwardly unfulfilled. Smoking and maybe eventually drinking or other things tries to fill that void.

It is necessary to teach God's love in creating and redeeming us and His good will for us and desire to be with us in fellowship and lead us daily for our benefit. Rules are necessary for boundaries for children but they must be brought to understand the purpose of the rules because rules cannot make relationships. Many only hear the rules and don't learn to develop a relationship with their father and mother or family, or with God.

Eternal life is to know God and His Son Jesus Christ (John 17:3). Confession and absolution can be only something outward you do or have to do. It may bring peace and forgiveness temporarily without sanctification or the inner knowledge of the continual flowing, cleansing blood so that one lives in a continual state of guilt and release but no settled peace.

Just a personal observation on smoking: if you watch people, 40 to 50 percent of women smoke and about 25 percent of men. I think many women don't feel appreciated or loved. They lack contentment. True repentance from sin and dead works and living faith in the complete, not conditional, and continual, absolute love and forgiveness of God through Christ in the face of absolute failure is the only full recipe for settled peace.

God's peace!  
Andy Kandoll; Champion, Michigan

# Too Good to be True?

Lois Matson  
Yacolt, Washington

**W**E'VE HEARD THE saying, "If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is." It usually refers to financial scams, weight loss programs, hair restoration products, or magic pills that promise to keep us young. We are bombarded in the media, through mail, e-mail and the internet with offers that will do something extraordinary for "only \$19.95 a month!" More often than not, we recognize these as untruths, as the fraudulent attempts of unscrupulous people who want our money (something of value) in exchange for their product (something worthless). Some offers may even have a guarantee of sorts.

There is one thing that sounds to good to be true, but it is true. And it's free! And guaranteed!



The Gospel sounds too good to be true. The message of salvation sounds like an impossibly good deal—Jesus takes us with our sin and unrighteousness (something worthless) and makes us perfect and holy in God's sight (something of value). It is completely backward to our way of thinking. We have another saying, "You don't get something for nothing." Yet that is what the Bible teaches, and our guarantee that the Gospel is true is that God said it and He doesn't lie.

God tells us in His Word that we are sinners. The Apostle Paul quoted Psalm 14 and Psalm 53 when he confirmed the sinfulness of all people in *Romans 3:9-12*: *What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.* Sinners are deserving of death, and can never, never be in the presence of the holy, righteous God. But do not despair; all is not lost—because of an offer that sounds too good to be true.

Jesus Christ, perfect, sinless, holy God, came to earth in the form of a man. How could God come to sinful earth to live in a human body? How could One who had no sin be willing to die in the place of sinners? He humbled Himself, according to *Philippians 2:5-8*: *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.* In His great love, Jesus gave His life for us. He knew that this was the only way for us to spend eternity in heaven; we were doomed if left to our own devices.

He died for all people. But He didn't stay dead; He arose from death to live forever! He gives us eternal life (something of value) in exchange for our mortality (something worthless). He promises that in Him we will never die. *I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. (John 11:25-26)* Our physical body dies, but the spiritual being, the real us, never dies; it has been given eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ. Never die? That sounds too good to be true!

Do we believe and trust what God says in His Word—about Himself, about us, and about what He did for us? Only God can give us faith in His Word, and that faith comes by His Word. It's not something we can work in ourselves or learn on our own. Luther says, "Faith is God's work in us, that changes us and gives new birth from God. (John 1:13) It kills the Old Adam and makes us completely different people. It changes our hearts, our spirits, our thoughts and all our powers. It brings the Holy Spirit with it. Yes, it is a living, creative, active and powerful thing, this faith." We throw ourselves on His mercy, and He saves us. *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:16)*

The Gospel of Christ is powerful enough to save us, every one of us (*Romans 1:16*). Receive and believe the message of the Gospel. Believe it, even though it sounds too good to be true. The guarantee: God never lies (*Titus 1:2*), and His Word will stand forever. *Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you, Who by him do believe in God, that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory; that your faith and hope might be in God. Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently: Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the* —→

