

# 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.

November 2016

## As Heaven Is High Above the Earth

C.O. Rosenius

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*He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.*

Psalm 103:10

**T**HE WORDS ARE SO FULL OF GRACE AND COMFORT, and so clear, that we can never rejoice enough at them, never praise and thank enough for them, never take them deeply enough to the heart! First they are the whole of the contents of the Gospel, that God does not deal with us after our sins, but after the merits of His Son. The Lord has once dealt with one person “after our sins and rewarded Him according to our iniquities.” *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin... (2 Corinthians 5:21) He ...Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses. (Matthew 8:17) ...the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:6) He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities... (Isaiah 53:5) God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them... (2 Corinthians 5:19)*

Here is the reason why He does not deal with us after our sins, why very great sinners have received grace and those who expend much self-effort in saintliness have been condemned. But it is true that the Lord wants to deal with certain people after their sins. It is said in *Romans 4:4: Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt, i.e., they will strive after merit because they want to have it so, and thus have not truly kissed the Son. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. (Romans 4:5)*

In short: that God does not deal with us after our sins is the whole of the contents of the Gospel. And nevertheless, the tainted thought dwells indelibly in all men, even in the faithful, that God will still be more gracious to us when we are more pious, and less gracious, when we have sinned. But if it were so, then verily righteousness would be of works, and then Christ would have died in vain. *And if by grace, then is it no more of works: otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it be of works, then is it no more grace: otherwise work is no more work. (Romans 11:6)*

But furthermore see how high this reckoned righteousness is. Oh, the wonderful words now following in our psalm: *For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. (Psalm 103:11)* May every Christian impress these glorious words deeply on his heart—this great

picture that the Spirit of the Lord Himself has used, and they will make a heavenly paradise in his heart.

Think “as heaven is high above the earth”—why! no human eye can measure that! And still here it says, as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is His mercy toward us. Now the heaven is so high above the earth, that all the unevennesses here on the earth do not cause the least little unevenness in the heaven. To be sure to us down here, it is a great distance between the bottom of the valley and the highest tops of the mountains. Thus to us down here, there are great unevennesses on earth. But no mountain top reaches up to the heaven to make an unevenness there.



So it also is with sin and grace. To us our sins often are like high mountains. But the grace of God is as high above them all as the heaven is high above the earth, so that all our sins will not cause even the least unevenness in grace. And think: if sin could cause unevenness in grace, so that we would have grace from God when we have done some better works, and would not have the same grace when some shortcomings appear, then verily righteousness would be of works. Then everything would be false that the Gospel teaches about reconciliation and grace.

Feel here how our reason and feeling get dizzy at this thought! And when Christ says of the weak disciples: “Now ye are clean and clean every whit,” and when Paul says: “If it is by grace, then is it no more of works,” and when David says in this verse that grace is as high above us as the heaven is high above the earth—they all seem to be fools and liars! So deeply the taint dwells in us, the taint that grace must depend on works. But the one that will be able to stand steadfast in such a fight of faith must impress the words of the Holy Spirit deeply on his heart, and in earnest pray to God for that faith. ~

# An Exhortation to a Christian Life

Pastor Mark Matson  
Pasco, Washington

*And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: 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.*

1 Peter 1:17-21

Martin Luther writes:

“Thus Peter says: You have through faith attained even to this, that ye are the children of God and He is your Father, and ye have obtained an incorruptible inheritance in heaven, as has been said in verse 4; so nothing more now remains, except for the veil to be taken away, and that to be uncovered which is now concealed; for which ye are still to wait until ye behold it. Though ye have now arrived at that state in which ye may joyfully call God your Father, yet He is so righteous that He will reward every man according to his works, and respect not persons. Wherefore thou art not to imagine, although thou hast already that great name that thou art called a Christian or a child of God, that He will therefore continue thine if thou livest without fear, and thinkest it is enough if thou dost glory in that name. The world indeed judges according to the person, since it does not punish all alike, and respects those who are friendly, rich, reputable, learned, wise, and powerful; but God regards nothing of this kind; it is all alike to Him, be the person as great as he may. Thus in Egypt He struck the son of King Pharaoh dead, as well as the son of the poor miller. (Exodus 12:29)

“Therefore the Apostle would have us expect such judgment from God, and stand in fear, so that we do not glory in our title that we are Christians, and rely upon that, as though He would for this reason be more lenient to us than to others. For in this the Jews were formerly deceived, who boasted that they were Abraham's seed and God's people. Scripture makes no difference in respect to the flesh, but in respect to the spirit. It is true that Christ was to be born of Abraham's seed and that a holy people should spring from him, but it does not therefore follow that all who are born of Abraham are the children of God. He also promised that the Gentiles should be saved, but He has not said that He would save all the Gentiles.

