

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.

June 2016



To the Graduate

Pastor Wayne Juntunen; Esko, Minnesota
June 1970 CM

O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him. (Psalm 34:8)

THIS BRIEF LETTER IS FOR those of you who are being graduated from high school or college this year. You are at the point in your life when you shall reap what you have sown or not sown during these past twelve or sixteen years. From the time when you first began your ABC's to the present you have been confronted with many different ideas and philosophies. Some you have agreed with; others you have had to reject. Without a doubt your own faith has been tried. Perhaps you have wondered about some ideas which your instructors or classmates had. Maybe you weren't sure whether you were right or wrong.

The Psalmist gives good counsel which it would be well for each of us to heed — to taste and see that the Lord is good. No matter what we are taught, it must be tested against the Word of God. It may be that some of you have floundered because you were not sure of your faith. James writes that a doubleminded man is unstable in all his ways. Paul writes in his letter to the Ephesians that Christians are to be armed with the shield of faith. You may ask: "How can I be sure that my faith is right?"

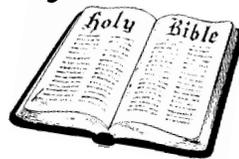
In order for you to determine whether or not your faith is right, there are only two factors which you must consider: 1) its author and 2) its use. For example, any soldier fighting a battle today goes into the battle trusting in his weapon because he believes that it was properly manufactured to stand the stress and strain of battle conditions, and he has been properly trained to use the weapon with utmost efficiency and accuracy.

The same is true of faith. It is in the first place a gift from God. When you came to that point in your life where you realized that you are total sin and in need of the redemptive work of Christ, and by grace you were able to repent and believe that your sins, too, were forgiven, God gave you that faith to believe the gospel promise. Your faith was strong then, for it was the power of God working in you through the Holy Spirit which gave you the courage to tell others what

had happened in your life. But you were still a newborn babe in Christ and the heavenly Father was protecting you from the evil one. But your faith had to be tried in fire in order that you might be saved in the day of battle so the wise Author of faith prepared a training camp for you right in your own home and school.

Now the second factor regarding faith comes into play — your use of it. You can never know whether your faith is a living faith which is scriptural and Christ-centered unless you try it. This is why the Psalmist says: *O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.* You will never know how good a chocolate malt is until you have tasted it. Neither will you know how great God is until you take Him at His Word.

The Psalmist gives good counsel which it would be well for each of us to heed — to taste and see that the Lord is good.



This is why, for all the other books you have read and the knowledge you have gained, the one fundamental book is the Bible. You will never know what faith can do if you do not know what it has already done. When all other wisdom fails, God's Word will abide, and on the basis of that Word you can choose with wisdom the action you should take in any given situation.

My dear young brothers and sisters in faith, do not be alarmed at the training ground into which you are placed. Do not let Satan deceive you into giving up your faith. The fault is not with faith. That has been given by God and it will stand any test. If you are slipping or backsliding, if you feel you have lost faith, cry unto the Lord to reveal what the trouble is. If He shows you some sin, repent of it! If He shows you that you have taken your eyes off of Jesus, there is still mercy and the Lord will not forsake you.

Whatever it is, He will reveal it if you are willing to see it. The one who trusts in the Lord is still the one who is blessed, for he can go forward in the strength of the Almighty. May you be able to say as the Apostle Paul: *...the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20) ~*

God's Love

John Ruotsala, Foreign Mission Administrator
New Ipswich, New Hampshire

Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father. And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it. If ye love me, keep my commandments.

John 14:8-15

PHILIP ASKED JESUS TO SHOW THEM the Father, saying that they will then be satisfied. Jesus said, *Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?* Jesus told them, "If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father, because He is in Me, and I in Him."

How is it with you and me today? Are we thankful for knowing Jesus? Do we see Jesus with the eyes of faith? I pray that we all do.

As a small boy, when I read the Bible I was afraid to read the words of Jesus. I thought in my young mind that Jesus is so holy that surely I cannot live up to His sayings and words. Oh, what foolish thoughts of a young child!

