

# 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.

September 2021

## Let Angel Minds Inquire No More

Pastor Chuck Bylkas  
South Range, Michigan

*Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls. Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven; which things the angels desire to look into.*



*The Crucifixion of Jesus Christ by Vasili Golinsky*

1 Peter 1:1-12

**W**HAT AN ASTONISHING STATEMENT! The Gospel is so wonderful that even the angels desire to see it! The Apostle Peter speaks these words to a

people who are in great need of encouragement. Peter says that their faith in the Lord Jesus is not in vain and that God will see them through this season of heaviness. Even though trials and temptations afflict the people, Peter comforts them with the news that they have a living hope, by the Resurrection of Jesus Christ according to the abundant mercy of God. By faith, they now have an inheritance in heaven that cannot be corrupted or defiled and will not fade away.

We are recipients of this promise as well. Though we, too, journey through this fallen world with its seasons of heaviness, God is always with us, and we stand on His promises that never fail. Forgiveness of sins, Life and salvation are ours through faith in the death and

Resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is the message that the patriarchs and prophets hoped for and that the angels of God longed to see. This is the amazing love that God has now revealed in His Son Jesus. As the hymn write Charles Wesley says, "Let angel minds inquire no more."

*'Tis myst'ry all: th' Immortal dies:  
Who can explore His strange design?  
In vain the firstborn seraph tries  
To sound the depths of love divine.  
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,  
Let angel minds inquire no more.*

May God be praised for the living hope we have in Jesus Christ that never fades

away. Thank you for your continuing support of the seminary through your prayers, gifts and words of encouragement. Please pray for us as we prepare for the fall semester beginning in September, and by all means consider taking a class, either in person or remotely by live video. God bless you all!

*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... (1 Peter 1:18-20)*

Yours in Christ.

# The Love of God

C.O. Rosenius

*But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*

*Romans 5:8*

**T**HE APOSTLE SAYS THAT GOD proves His love, and expresses His love. That is, God declares it to all the world. He “makes it so great, so certain and evident, that it is not possible that a man can consider this proof of love rightly and yet doubt it” (Luther). Even if you would otherwise be full of doubts as to the love of God, and full of uneasiness of conscience and fear of the wrath of God over sin, this proof should give you a notion of the heart of God. At this proof you should begin to realize and understand that in spite of His holy zeal against sin, God must nevertheless have in His heart an infinite love and mercy toward sinners. We would never have been capable of thinking such things if God Himself had not revealed it by this great proof. Thereby God shows His love to us.

When wanting to explain the love of His Father to us, Christ only states this proof: *For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son.*” (John 3:16) So also John says that this is the real proof: *Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us.* (1 John 3:16) And again: *In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.* (1 John 4:9) Otherwise we would never have been able to think anything like that about the heart of God. Therefore it is also rightly said that God has expressed, “commanded,” His own love thus. It is only God’s own matchless love that has proved itself this way. When we love somebody, it must be a friend or at least a good, lovable person. If on the contrary we see something detestable in a human being or he is our enemy and a backbiter, then we are not in the habit of loving him, but of hating him. It is like that with our love according to nature. God has a most intense hatred towards sin. And furthermore He sees us, all of us, full of sin. And still He has such a love for the sinner that He gave His beloved Son to death, rather than see the death of the sinner.

And when we consider rightly what the apostle has repeated so frequently, namely that God did so much for the ungodly, for sinners, for enemies, then surely we must ask with great wonder: ‘Oh, gracious God, from where have You such love? Is it true, that You love so? And what has moved You to such a love?’

An old servant of God has learned much about the kingdom of heaven. He confesses that for a long time he had pondered over the matter of what could be the real, tender reason and ground for God’s love towards sinners. And then he admits that at long last he had come to this conclusion in the matter: “God loved, therefore He loved.” The reason was expressly in God’s own love. He had such a heart that loved, therefore He loved. God has Himself explained His love by the picture of a mother’s love.