“But here now a question arises: When we say that God saves us alone by faith, without regard to works, why does Peter say He judges not according to the person, but according to works? Answer: What we have taught as to faith alone justifying before God, is true beyond doubt, since it is so clear from Scripture it cannot be denied. That God judges according to the works, as the Apostle here says, is also true; but we must certainly hold therefore, that where no faith is, there can be no good works; and on the other hand, there is no faith where there are no good works. Consequently join together faith and good works, since it is in both that the sum of the whole Christian life consists. As you now live, so will it be with you, for according to your life God will judge you. Therefore although God judges us according to our works, still it remains true that works are only the fruits of faith, by which we perceive when there is belief or unbelief; hence God will judge and convict you according to your works whether you have or have not believed. So it is that one cannot well convict and judge a liar, except from his words. Yet it is evident that he is not made a liar by his word, but became a liar before he spoke the lie, for the lie must come from the heart into the mouth. Therefore, understand this passage thus, in the plainest way: that works are fruits and signs of faith, and that God judges men according to such fruits which must certainly follow, so that it shall be openly seen whether there is faith or unbelief in the heart. God will not judge according to this, whether you are called a Christian, or have been baptized, but will ask you: ‘Art thou a Christian?’ then tell where are the fruits by which you can evidence your faith.”

*For, brethren, ye have been called unto liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another. (Galatians 5:13)*

Jesus says: *For every tree is known by his own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh. (Luke 6:44-45)*

Oh, Father of mercies, God of all grace, we ask this harvest season with Thanksgiving soon upon us, that You would cause our hearts to overflow with Your love to each other and to our neighbors, that fruits of love would witness to all people in the world in which we live, that all the world would see we are Your disciples because we love one another. Grant us daily lives of faith that bring glory to Your great name, in Jesus' name. Amen.



**H**OW VERY PRECIOUS IS THE BLOOD OF CHRIST! We are redeemed with it, washed in it, sanctified by it, forgiven through it. It brings us peace, satisfies God's demands, opens heaven's door, closes hell's door, and reconciles us to God. It is a source of life, the central theme, the ransom price of our souls. It is the river of life, the thread of hope, the source of joy. It is the perfect price, completely sufficient, nothing more is needed... nothing less. Thank you, Jesus!

Paul Coponen

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



# A Scene in Glory—Revelation 7:9-17

John Ruotsala, Foreign Mission Administrator  
New Ipswich, New Hampshire

**N**OVEMBER 1ST IS "All Saints Day." It is a celebration that the Church has largely forgotten, at least here in America. Anyone who

has been grafted into Christ through the power of the Gospel is both a sinner and a saint. We do not become "saints" by anything we do. We are called saints because of God's gift of the righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ imparted to us by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ who has been *...made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption (1 Corinthians 1:30).*

The Apostle John saw *...a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. (Revelation 7:9-10)*

Finally, the numberless throng from all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues stand before the throne and before the Lamb. Finally, all the angels who have been ministering to the saints throughout the world also stand around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures. Finally, those who have come out of the great tribulation, whose robes are washed and made white in the blood of the Lamb, are before the throne of God. Finally, He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. Finally, we shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike us, nor any heat; "For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed [us], and shall lead [us] unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from [our] eyes."

Throughout the annals of human history tremendous celebrations have been held when wars have ceased, kings have been crowned, and presidents have been inaugurated, but nothing ever has been or ever will compare to the celebration that is described here. Prior to this celebration, we see the opening of the sixth seal (Revelation 6:12-17) that describes a judgment for the ungodly.

God is a God of love. And His love is so infinite, majestic, powerful, and eternal—that He gave all that He could. He couldn't give any more. Because God is love, He delays judgment (Revelation 7:1-3) so the saints may be sealed. This sealing is accomplished when the Gospel is being preached

and sins are forgiven and the Holy Spirit comes to dwell within a person and his name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life, until the whole number comes in. This day of judgment will be a day of terror and horror and fear for the ungodly, but for the saints it will be a day of deliverance, a day of praise. We are sealed with the Spirit, so we no longer walk in our own ways with a darkened mind of unbelief. We no longer function according to our own will, but we follow in humble submission to our Lord and Savior, the King of kings.