However, when I began to learn how Jesus loved mankind and demonstrated it as He lived on earth, I began to see Jesus as the merciful lover of my soul. I noticed how Jesus treated the man with leprosy and the sinful woman caught in the very act of adultery. I noticed how Jesus picked Peter out of the water when Peter doubted and began to sink, and how Jesus did not forsake Peter even after he denied Him. I noticed how Jesus conversed with the



Address to Saint Philip by James Tissot
Wikimedia Commons

woman at the well, and how He forgave the sins of the man sick of the palsy. This same Jesus loves me and you in the very same way. He will never leave nor forsake us.

What a joy it is now to read of Jesus! What a joy to read all of God's Words, knowing that I am still a poor sinner, but God is a merciful God.

In verses 13 and 14, Jesus tells us that if we ask anything in His name He will do it. What are we to think of this? Many of us have prayed in Jesus' name, sometimes even for years, and what we wanted has not happened. So from our own experience, we admit that this verse must have a much deeper meaning. When we pray in Jesus' name, we are asking for His intercession. We are asking for His merit. We are asking for His council, His wisdom, and His power.

We surely do not pray to God in a demanding way. We lay all of our cares and burdens in front of Jesus, and He will surely do what is best. Even as earthly fathers we do not give our children all they want, because we know certain things are bad for them. This is the same with our heavenly Father. He will only give those things that He knows are good for us and our family, that fit His will, that will be best in the broad

expanse of time and in the generations that follow as well. God can see the entire future, while we can only see today. He knows so much better than we do as to what is good for us! So let us pray humbly, obediently, and with reverence in Jesus' name, asking that God's will be done in each situation.

Verse 15 says, *If ye love me, keep my commandments.*

What are the commandments of Jesus? Are they the ten commandment laws? We know Jesus came not to destroy the law but to fulfill it. When sin entered the world through Adam, all mankind was at once lost and condemned. In order for us to be saved, Jesus came and fulfilled all in our behalf. We are ever so grateful that He willingly did this, and then gave His life for us! Jesus said, *A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.* (John 13:34-35)

Dear reader, do you hate your brother, your neighbor? Are you jealous of a fellow pastor? Do you care for the lost of this world? Let us pay attention to these words of Jesus about love. We are not capable of loving as Jesus does. We fall so short of having perfect love; however, let us turn humbly to our Lord in daily contrition and repentance, and ask Him to help us to love one another.

God's peace!

FAITH IS A LIVING, DARING CONFIDENCE ON God's grace, so sure and certain that a man would stake his life on it a thousand times. This confidence in God's grace and knowledge of it makes men glad and bold and happy in dealing with God and all His creatures; and this is the work of the Holy Ghost in faith. Hence a man is ready and glad, without compulsion, to do good to everyone, to serve everyone, to suffer everything, in love and praise to God, who has shown him this grace; and thus it is impossible to separate works from faith, quite as impossible as to separate heat and light from fire. Beware, therefore, of your own false notions and of the idle talkers, who would be wise enough to make decisions about faith and good works, and yet are the greatest fools. Pray God to work faith in you; else you will remain forever without faith, whatever you think or do.

Martin Luther

The Awakening Call

Excerpts from an article by the late Rueben O. Peterson
May 1992 CM

EVERY ONE OF US HAS EXPERIENCED some type of awakening call during the course of our lifetime. A typical awakening each day is the awakening from sleep. Some hear the call of a parent informing them to get up. Some must be called several times before getting up. Others jump up at the first call and are ready to start the day. Those who have no one to call them must depend on alarm clocks, or perhaps by a telephone call when lodging at an inn. Even this type of call has its problems. People hate to get up, so they will shut the alarm off or press a doze button to delay getting up.

There are, of course, other ways by which we are awakened to a need or situation. Automobiles will catch our attention when the engine sputters and a glance at the fuel gauge reveals that we are out of gas. How about the siren and blinking lights of a traffic patrol reminding us of our speed? What about past due notices in the mail? They get our attention, don't they? We could go on, but I'm sure you get my point. This happens all too often in our secular lives. But what about our spiritual lives? Is there such a thing as an "awakening call" from God? If so, how does it come and what purpose does it serve?