You see a mother day after day carrying and nursing her sick child with an indefatigable love. In the night time, when other people sleep, you see her watch equally tirelessly at its bedside. Or you see her carry it in her arms. And it is a child who has not yet done anything else than exhaust its mother

by all its need for help, care and nursing. But if you ask her why she still loves it that way, she will not be able to give any other reason for it than that she feels love in her heart. She will be astonished that your question and say: ‘Why, it is my child!’ That she loves her child thus is a law of nature to the mother’s heart. There is no need for her to oblige herself to it. And this does not even illustrate a pious mother, but only a mother.



***Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.***

***Isaiah 49:15***

And this nature of the mother’s heart is so mighty that even if the child becomes a child of sorrow, commits crimes, falls into the hands of the justice of society and must be punished, a natural mother cannot think of it with indifference. No, she will suffer most bitterly for it. Such is the nature of a mother’s heart. Remember it is also that way with God’s heart! Remember, God has an equally deep love for us as a mother for her child! That Lord God Himself says that He has an even deeper love. The Lord says: *Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee.* (Isaiah 49:15) And hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us. (1 John 3:16)

But hereby also we have touched one more thing that can explain the love of God for the human being. It is the love to the child. The Lord suggests this when He speaks about Himself and asks: *Can a woman forget her sucking child?* No matter how deep we have fallen, and what distorted children we are, no matter how far we have gone astray in sin and ungodliness, God still cannot forget that the human being is His child. He says that He has a mother’s love for us. After all the Lord God has created us to be His children and heirs. And when the devil seduced us, God still did not want to let him keep the prey. No, He still wanted to do something to save the child. To some extent this can explain the otherwise inconceivable love of God, that Christ died for us, what we were yet sinners. ~

# The Importunate Widow

Paul Kretzmann

*And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint; Saying, There was in a city a judge, which feared not God, neither regarded man: And there was a widow in that city; and she came unto him, saying, Avenge me of mine adversary. And he would not for a while: but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor regard man; Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.*

Luke 18:1-5

**T**HE REVELATIONS OF JESUS CONCERNING the last days of the world and His coming to Judgment would naturally fill the disciples with consternation and apprehension. It was evident that, with such afflictions and desolations coming upon the land, they would have need of much patience and continual fortitude, but also of the constant protection of God. To be instant and importunate in prayer, therefore, would be a necessity of the last days for such as intended to heed the warnings of the Master. The story was to teach the disciples the obligation always to pray, to be persistent and persevering in prayer, in spite of all temptation to unbelief, notwithstanding all delay on the part of God. Not to grow weary, not to be overwhelmed by fatigue, that is the secret of the conquering prayer. For the point of the story is not that God does not delay in answering prayer. This fact is only too well known from the experience of many Christians. But the cause, reason, or motive for delay in the case of God is entirely different from that of the judge. The judge represents God only in so far as the Lord often appears to a sorely tried heart as a hard and unreasonable Master, otherwise there is no similarity.

A judge was in a certain city. According to Deuteronomy 16:18, the Jews were to have, in all the gates of the city, judges, whose work consisted in hearing cases and pronouncing judgment. They were supposed to administer justice without respect of persons (Exodus. 23:6-9, Leviticus 19:15, Matthew 5:21-22). But the judge here spoken of feared not God, he paid no attention to the calls of justice; and he had no respect for man, he was unmoved even by such complaints as required immediate adjustment. An utterly unprincipled man, controlled by shameless selfishness.

Now there was a widow in the same city that had been defrauded, that had suffered an injustice, and she naturally brought her complaint to the official whose business it was to

adjudicate matters of that kind. Her cry was: Vindicate me from my adversary, see to it that I get justice, provide a square deal for me. She continued to come again and again, and she became more insistent as time went by. For a considerable time he stood it, for he had no inclination to exert himself, since he was living for his own ease only. But finally he thought the matter out within himself. Though he had no fear of God in his heart and no respect for men in his mind, yet his selfishness thought very highly of his own comfort and peace of mind. To escape the bother which she was making for him, to spare himself disagreeable hours, since she was rendering life miserable for him, he wanted to secure justice for her, lest she at last, in the height of

bitterness and rage, literally put her fists into his eyes, punish him, in the language of the prize-ring (Luther). The condition of his heart was not changed in a single particle, but he disliked being bored to distraction.