## Christian Monthly Vol. LXXVIII—No. 1

Subscription Rate: 1 Year

US: \$12 (South Dakota residents add your local sales tax)

Canada: \$18 (US money order only) Foreign: \$25

### Send articles for publication to:

Lois Matson, Editor  
Email: [cm@apostoliclutheran.org](mailto:cm@apostoliclutheran.org)  
Phone: (360) 904-6951

Postal Mail to:

**CHRISTIAN MONTHLY**  
20211 NE Yacolt Mountain Road  
Yacolt, WA 98675

### Address subscriptions, payments, and Book Concern orders to:

Anders & Clara Sundqvist, Managers  
Email: [books@apostoliclutheran.org](mailto:books@apostoliclutheran.org)  
NEW Phone: 360-601-5117  
**THE BOOK CONCERN**  
PO Box 104  
Hayti, SD 57241

## Apostolic Lutheran Church of America

[www.apostoliclutheran.org](http://www.apostoliclutheran.org)

Western Mission: [western@apostoliclutheran.org](mailto:western@apostoliclutheran.org)

Eastern Mission: [eastern@apostoliclutheran.org](mailto:eastern@apostoliclutheran.org)

Foreign Mission: [foreign@apostoliclutheran.org](mailto:foreign@apostoliclutheran.org)

The *Christian Monthly* (ISSN 0009-5494) is published monthly for \$12 per year by the Apostolic Lutheran Book Concern, 45036 SD Hwy 22, Hayti, South Dakota 57241. Periodicals postage paid at Hayti, South Dakota.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: *Christian Monthly*, PO Box 104, Hayti, SD 57241.

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





**HAVE YOU MOVED?** Please notify the Book Concern of address changes. We must pay return postage on undelivered mail.



*flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. (1 Peter 1:18-25)*

We honor God by believing Him and His Word. When “the soul firmly believes God’s Word, it considers Him to be truthful, good, and righteous. Thereby it pays Him the highest honor it can: It admits that He is true and does not

dispute the fact. Thus it honors His name. This also means that we can do no greater dishonor to God than not to believe Him.” (Luther)

This message of salvation is NOT too good to be true. Because of the Gospel we will spend eternity in heaven with God, the holy, righteous God. We will live forever. Tell your friends! Tell your neighbors! This is an extraordinary offer, it’s free, and it’s guaranteed! ~

**Save the Date! >>>>>**

***For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.***

***1 Corinthians 3:11***



***To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.***

***Isaiah 61:3***

**I**N A NATURAL SENSE, we see a lot of mourning and heaviness in these times. Lots of people we know have lost loved ones, along with all the sicknesses and diseases that many are dealing with. And we know that it is the Spirit of the Lord that comforts and helps and heals. We pray that God would so do. But we want to look at this place this morning in the spiritual sense. Do we mourn our sinfulness, our coldness, and sleepiness that we feel so often on the journey? And in our heaviness, it’s as if we sit in sackcloth and ashes.

Jesus was appointed by the Spirit to give beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. So beautiful! The palsied man takes up his bed and walks to his home, the impotent man rises up walking and leaping and praising God. Blind Bartimaeus received his sight. The troubled eunuch is baptized and goes on his way rejoicing in Jesus, Legion is saved and leaves the tombs clothed and in his right mind. The praying Saul is visited by Ananias and the scales fall from his eyes. The troubled woman taken in adultery and accused before man hears the words of Jesus, “Neither do I condemn thee, go and sin no more.” The weeping Mary, washing Jesus’ feet, and wiping them with the hairs of her head, hears those blessed words, “Thy sins be forgiven thee.” And we also, with our troubled hearts, can hear or have heard that beautiful gospel of forgiveness and life through the precious blood of Jesus Christ. These are the trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, and He is glorified in all things. Praise God! Thank you Jesus!

Paul Coponen; Chassell, Michigan

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