To one who has never heard the story of creation or has refused to give it his attention, it has no meaning. In spite of this, there really is such a call, for His Word says that He doesn't want any to perish (2 Peter 3:9). The purpose of this call is to awaken you to the solemn fact that it is appointed for men once to die but after this the judgment (Hebrews 9:27), and in so doing get your attention. God wants you to know that you are a sinner and that the wages of sin is death.

It is true that everyone must meet with physical death because of the inherited sin of Adam and Eve. To the one who has forgotten the natural man's destiny, it is a grim reminder. Once God has your attention and reveals to you your sinful condition, He also wants you to know that there is hope for your situation. The hope is in His Son, Jesus Christ. *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)* Isn't this Good News to the one who has been awakened from the horrible nightmare of a condemned sinner? The life in store for the sinner who ignores God's call or scoffs at His call is by no means desirable, for it entails eternity with the devil and his angels in the lake of fire. *But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death. (Revelation 21:8)*

The mechanism that trips the alarm of God's awakening call in a man's heart and mind is the WORD OF GOD. He wants to be heard with this message delivered to the Hebrews: *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)* Where and when is one stricken by this Word? This mystery has no ready answer. Many factors govern it. Some have been on the verge

of suicide and have been smitten by the "sword of the spirit," which is the Word of God. One departed preacher told of his mother's convicting words coming to him. Others have heard the witness of a child of God or disciple of Christ. Perhaps some tragedy has taken away a loved one and at the funeral service the message delivered God's convicting sword. God works in mysterious ways.



Whichever way God chooses to awaken you, dear friend, take heed. This is the first step in God's plan of salvation. God is placing the conviction of sin into your heart. Will His Word pierce your hard heart? The two-edged sword wants to break your heart to provide good ground in order that God's Word would find a lodging place. This is a desirable condition for now the "Sower of the seed" (Matthew 13) may be able to plant the seed of hope into your troubled heart. The members of the royal priesthood have received the keys of binding and loosing and the authority to use them (Matthew 16:19). They, too, have heard the Good News, and have had their troubled and evil consciences cleansed with the blood of Christ contained in the Gospel declared unto them. Jesus spoke to His disciples after His resurrection: *Whose soever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them; and whose soever sins ye retain, they are retained* (until such time as they repent). (John 20:23) Jesus instructed His disciples that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all the nations, beginning at Jerusalem (Luke 24:47).

May God, our Heavenly Father, awaken the sinner receiving His call to their need of a Savior in these latter and crucial times. Have you received God's awakening call? If God is calling you, answer the call by seeking the Lord while He can be found. Are you aware of the time on God's clock? The Apostle Paul gave the Romans this warning: *And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof. (Romans 13:11-14)* May He speak to your heart. ~

Jacob Returns to His Father

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children,

Hello to all of you, wherever you may be. I pray the day is going well for you. All is well here. Today I will share a story from the first book of the Bible. You may be familiar with a man named Jacob, whose father was Isaac. Let's look in *Genesis 31*.

JACOB WAS LIVING IN CANAAN with his family. He was around 26 years old when his father Isaac told him, *Thou shalt not take a wife of the daughters of Canaan. Arise, go to Padanaram, to the house of Bethuel thy mother's father (Jacob's grandfather); and take thee a wife from thence of the daughters of Laban thy mother's brother (Jacob's uncle). (Genesis 28:1-2)*

Jacob left his family and headed to Padanaram. Here he met Laban's daughter Rachel, who was coming with her father's sheep to the well. This was just as Jacob had hoped it would be. This was God's plan.

Rachel was very beautiful. She took Jacob to her father's tent and Jacob met his uncle. Laban was happy to meet his brother's son and asked him to stay and work for him. Laban asked Jacob what wage he would like to earn. Jacob said that he wanted to marry Laban's daughter Rachel, and he would serve Laban for 7 years to be able to marry Rachel.

In that land it was customary for the elder daughter to be married first. The elder daughter was named Leah. Laban had something in mind, but he would wait for Jacob to fulfill his 7 years.