*And the Lord said, Hear what the unjust judge saith. And shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth? (Luke 18:6-8)*

The moral of the story: The Lord Himself, in pointing out the lesson, brings out the contrast strongly: on the one hand, the judge of unrighteousness, whose ideas of justice were not only hazy, but who knew no justice, whose character was the essence of selfishness; on the other, the just and loving God, whose aim is not only to do justice, but to show mercy to all His works; the one yielding grudgingly and merely to escape being bored; the other finding His delight in showing mercy and in yielding to the entreaties of His own. Truly, God will provide vindication for His elect, for those that believe on Him through the power of His means of grace. But He wants them to continue in prayer, in calling to Him, day and night. He may be leisurely in coming to the help of His saints, He may delay help for a while; but when His hour comes succor which He renders comes suddenly. It is a speedy and glorious deliverance which they experience. The question of God's hearing prayer is therefore beyond doubt, but the certainty of faith in the case of the people earth is not so absolute. With all the temptations of the last days surrounding them, it be a very serious question, from the standpoint of men, whether faith in Jesus Christ as Messiah of the world will still be found at that time. It will surely be a matter of God's power and mercy to keep His elect in the faith until the end. ~



**T**he Word of God can provide for all of our needs. It is God's means to awaken us to an awareness of the importance of spiritual things. It is also by the power of the Word that we are brought from spiritual darkness to the light of His kingdom, where we receive the assurance of salvation and the attributes of His Spirit. The attributes are righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. We are thankful that we derive all of these benefits from the Word.

Alvin Holmgren

# Twelve Baskets of Leftovers

Gwen Wilson  
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children,

God's peace to all of you, and I pray that His peace will always be in your hearts.

We recently heard a sermon on Jesus feeding five thousand people. I'm sure you know the very account. This shows once again how much Jesus loves us and has promised to take care of us ALWAYS. He is the same wonderful Lord and friend, yesterday, today and forever. You can find this story in St. John 6:1-15.

**J**ESUS HAD BEEN SPENDING MUCH time with people, teaching, preaching, and healing the lame and the sick. Jesus then wanted to leave the people and go away somewhere to be alone, to pray to His Father God, so He went in a ship to a desert place.

When the people heard He was going, they followed Him on foot out of the cities. The crowd who followed Jesus wanted to hear Him and bring those who needed healing. Many of these people loved Jesus and believed in Him, but many wanted an earthly king and Jesus in their mind's eye was just the person they wanted. They saw the miracles and wanted Jesus more for that, than to follow Him for who He was.

When Jesus got to this desert place, He found a great multitude of people waiting for Him. Did Jesus walk the other way? No, the Bible says He had compassion (love) toward them and He healed their sick (Matthew 14:14).

Jesus did not think of taking time for Himself, and again spent all day with the people, being their teacher, friend and physician (doctor). The day was getting late, and it was nearing the evening meal hour, so the disciples told Jesus to send the people away to buy food in the villages.

*But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat. (Matthew 14:16)*

The disciple Philip was the first to speak up after Jesus said that, and he said the money they had with them would only allow a little bite of bread. He was thinking that certainly that would not fill them.

Disciple Andrew somehow in that massive group of people noticed a boy there who had some food with him. It appears that this boy may have come alone and his mother had prepared him a lunch. Andrew says to Jesus, *There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? (John 6:9)*

Jesus had all the people sit on the grass, the number of men being about five thousand! That's a huge crowd. I've never in my life been in a crowd that large.

He took the bread and fishes and, looking up to heaven, He gave God thanks, and brake, and gave the loaves to His disciples. The disciples walked around giving everyone bread and fish that just kept coming and coming. And they did all eat, and each had as much as they wanted, and were filled.

Jesus then told the disciples something I'm sure was a huge surprise to them. *Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. (John 6:12)* I think those disciples figured their

task of handing out the food was finished. NOW they must pick up the pieces? They took up the pieces that remained, **TWELVE BASKETS FULL** of the barley bread. Do you think those disciples and all the people were amazed at this? Yes, they were. I am, too, but I know all things are possible with God. You believe that too, I'm sure.

How is it that we can believe that? It is the Holy Spirit living inside of us. You see these people who were with Jesus that day, along with His disciples, did not have the Holy Spirit

leading them yet, as the Spirit wasn't given until Jesus had gone back to heaven. These people were just learning who Jesus was and were blessed to have Him right there in the flesh.