The number indicates all of God's people. Through the Lord Jesus Christ, we are the new Israel. Therefore, the sealing of every tribe is significant because first of all there were equal numbers of every tribe. When you read the Old Testament, some of the tracks in the sand made by some of these tribes were anything but beautiful. They left a lot of ugly marks in their life. Their history was filled with a lot of ugly behavior.

Nonetheless, every single tribe has the same number of sealed saints. What is God saying? He is saying there are no favorites with Him. There are no particular people that are privileged. Every single man, woman and child in this world has the same opportunity to be sealed by the Spirit of God. No matter what our sin, our heritage, what we've been doing in life, it can all be washed away in the blood of Jesus Christ. The same grace that was offered to the tribes of Judah and the Levites is the same grace that is offered to all the other tribes.

In other words, every one of us is a recipient of God's marvelous grace. No one has to feel or think that you've committed too great a sin, your thoughts are too dirty, your life is too messed up. The blood of Jesus washes all of our sins away. There is not a one of them that cannot be cleansed away in the blood of the Lamb.

This number is 12 squared times 10 cubed signifying the Old and New Testament saints together. Thinking of a cube, we can visualize the length, and breadth, and depth of something. This portrays all the people of every generation, of every tribe, the length and breadth of human history. Verses 9-17 are a fulfillment of 11:15, describing that great multitude no one could count. It is world-wide and numberless, hence: "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ, and He will reign for ever and ever." Praise God, we can reign with Him! ~



*...I have loved thee with an everlasting love: therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.*

**Jeremiah 31:3**

**G**OD'S DAILY MERCY IS my life's greatest wonder. How remarkable that He does not weary of me and reject me! I even become weary and disappointed with myself. What can be the reason for His continued mercy toward me?

The answer is: "I have loved you with an everlasting love." His love of me is everlasting—boundless—as is everything in heaven. Long before I saw the light of day—from eternity—He has loved me. And He has promised to love me long after the world has ceased to exist—through the endless future of eternity. As fervently as God loves His own Son, so He loves me. As high as the heavens are above the earth, as unfathomable as the depths of God's mercy, so is His love for me, a poor sinner. *Therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.* O Thou marvelous God!

*Fredrik Wisloff*

# Give Thanks unto God

Gwen Wilson  
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children, from sea to shining sea,

Hello to each of you. I do pray you are well.

You may be wondering why the last children's page was not submitted by me, but I was busy helping my daughter who lives a few hours from us. She had just had her second baby boy. My husband and I were able to go two days after his arrival, and after a couple days my husband returned home and I stayed with her for a week. It was a special time.

While I thought on what to write about, it seemed fitting to touch on the giving of thanks and to share Bible verses that speak of that. We soon will celebrate our calendar day called Thanksgiving.

*Psalm 100:4: Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations.*

*Colossians 3:15: And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.*

*Psalm 30:12: To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.*

*Colossians 4:2: Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving.*

*Romans 10:10: For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

*Psalm 106:1: Praise ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

*1 Thessalonians 5:21: Prove all things; hold fast that which is good.*

These next verses begin to speak of Jesus.

*2 Corinthians 9:15: Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. (That gift was Jesus His Son).*

*1 Thessalonians 5:18: In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*

*Ephesians 5:20: Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

*1 Chronicles 23:30: And to stand every morning to thank and praise the LORD, and likewise at even.*

*Psalm 97:12: Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous; and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.*

Psalm 136 speaks many times of giving thanks unto God for His mercy endures forever. For how long? **Forever.**

In Luke 22, Jesus took the cup of wine and broke the bread and **gave thanks** and gave to His disciples at the Last Supper which He shared with them before He died.