The 7 years went by quickly and Jacob came to ask for Rachel's hand. Laban prepared a wedding feast, and much merriment went on. Laban had Leah put on the wedding garment and a covering over her face, and he brought her to Jacob. Jacob was of course thinking it was his beloved Rachel, and LO, here it was Leah! Jacob was angry with Laban and asked why he did this. Laban told him it was the custom for the elder to marry first.

What was Jacob to do? He took Leah for a wife, but had to wait a week more to have Rachel, and had to work 7 more years to be able to keep her. Jacob fulfilled Laban's wishes, and he was about 40 years old now.

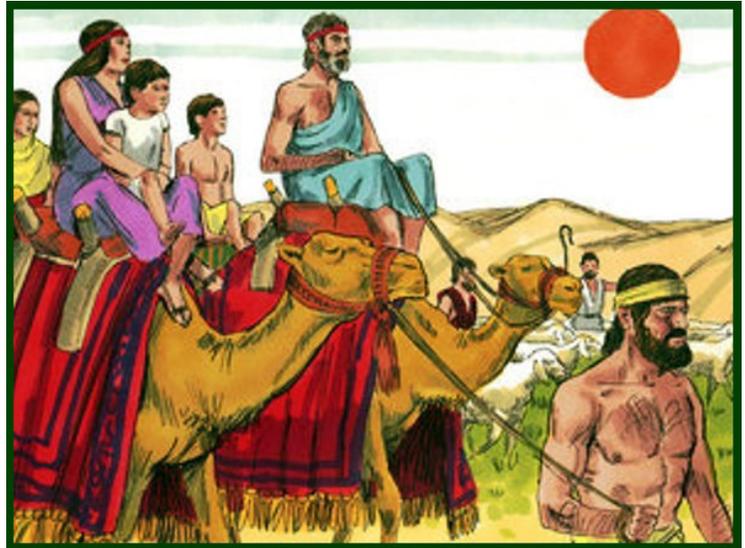
Jacob asked Laban for permission to take his wives, children and cattle back to his father Isaac's people in Canaan, so he could start his own life. Laban wondered why he would want to leave when he had everything here he could want. Jacob said he wanted to be independent and care for his own family. Ever since Jacob came to live in Laban's house, the flocks had grown abundantly as well as the crops. God was blessing Laban through Jacob.

Laban's sons thought Jacob was taking cattle that weren't his and they told their father. Laban was angry and Jacob knew it was time to leave. The Lord told Jacob, *Return unto the land of thy fathers, and to thy kindred; and I will be with thee. (Genesis 31:3)*

Jacob told his wives to get ready to leave as their father was angry and it was time to go. No goodbyes were said, and Jacob with all his house, cattle, and goods, began their journey to Canaan.

It was 3 days before Laban discovered they were gone. Laban was angry and he and his sons followed, and seven days later they found them. Laban told Jacob how unhappy he was about this. He said, "Is it too much to let a father say goodbye to his children?" Jacob told Laban that he was afraid that Laban would not let him go.

Laban and Jacob were angry. After some words (read verses 36-43), Laban wanted to make a covenant with Jacob. Jacob set up a large stone for a pillar and his men gathered more stones to make a heap around it. Laban called it



Jacob Returns to His Father, Sweet Publishing/FreeBibleimages.org

Jegarsahadutha (witness heap, in Aramaic), but Jacob called it *Galeed* (witness heap, in Hebrew). The pillar stone Laban called *Mizpah*, meaning that the Lord would watch between him and Jacob when they were separated from each other. Laban earnestly told Jacob not to take other wives, and to take good care of his daughters, and God would be the witness of this. Laban said the pillar and heap of stones would also be for a sign that neither he nor Jacob would ever harm the other.

Jacob offered a burnt offering on the heap of stones, and they ate bread and stayed there for the night. Early in the morning Laban said proper goodbyes to his daughters and grandchildren, and he and Jacob left each other in peace.

Things ended on a peaceful note but I know there was sadness in many hearts at having to part, not knowing if they would ever see each other again. They were going to a new land that only Jacob knew anything about. I'm sure much had changed in the 20 years Jacob had been gone.

Jacob was happy to be able to see his father again and show him all that God had blessed him with. God was with Jacob and would always be. Jacob had put his trust in God.