When Jesus told the disciples to gather the bits left over that nothing be lost, He was using this to teach about Himself. This bread was, as it were, Jesus' words of truth and He wanted all of this truth to be handled carefully, not just thrown

aside to be stepped on. This was Jesus showing His disciples and the people God's power that comes through Him. He wanted the people to learn who He really was and not to just keep following Him because He could do great things.

After the people had been fed, they were convinced in their minds that this is who they wanted for a king to rule over them, someone who would feed and heal them. What more could they ask for? Also, He was very kind. Jesus saw their thoughts and felt that at any moment they would physically grab Him and try to make Him their king. Jesus needed get away from this crowd, and He told his disciples to get into a ship and go to the other side of the water, and He would come to them later. Jesus sent all the people on their way and went up into a mountain alone to pray.

Jesus did a great miracle, and I'm always amazed at how much bread was left over, and that no one had to leave hungry. That is how it is for us as Christians: if we will follow Jesus and hear and believe His Word, we will never have to leave His presence hungry either.

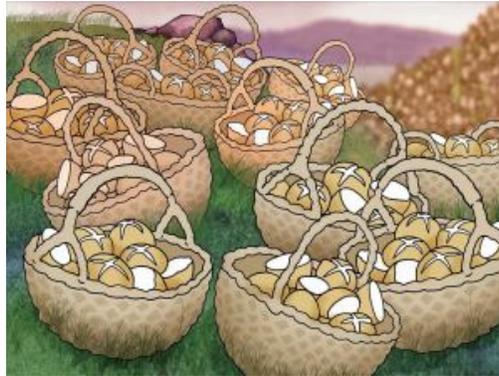
Our story ended with Jesus getting some time alone, and I was glad that He did because He had been so busy with the people. I'm sure he was getting tired, but more than just being tired, Jesus needed to spend time talking to God His Father and ask Him for more strength and instruction.

We need to remember to have quiet time with God and Jesus, too, and we can do that when we say our evening prayers or praying at mealtime, or any time of the day that we take a little time in our thoughts to think of Jesus.

Again we see the wonderfulness of our friend Jesus and how much He loves His people. It will always be this way, and you can always believe that He will be there for you. Just talk and pray to Him, as He waiting to hear. God and Jesus never sleep and are ever ready to help in time of need.

God bless each and every one of you, and may His face shine on you and give you peace.

*Love to you all.*



# Faith and Good Works

Martin Luther

**A**LTHOUGH, AS I HAVE SAID, a man is abundantly and sufficiently justified by faith inwardly, in his spirit, and so has all that he needs, except insofar as this faith and these riches must grow from day to day even to the future life; yet he remains in this mortal life on earth. In this life he must control his own body and have dealings with men. Here the works begin; here a man cannot enjoy leisure; here he must indeed take care to discipline his body by fastings, watchings, labors, and other reasonable discipline and to subject it to the Spirit so that it will obey and conform to the inner man and faith and not revolt against faith and hinder the inner man, as it is the nature of the body to do if it is not held in check. The inner man, who by faith is created in the image of God, is both joyful and happy because of Christ in whom so many benefits are conferred upon him; and therefore it is his one occupation to serve God joyfully and without thought of gain, in love that is not constrained.

While he is doing this, behold, he meets a contrary will in his own flesh which strives to serve the world and seeks its own advantage. This the spirit of faith cannot tolerate, but with joyful zeal it attempts to put the body under control and hold it in check, as Paul says in Romans 7:22–23, “For I delight in the law of God, in my inmost self, but I see in my members another law at war with the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin,” and in another place, “But I pommel my body and subdue it, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified” 1 Corinthians 9:27, and in Galatians 5:24, “And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.”

In doing these works, however, we must not think that a man is justified before God by them, for faith, which alone is righteousness before God, cannot endure that erroneous opinion. We must, however, realize that these works reduce the body to subjection and purify it of its evil lusts, and our whole purpose is to be directed only toward the driving out of lusts. Since by faith the soul is cleansed and made to love God, it desires that all things, and especially its own body, shall be purified so that all things may join with it in loving and praising God. Hence a man cannot be idle, for the need of his body drives him and he is compelled to do many good works to reduce it to subjection. Nevertheless the works themselves do not justify him before God, but he does the works out of spontaneous love in obedience to God and considers nothing except the approval of God, whom he would most scrupulously obey in all things.