There are many more verses on the giving of thanks, but this gives you an idea of how much we are to give thanks to God. We can and should thank Him first for creating the world and for His Son Jesus who came into this world as a baby and then died, shedding His blood for us, that we might have life forever with Him if we believe. We should thank Him for all He gives us for our life: food, shelter, family, people who love and care for us, for watching over the peoples of the world and being so patient and loving when so many are not living for Him and still hate Him. We can thank Him for continuing to love us who do love Him but still sin and fall short so often. His mercy endures (lasts) forever toward His children, which you are. Keep serving Him who loves you so unconditionally and pray that that you will have strength unto the end. We are so blessed to be able to confess with our lips that we believe in Jesus. **O give thanks unto God!**

God's peace to you.



**Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. Ye are my friends...**

**John 15:13-14**

**O**H, HOW GREAT A LOVE the Father has for His creation! How great a love He has for you and me! He has expressed this love to us by sending His dear Son in whom He is well pleased. When our dearest Jesus laid down His life for us, His sheep, our heavenly Father was well pleased in Him, not because Jesus did it for Himself, but because He did it for us.

Pastor Gene Mixon  
Seattle, Washington

# Faith Alone Makes Us Good

Martin Luther

**T**HE FOUNDATION MUST BE MAINTAINED without wavering, that faith without any works, without any merit, reconciles man to God and makes him good, as Paul says to the *Romans 3:21-22*: *But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe...* Paul at another place, *Romans 4:9*, says: *...faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness; so also with us. Again, 5:1: Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Again, 10:10: For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.* These, and many more similar passages, we must firmly hold and trust in them immovably, so that to faith alone without any assistance of works, is attributed the forgiveness of sins and our justification.

Take for an illustration the parable of Christ in *Matthew 7:17*: *Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.* Here you see that the fruit does not make the tree good, but without any fruit and before any fruit the tree must be first good, or made good, before it can bear good fruit.

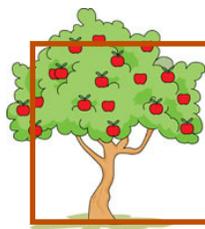
As He also says, *Matthew 12:33-34*: *Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit. O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things?* Thus it is the naked truth, that

a man must be good without good works, and before he does any good works. And it is clear how impossible it is that a man should become good by works, when he is not good before he does the good works. For Christ stands firm when He says: "How can ye, being evil, speak good things?" And hence follows: How can ye, being evil, do good things?

Therefore the powerful conclusion follows: there must be something far greater and more precious than all good works, by which a man becomes pious and good, before he does good; just as he must first be in bodily health before he can labor and do hard work. This great and precious something is the noble Word of God, which offers us in the Gospel the grace of God in Christ. He who hears and believes this thereby becomes good and righteous. Wherefore it is called the Word of life, a Word of grace, a Word of forgiveness. But he who neither hears nor believes it, can in no way become good. For St. Peter says in the *Acts 15:9*: *And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.* For as the Word is, so will the heart be which believes and cleaves firmly to it. The Word is a living, righteous, truthful, pure and good Word, so also the heart which cleaves to it, must be living, just, truthful, pure and good.

What now shall we say of those passages which so strongly insist on good works, as when the Lord says: "Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness?" And in *Matthew 25:42*: *For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink;* and many other similar passages which sound altogether as though we had to become good by works.

We answer thus: There are some who hear and read the Gospel and what is said by faith, and immediately conclude they have formed a correct notion of what faith is. They do not think that faith is anything else than something which is altogether in their own power to have or not to have, as any other natural human work. Hence, when in their hearts they begin to think and say: "Verily, the doctrine is right, and I believe it is true," then they immediately think faith is present. But as soon as they see and feel in themselves and others that no change has taken place, and that the works do not follow and they remain as before in their old ways, then they conclude that faith is not sufficient, that they must have something more and greater than faith. Behold, how they then seize the opportunity, and cry and say: "Oh, faith alone does not do it." Why? Oh, because there are so many who believe, and are no better than before, and have not changed their minds at all. Such people are those whom Jude in his epistle calls dreamers, 5:8, who deceive themselves with their own dreams. For what are such thoughts of theirs which they call faith, but a dream, a dark shadow of faith, which they themselves have created in their own thoughts, by their own



***For just as natural as it is for the tree to produce fruit, so natural is it for faith to produce good works.***

strength without the grace of God? They become worse than they were before, for it happens with them as the Lord says in *Matthew 9:17*: *Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out.* That is, they hear God's Word and do not lay hold of it; therefore they burst and become worse.