I pray that all who claim to be children of God would truly put their trust in Him, learn of Him and serve Him. I pray that He will strengthen all His children so that we can press on. God calls us to believe in His Son Jesus – and one day to eternal life and happiness in heaven.

God's peace to you.

The Faith of the Leper

Martin Luther

When he (Jesus) 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.

Matthew 8:1-3

WE OBSERVE AT FIRST GLANCE the compassionate and friendly heart of our Lord and Savior; it needs but one prayer and He is ready to help where all earthly power is of no avail. This evinces His kindness and grace toward the poor, the distressed and the suffering; else He would have done as we are prone to do when out of humor and displeased, turning away with unkind words those who ask a favor. Not so Christ. Scarcely has the leper made known his request when Christ touches him and declares His willingness to grant his prayer. He immediately cleanses him of his disease.

Such kindness must prompt us in all our troubles to come unto Him for help, and to place our entire confidence in Him. But more than this: it ought to prompt us to exercise similar kindness and love toward our fellow men, with the sole intention to do the will of God and to promote the welfare of our neighbor. Christ seeks neither honor nor reward in rendering assistance; He has but this in view, that man may be relieved from woe and suffering, that the glory of God may be enhanced and His will accomplished.

We do not serve God if we are kind to others merely because we expect a similar return from them. Such a spirit would be selfish. If we wish to serve God and our brother aright, we must not look to our own interest, but only to the existing want. We must bear in mind that it is God's will and command to assist our fellow man in his time of need, though we are aware that we gain not even a farthing by it, or perhaps naught but ingratitude; as Christ Himself experienced when He cleansed ten lepers, nine of whom forgot to thank Him, and only one returned with a grateful heart. Christ foresaw this base ingratitude, and yet He helps them when they ask, committing the rest to God in heaven...



Healing of the Leper, Niels Larsen Stevns
Wikimedia Commons

The faith which the leper manifests is also beautiful beyond measure. According to the law he was forbidden to appear among men, nor dared he to speak with others; yet he ventured to come unto Christ without fear, falling upon his knees with the prayer: "Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean." In this he expresses his conviction that Christ will be merciful beyond all doubt, and also that He possesses the ability to help where all human power fails. His confidence was not shaken by the fact that Christ passed by in humble array, destitute of all outward glory and splendor. Another praiseworthy trait he manifests: he is not impudent with his petition, but leaves the decision entirely to Christ. If He should deem it best not to fulfill the request, if it should be the will of God, and for his own benefit, that the disease should remain upon him, he is ready to bear the pain and to suffer the agony still longer.

This is not only true faith, but also the proper way to pray. He who believes aright will also pray aright, while he who lacks sure faith will not know how to pray. Prayer must rest upon faith; the heart must be convinced that He is ready to help us from all our misery.

Especially must our faith be firm in those matters that pertain to the glory of God and to our soul's salvation: in the forgiveness of sins, the redemption from the power of the devil and of death, the promise that God will pour out His Holy Spirit into our hearts, and preserve us in His Word, so that no tribulation can overwhelm us, and that our faith and love may increase every day, etc. Such truths pertain especially to the glory of God and our salvation, wherefore

the heart, when it prays, must never doubt that God is willing to bestow upon us these favors; for of these we stand in need, and He has vouchsafed them unto us in His Word... The example of the leper is worthy of imitation. We must learn to pray with an unwavering heart, trusting in the willingness of God to alleviate our misery in the manner which is best for us. This we must firmly believe, while we at the same time humbly exclaim: "Lord, Thou knowest the proper time and place, in Thee we confide, do unto us according to Thy good will." The leper does not doubt that Christ can help him, nor does he question His willingness, else he would not have importuned Him as he did; but at the same time he admits that it is not for him to say when and how the remedy should be applied. Such a faith and submission is well pleasing to Christ, wherefore He helps the poor man in the self-same hour and place, yea, beyond all expectation. ~

WITHOUT CHRIST WE WOULD NOT know God; we could neither call on God nor come to God. Moreover, without Christ we would not know other Christians around us; nor could we approach them. The way to them is blocked by one's own ego. Christ opened up the way to God and to one another. Now Christians can live with each other in peace; they can love and serve one another; they can become one. But they can continue to do so only through Jesus Christ. Only in Jesus Christ are we one; only through Him are we bound together. He remains the one and only mediator throughout eternity.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

How Should We Pray?