In this way everyone will easily be able to learn for himself the limit and discretion, as they say, of his bodily castigations, for he will fast, watch, and labor as much as he finds sufficient to repress the lasciviousness and lust of his body. But those who presume to be justified by works do not regard the mortifying of the lusts, but only the works

themselves, and think that if only they have done as many and as great works as are possible, they have done well and have become righteous. At times they even addle their brains and destroy, or at least render useless, their natural strength with their works. This is the height of folly and utter ignorance of Christian life and faith, that a man should seek to be justified and saved by works and without faith.

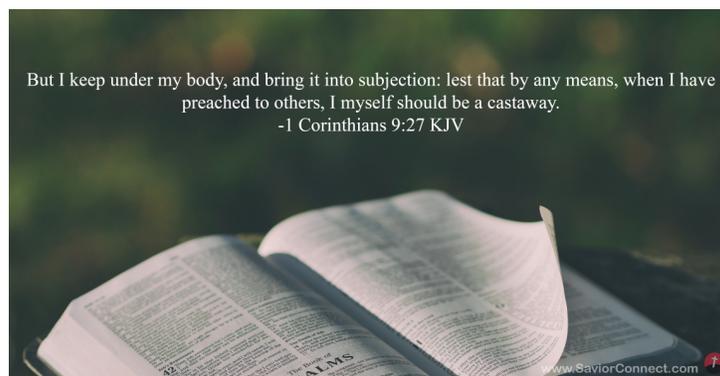
In order to make that which we have said more easily understood, we shall explain by analogies. We should think of the works of a Christian who is justified and saved by faith because of the pure and free mercy of God, just as we would think of the works which Adam and Eve did in Paradise, and all their children would have done if they had not sinned. We read in Genesis 2:15 that “the Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to till it and keep it.” Now Adam was created righteous and upright and without sin by God so that he had no need of being justified and made upright through his tilling and keeping the garden; but, that he might not be idle, the Lord gave him a task to do, to cultivate and protect the garden. This task would truly have been the freest of works, done only to please God and not to obtain righteousness, which Adam already had in full measure and which would have been the birthright of us all.

The works of a believer are like this. Through his faith he has been restored to Paradise and created anew, has no need of works that he may become or be righteous; but that he may not be idle and may provide for and keep his body, he must do such works freely only to please God. Since, however, we are not wholly recreated, and our faith and love are not yet perfect, these are to be increased, not by external works, however, but of themselves.

A second example: A bishop, when he consecrates a church, confirms children, or performs some other duty belonging to his office, is not made a bishop by these works. Indeed, if he had not first been made a bishop, none of these works would be valid. They would be foolish, childish, and farcical. So the Christian who is consecrated by his faith does

good works, but the works do not make him holier or more Christian, for that is the work of faith alone. And if a man were not first a believer and a Christian, all his works would amount to nothing and would be truly wicked and damnable sins. The following statements are therefore true: “Good works do not make a good man, but a good man does

good works; evil works do not make a wicked man, but a wicked man does evil works.” Consequently it is always necessary that the substance or person himself be good before there can be any good works, and that good works follow and proceed from the good person, as Christ also says, “A good tree cannot bear evil fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit” Matthew 7:18. It is clear that the fruits do not bear the tree and that the tree does not grow on the fruits,



also that, on the contrary, the trees bear the fruits and the fruits grow on the trees. As it is necessary, therefore, that the trees exist before their fruits and the fruits do not make trees either good or bad, but rather as the trees are, so are the fruits they bear; so a man must first be good or wicked before he does a good or wicked work, and his works do not make him good or wicked, but he himself makes his works either good or wicked.