But true faith, of which we speak, cannot be manufactured by our own thoughts, for it is solely a work of God in us, without any assistance on our part. As Paul says to the *Romans, 5:15*, it is God's gift and grace, obtained by one man, Christ. Therefore, faith is something very powerful, active, restless, effective, which at once renews a person and again regenerates him, and leads him altogether into a new manner and character of life, so that it is impossible not to do good without ceasing. For just as natural as it is for the tree to produce fruit, so natural is it for faith to produce good works. And just as it is quite unnecessary to command the tree to bear fruit, so there is no command given to the believer, as Paul says, nor is urging necessary for him to do good, for he does it of himself, freely and unconstrained; just as he of himself without command sleeps, eats, drinks, puts on his clothes, hears, speaks, goes and comes.

Whoever has not this faith talks but vainly about faith and works, and does not himself know what he says or whither it tends. For he has not received it; he juggles with lies and applies the Scriptures where they speak of faith and works to his own dreams and false thoughts, which is purely a human work. Whereas the Scriptures attribute both faith and good works not to ourselves, but to God alone. ~

# Lift Up Your Heads

Pastor Dennis Hannu  
Spruce Grove, Minnesota

**T**HE SEASON OF ADVENT reminds us of the first coming of our Lord and also points us to the expectation of His second coming. The word “advent” comes from the Latin word *adventus* which means “coming” or “visit.” Another term commonly used for the second coming of Christ is *parousia*, a Greek word meaning “presence” or “arrival.” The Parousia of Jesus Christ refers to the time when Christ will return to this earth in all of His power and splendor. He will then judge the world, and those who are believers will be united with Him for all of eternity.

One of the texts for the season of Advent is **Luke 21:25-38**: *And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. And in the day time he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives. And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, for to hear him.*

This portion of the 21st chapter of Luke refers to the second coming of Christ. The cosmos (world or universe) is rocked by disorder and chaos. People upon seeing this become fearful and their hearts fail them because of the uncertainty of what is happening. In the midst of all of this, Jesus says to His followers: “Look up and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth near.” The consummation of the eschaton is about to appear. Our Redeemer, our Savior, our God, and our King is about to appear. Don’t be afraid; rather lift up your heads and when you do you will see Jesus!

This is the best way for us to understand eschatology. The study or understanding of end times is found in the One

who has brought the end with His death and resurrection. Jesus in His finished work has already accomplished the eschaton or the end. It is not now available by sight but rather by faith, and so with the faithful we simply wait for its consummation. We now live in the end times or the last age. **Hebrews 9:24-28**: *For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.* We, then, as partakers of the kingdom of God wait with patience for the Parousia of our King. We do this standing tall, with our heads held high in full expectation of His arrival.

We are to have the right perspective of the end and not simply engage in our fleshly activities with no awareness of the coming of Christ, so that the end comes upon us like a trap. The end is coming for all whether it’s the end of the world or the end of one’s own life. The encouragement is to always be watchful and in constant communication with the One whose return is imminent. Jesus is the One who has restored all things and now we being fully aware of that are to “lift up our heads.” As we celebrate this coming Advent season, let us always be mindful of His accomplishments for us in His first Advent and let us rejoice in full expectation of His second Advent.



**“Our Hope and Expectation, O Jesus, now appear;  
Arise, Thou Sun so longed for, O’er this benighted sphere!  
With hearts and hands uplifted, We plead, O Lord, to see  
The day of earth’s redemption, That brings us unto Thee!”**

**(Laurentius Laurenti)  
God’s peace.**



**T**HE CELEBRATION OF ADVENT is possible only to those who are troubled in soul, who know themselves to be poor and imperfect, and who look forward to something greater to come. For these, it is enough to wait in humble fear until the Holy One himself comes down to us, God in the child in the manger. God comes. The Lord Jesus comes. Christmas comes. Christians rejoice!