Jill Carattini

Submitted by Alvar Helmes; Battle Ground, Washington

HUCKLEBERRY FINN FIRST HEARD ABOUT prayer from Miss Watson, who told him that prayer was something you did everyday and that you'd get what you asked for. So he tried three or four times praying for hooks to complete his fishing line, but when he still didn't get what he asked for decided that "No, there ain't nothing in it."

Prayer is a curious activity. It is one we seem, at times, regardless of belief or creed, almost inclined naturally toward, while other times, like Huck, almost as naturally conclude we either can't make it work or conclude there ain't nothing in it.

One day Jesus was praying in a certain place, and when he finished, one of his disciples asked him to teach them how to pray. Jesus said to them, "When you pray, say: 'Father, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come. Give us each day our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive everyone indebted to us. And do not bring us to the time of trial.'"(1)

The Lord's Prayer, which Christians around the world still hold and practice today, comes out of this context—that is, out of a plea for help with prayer and out of the praying of Jesus himself. It is not just the good advice Jesus had to offer about praying; it is his praying. In fact, giving his followers this prayer, Jesus, like John, was following a common rabbinic pattern. When a rabbi taught a prayer, he would use it to teach his disciples the most distinctive, concise, essential elements of his own theological teachings. Thus, disciples would learn to pray as their teacher prayed, and from then on, when a disciple's prayer was heard, it would sound like that of his teacher's prayers, bearing his own mark and posture before God.

As this suggests, when Christians pray the Lord's Prayer today, it is simultaneously an offering of the voice of Jesus, a declaration of belonging to him, and a pronouncement of the lessons he wanted his followers most to know and to hold near.

Somewhat different than fishing hooks, the prayer for daily bread is foundational; a literal need. News of world food shortages, urban food deserts, the prevalence of malnourishment, and volatile food prices remind us with repetition that cries for basic provision are appropriate and necessary.

Fifteenth century theologian Martin Luther spoke of the prayer for daily bread as the plea for "everything included in the necessities and nourishment for our bodies such as food, drink, clothing, shoes, house, farm, fields, livestock, money, property, an upright spouse, upright children, upright members of the household, upright and faithful rulers, good government, good weather, peace, health, decency, honor, good friends, faithful neighbors, and the like."(2) In other words, bread is not merely the private concern of those who need something to eat. It is far broader than this, including far more than bread, and far more than isolated individuals before God. Our daily bread is something friends, neighbors, communities, economic situations, and governments affect collectively. Christ's prayer for daily bread, then, is a prayer for food and clothing, but also for good neighbors, good rulers, and good conscience as we face need and want and hope in unison together.

As such, a prayer for daily bread can be a reminder that we do not live in a vacuum before God or the world. Rather, we live in communities where we are responsible for one another. So if we pray for daily bread, like Jesus, we pray for

God's care and provision. But subsequently, we are praying against the things in life that prevent God's provisions for our neighbors as much as for ourselves. This may well be corruption or systems of social injustice; it may also be our own hardened hearts, fearful dispositions, or a self-consumed and consuming living. When our neighbor prays for daily bread, our neighbor prays for our help, in the hands of the one who provides all things.