Illustrations of the same truth can be seen in all trades. A good or a bad house does not make a good or a bad builder; but a good or a bad builder makes a good or a bad house. And in general, the work never makes the workman like itself, but the workman makes the work like himself. So it is with the works of man. As the man is, whether believer or unbeliever, so also is his work—good if it was done in faith, wicked if it

was done in unbelief. But the converse is not true, that the work makes the man either a believer or an unbeliever. As works do not make a man a believer, so also they do not make him righteous. But as faith makes a man a believer and righteous, so faith does good works. Since, then, works justify no one, and a man must be righteous before he does a good work, it is very evident that it is faith alone which, because of the pure mercy of God through Christ and in His Word, worthily and sufficiently justifies and saves the person. A Christian has no need of any work or law in order to be saved since through faith he is free from every law and does everything out of pure liberty and freely. He seeks neither benefit nor salvation since he already abounds in all things and is saved through the grace of God because in his faith he now seeks only to please God. ~

## There Is Joy over One Sinner Who Repents

Pastor Nicholas Kandoll  
New York Mills, Minnesota

*Then drew near unto him all the publicans and sinners for to hear him. And the Pharisees and scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them. And he spake this parable unto them, saying, What man of you, having an hundred sheep, if he lose one of them, doth not leave the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and go after that which is lost, until he find it? And when he hath found it, he layeth it on his shoulders, rejoicing. And when he cometh home, he calleth together his friends and neighbours, saying unto them, Rejoice with me; for I have found my sheep which was lost. I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance. Either what woman having ten pieces of silver, if she lose one piece, doth not light a candle, and sweep the house, and seek diligently till she find it? And when she hath found it, she calleth her friends and her neighbours together, saying, Rejoice with me; for I have found the piece which I had lost. Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.*

Luke 15:1-10



**This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them.**

Luke 15:2

**J**ESUS TELLS THESE PARABLES IN response to the Pharisees murmuring about Him spending time with sinners and eating with them. As Christians, we have to realize that when they use the term “sinner,” they mean it a little differently than we usually use it. Christians are used to hearing about sinners, but it’s usually in the sense that “we are all sinners.” We recognize that God sees our sins, and that we are all on an even playing field in terms of how much of a sinner we are. That being said, we can understand their outrage if we look at it more like “known, willful, sinners” or people with bad morals and reputations. Think how we tend to look at drug dealers, rapists, and murderers. Jesus isn’t just spending time with people who have original sin, He’s hanging out with the dregs of society.

With that in mind we can see that we are more similar to the Pharisees than we would care to admit. What would we do if a pastor started inviting drug addicts, gang members or other unsavory characters to his home for dinner? We would all have a similar response, wouldn't we? We would question their motives and activities and suspect that they could be up to no good. This attitude is what these parables address.

God loves all His children, even the lowest in our society. Even the vilest offender. Martin Luther once said:

The gist of the Gospel is this: No man is so high or may rise so high that he need not fear becoming the lowliest. Conversely no one has fallen, or may fall, so deeply, as to preclude all hope of becoming the highest. For all merits are abolished here, and God’s goodness alone is glorified. By saying ‘The first shall be last’ Christ takes all presumption away from you and forbids you to exalt yourself above any prostitute, even though you were Abraham, David, Peter, or Paul. But by saying ‘The last shall be first’ He guards you against all despair and forbids you to cast yourself under the feet of any saint, even though you were Pilate, Herod, Sodom, and Gomorrah.

Jesus came to seek and save the lost. The Good Shepherd leaves the ninety-nine to find the lost one. The woman turns her house upside down to find the coin. Jesus receives sinners, and heaven rejoices when a sinner repents. This is good news for us, because even our sin of prejudice is covered by our Jesus. “The vilest offender who truly believes that moment from Jesus a pardon receives. Praise the Lord!” To God be the glory!

God’s peace.