Dietrich Bonhoeffer

# God's Not a Racist

Lois Matson  
Yacolt, Washington

**T**HE APOSTLE JOHN WAS GIVEN a magnificent vision, a peek into the throne room of heaven. He saw the One seated on the throne, surrounded by twenty-four elders clothed in white and wearing golden crowns. He saw the crystal sea of glass. He heard the four living creatures calling continually, *Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come.* (Revelation 4:8) He saw that when the living creatures gave glory, honor and thanks to the Ever-Living One, the elders fell in worship and cast their crowns before His throne, saying, *Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.* (Revelation 4:11)

The Apostle saw, in the right hand of Him who sat on the throne, a Book, sealed with seven seals. When no one was found worthy to open the Book, John wept bitterly. One of the elders told him, *Weep not: behold, the Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof.* (Revelation 5:5) John looked, and there! In the middle of the throne and the living creatures and the elders, stood a Lamb as it had been slain! The Ever-Living Lamb took the Book from the right hand of Him who was seated on the throne, and the four living creatures and elders fell before the Lamb, each holding a harp and golden vials of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. They sang a new song: *Thou art worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation; And hast made us unto our God kings and priests: and we shall reign on the earth.* (Revelation 5:9-10)

John heard the voice of angels around the throne—thousands, tens of thousands, millions—calling: *Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. And the four beasts said, Amen. And the four and twenty elders fell down and worshipped him that liveth for ever and ever.* (Revelation 5:12-14)

Six of the Book's seals were opened, bringing destruction and calamity upon the earth, and when the seventh seal was opened, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour. Incense was offered in a golden censer at the altar, and seven angels prepared to sound their trumpets.



*After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; And cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb. And all the angels stood round about the throne, and about the elders and the four beasts, and fell before the throne on their faces, and worshipped God, saying, Amen: Blessing, and glory, and wisdom, and thanksgiving, and honour, and power, and might, be unto our God for ever and ever. Amen.*

*And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them.* (Revelation 7:9-15)

**O**ur glorious God is not partial to any race, or nationality, or family line. He has redeemed His own from every nation, tribe, people and language, and heaven will be filled with believers of every race. Some day we will all speak the same language, and the color of our skin won't matter. Thanks be to God. *Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever. Amen.*

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*Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the LORD: This gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter. I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD. God is the LORD, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar. Thou art my God, and I will praise thee: thou art my God, I will exalt thee. O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

*Psalm 118:19-29*

**I**N THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER, we celebrate the holiday of Thanksgiving. In many homes, it is a tradition for each family member to mention one thing for which they are thankful. The Holy Scriptures teach us that we are to live our lives in gratitude for all that God has done for us. In his first letter to the Thessalonians, the Apostle Paul tells us: ***In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. (1 Thessalonians 5:18)*** This means that we are to be thankful in good times and in bad. Remarkably, when President Abraham Lincoln issued the Thanksgiving Proclamation of 1863, he did so while the nation was still in the throes of the Civil War. Lincoln encouraged the nation to give thanks, even though the nation's future was still uncertain.

Because we are sinners, it is difficult for us to be thankful, especially during times of trouble. Even a presidential proclamation cannot force us to be truly grateful. However, when God calls us to be thankful, He does so by revealing His great love for us in the Gospel. It is that revelation that kindles faith in our hearts and moves us to thankfulness and praise. In Psalm 118, we hear a phrase that is heard over and over again in the Old Testament: ***O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.*** We give thanks to God, because He is good and because He is merciful to sinners.

In that same psalm, the writer expresses how God has shown us His mercy. ***I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.*** We praise God, because He has heard our cries for help and has given us salvation in His Son, Jesus Christ. Even though mankind rejected Him, Jesus suffered, bled and died on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. It is the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ that is our hope, our cornerstone and the foundation of our faith. The hymn-writer says it so well, "When all around my soul gives way, He then is all my hope and stay." So ***"Give thanks to the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endureth forever!"***

*Pastor Chuck Bylkas; South Range, Michigan*

**W**E HAVE BEEN THE RECIPIENTS of the choicest bounties of heaven. We have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious Hand which preserved us in peace, and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us! It behooves us then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.

*President Abraham Lincoln, March 30, 1863*

**O**ETERNAL AND EVERLASTING GOD... Increase my faith in the sweet promises of the Gospel; give me repentance from dead works; pardon my wanderings, and direct my thoughts unto Thyself, the God of my salvation; teach me how to live in Thy fear, labor in Thy service, and ever to run in the ways of Thy commandments; make me always watchful over my heart, that neither the terrors of conscience, the loathing of holy duties, the love of sin, nor an unwillingness to depart this life, may cast me into a spiritual slumber, but daily frame me more and more into the likeness of Thy son Jesus Christ, that living in Thy fear, and dying in Thy favor, I may in Thy appointed time attain the resurrection of the just unto eternal life...

*President George Washington, Prayer Journal*