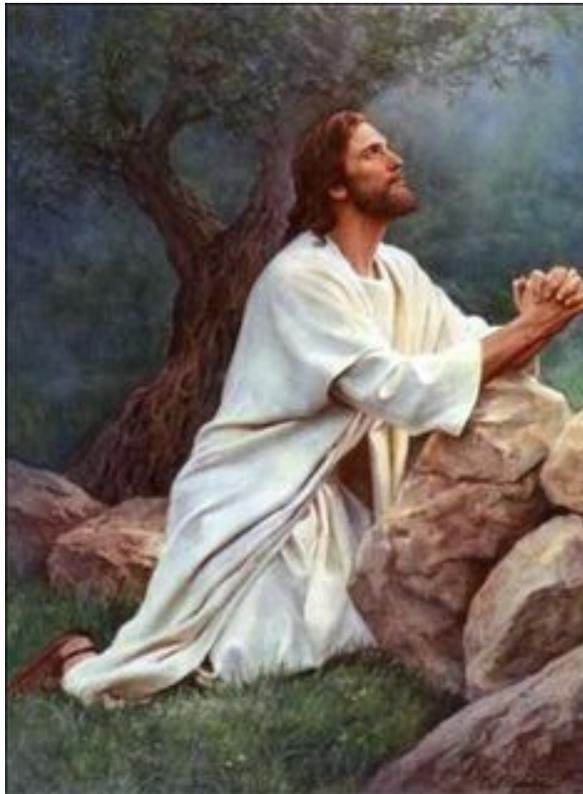
To pray the words Jesus invited us to pray means we pray out of the same paradox in which Jesus prayed himself. He was both the Son who knew he would need the Father's provision to get through the days before him and the Son who poured out his life for the crowds and individuals that needed him. Praying for daily bread, we are simultaneously the wealthy who can respond in gratitude for all that God has given us and the impoverished who cry out for the daily bread we need and the God who sustains all things. We are both the rich and the poor, the trespasser and the one trespassed against, united to our neighbors in ways we are constantly invited to imagine. We join ancient ancestors who prayed for physical

nourishment in the desert, and with them know that we are still hungry. In difficult days, in plentiful days, the invitation of Christian prayer is the invitation of the Spirit to join in a united cry—"Give us this day our daily bread"—placed before the bread of life who comes to give life to the world. ~

(1) Luke 11:1-4.

(2) Martin Luther, "The Small Catechism," The Book of Concord, 357.

"How Should We Pray?" by Jill Carattini, *A Slice of Infinity*, originally printed 17 July 2015 (www.rzim.org). Used by permission of Ravi Zacharias International Ministries.



Abba! Father!

Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington

When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

Galatians 4:4-7

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.

Romans 8:14-16

FATHER. THE WORD EVOKES STRONG emotions, either positive or negative, depending on a person's relationship with their father. Some loving, caring fathers nurture their children to adulthood and beyond. Some fathers are stern taskmasters who don't show affection easily. Some children have suffered abuse and mistreatment at the hand of their father. Others have a distant connection to their father, or no connection at all.

Our relationship to our natural father, and our perception of him, can influence our thoughts of our heavenly Father. How we perceive our father (as a loving, gracious, good man—or conversely as harsh, unmerciful, and wicked) can impact how we view our Father in heaven. Those who have no relationship at all with their father may feel that God the Father is distant or absent, too. No father on earth can compare to the heavenly one, but we have no other basis for comparison.

Unlike fallen human fathers, both “good” and “bad” ones, our heavenly Father is perfect. He does all things well.



He never makes a mistake or mistreats His children. Let's look briefly at the relationship Christians have with our Father in heaven.

God is truly our Father. God sent His Son to earth to accomplish our adoption. We were not naturally-born children of God, but a great adoption process secured our place in God's family. *When the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.* At the proper time, Christ was born of the Virgin Mary, born subject to the Law, to save us who also were subject to God's holy Law. Jesus the Son lived and died to redeem us from the clutches of Satan. God has adopted us into His family by faith in the blood of His dear Son, which was shed for the sin of the world.

We are truly His children. Jesus taught His disciples to pray saying, “Our Father which art in heaven...” Luther's Catechism explains this introduction to the Lord's Prayer: “God would hereby tenderly invite us to believe that He is truly our Father, and that we are truly His children, so that we may ask of Him with all cheerfulness and confidence as dear children ask of their father.” Jesus wants us to address the Father in heaven as “our Father.” As small children ask their father to meet their needs, so we ought to ask our heavenly Father for the things we need. We should share our deepest joys and sorrows with our Father. Though He knows them already, His desire is that we would bring our concerns to Him, because He cares for us and He takes care of us. He will hear us, and He will receive our thanks and praise for His goodness and mercy.

The Holy Spirit within us responds to the Father.

Because we are His children, God has sent His Spirit into our hearts to abide there, revealing Jesus to us, opening the Word to our hearts, and guiding us into all truth. Because we are children of God, the Spirit of the Son knows the Father intimately and responds *Abba! Father!* “Abba” is an intimate term for Father in the Aramaic language. Our Father wants to know us, and He wants us to know Him. He desires an intimate relationship with His children. We do not really know how to respond to our Father's goodness and mercy to us, His failing children, but the Holy Spirit knows and responds. The Spirit helps in our weakness; when we don't know how to pray, the Spirit groans wordlessly within us to the Father. And He hears. He knows. He understands.

Thank You, Father, that we are children and heirs through Christ alone. ~

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Meeting Notice

The 108th Annual Meeting of the Apostolic Lutheran Church of America will be hosted by the Eastside Apostolic Lutheran Church of Greer, SC and held on June 23rd at the Spartanburg Expo & Event Center, 6655 Pottery Road, Spartanburg, SC 29303. In accordance with the Bylaws, the Annual Reports will be read; the members of the Central Board, the Eastern Mission Board, the Western Mission Board, and the Southern Mission Board will be elected. All matters will be considered and acted upon. Congregations are requested to send their delegates to this meeting.

The schedule of meetings and services are as follows:

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| Tuesday, June 21 | Ministers meeting 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM at the Eastside Apostolic Lutheran Church, Greer, SC |
| Wednesday, June 22 | National Sunday School Meeting 1:00 PM to 3:00 PM and Eastern Mission Meeting 3:00 PM at the Eastside Apostolic Lutheran Church, Greer, SC |
| | Opening service 7:00pm at the Eastside Apostolic Lutheran Church, Greer, SC |
| Thursday, June 23 | Annual Business Meeting 9:30 AM to 5:00 PM at Spartanburg Expo & Event Center, Spartanburg, SC |
| | The Foreign Mission Business Meeting will immediately follow the Annual Business Meeting. |

Devotional services will be held in the morning, afternoon, and evening, beginning on Thursday, June 23rd through Sunday June 26th at the Spartanburg Expo & Event Center, Spartanburg, SC. Ministers, members, and the general public are invited to participate in these services. The meetings will be held in conjunction with the devotional services.

*On behalf of the Central Board of the Apostolic Lutheran Church of America,
Gary Bertram, Chairman
David Myllymaki, Secretary*



After these things Jesus shewed himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; and on this wise shewed he himself. There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was

now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he girt his fisher's coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea. And the other disciples came in a little ship; (for they were not far from land, but as it were two hundred cubits,) dragging the net with fishes. As soon then as they were come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid thereon, and bread. Jesus saith unto them, Bring of the fish which ye have now caught. Simon Peter went up, and drew the net to land full of great fishes, an hundred and fifty and three: and for all there were so many, yet was not the net broken. Jesus saith unto them, Come and dine. And none of the disciples durst ask him, Who art thou? knowing that it was the Lord. Jesus then cometh, and taketh bread, and giveth them, and fish likewise. This is now the third time that Jesus shewed himself to his disciples, after that he was risen from the dead. (John 21:1-14)

As we sit here before this incredible story with all these details, all I can say is, with the Apostle John, "It's the Lord." This is all about Jesus, not a hundred and fifty-three fish, not seven men, two not identified, not Peter's coat, or whether he was naked, or half naked, or whatever, it just isn't about that. It's about the Lord. The One who died is sitting on the shore. The One who rose from the dead is standing there saying, "Come and dine." Maybe we ought to pay attention to Him. Maybe we ought to sit like these apostles and not say a word, just take it all in. We have been so unsuccessful in everything we do. We have toiled through the night and have borne no fruit. Then He comes in the darkness of the night, in the dawning of a new day. He rises from the dead and calls to us to come and dine. This is the third time that He had showed Himself to His disciples after He had been risen from the dead. This man is the Great Event. This man Jesus is what all theology is. All theology is Christology. It would always—it must always—bring us to the Great Event of Jesus Christ crucified for you, or it isn't theology at all. You don't know the God you are worshipping, you don't know the God you are studying, if it doesn't bring you to the Great Event. And when it does, then we can sit with these disciples and we don't have to ask Him who He is. We know who He is.

Pastor Ron Holmgren; Hockinson, Washington