# Help of the Helpless

Lois Matson  
Yacolt, Washington

O Lord, thou art my God; I will exalt thee, I will praise thy name; for thou hast done wonderful things; thy counsels of old are faithfulness and truth. For thou hast made of a city a heap; of a defenced city a ruin: a palace of strangers to be no city; it shall never be built. Therefore shall the strong people glorify thee, the city of the terrible nations shall fear thee. **For thou hast been a strength to the poor, a strength to the needy in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall...** And in this mountain shall the Lord of hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wines on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wines on the lees well refined. And he will destroy in this mountain the face of the covering cast over all people, and the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of his people shall he take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it. **And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.**

Isaiah 25:1-4, 6-9

But thou, Israel, art my servant, Jacob whom I have chosen, the seed of Abraham my friend. Thou whom I have taken from the ends of the earth, and called thee from the chief men thereof, and said unto thee, Thou art my servant; I have chosen thee, and not cast thee away. **Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness... For I the Lord thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not; I will help thee. Fear not, thou worm Jacob, and ye men of Israel; I will help thee, saith the Lord, and thy redeemer, the Holy One of Israel.**

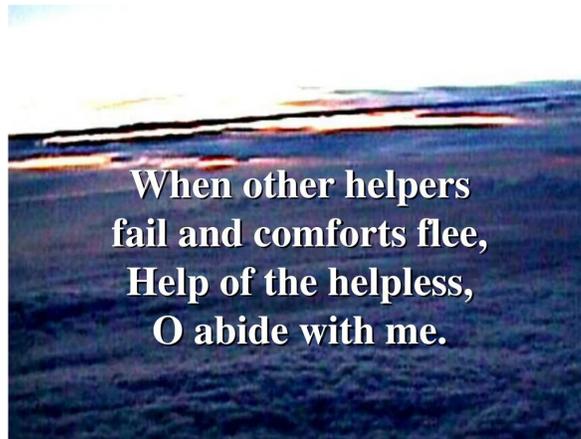
Isaiah 41:8-10, 13-14

**W**E HELPLESS ONES HAVE A Helper in the Lord our God. He is a strength to the poor and needy, a refuge from the storms of life, and a shadow from the blast furnace of Satan's terrible accusations. We, who are the new Israel, the offspring of Abraham (the friend of God), have no reason to fear or be dismayed. He is our God and He will strengthen us in faith unto our end, and help us helpless ones. He will uphold us with the right hand of His righteousness. He holds our right hand and says to us, "Fear not! I will help you, helpless one!" The Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel says, "You worm, Jacob, I will help you!"

It is unpopular and uncomfortable to be helpless. We sinners seem to have an innate desire to try to help ourselves, to offer some good work to God. We will try of our own strength to better ourselves, to be a little less like a worm and more like a man. But hear what was foretold about our Lord Jesus Christ, who quoted the prophet Isaiah in His cry from the cross:

**My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent. But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded. But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. (Psalm 22:1-8)**

This whole psalm refers to the Christ. He delighted to do the Father's will, and for His obedience, the Holy One of Israel was forsaken of His Father. For you. For me. He was a worm, and no man, despised of all people. He was laughed to scorn and mocked. They said, "let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him."



And the Holy One of Israel was delivered. He was delivered unto death, into the grave. But He didn't remain there. He who was Beloved of the Father rose from death. For you. For me. He is the Help of the Helpless. Thanks be to God.

**"Abide with me; fast falls the eventide;  
The darkness deepens; Lord with me abide.  
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,  
Help of the helpless, O abide with me."**

~Henry Lyte

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Send articles for publication to:  
Lois Matson, Editor  
Email: cm@apostoliclutheran.org  
Phone: (360) 904-6951  
Postal Mail to:  
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Address subscriptions, payments,  
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Anders & Clara Sundqvist, Managers  
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**THE BOOK CONCERN**  
PO Box 104  
Hayti, SD 57241

**Apostolic Lutheran Church of America**

www.apostoliclutheran.org

Western Mission: western@apostoliclutheran.org

Eastern Mission: eastern@apostoliclutheran.org

Foreign Mission: foreign@apostoliclutheran.org

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## The Sign of the Loaves

T. R. Halvorson  
steadfastlutherans.org

Excerpt, <https://steadfastlutherans.org/2021/07/understanding-loaves-and-signs/>

**C**ONSIDER THE WORD, “sign.” It is the root of the words signal, signify, and significance. A sign is something that conveys a signal, a message. A sign shows significance. A sign signifies something. It is the root of the words signet and signature. A signet is a seal used to mark or endorse a document. A signet is used with a signature to attest the identity of a person who writes something.

The loaves were a sign. The loaves conveyed a signal, a message. The loaves showed significance. The loaves signified something. The loaves were a signet that went with the loaves as a signature identifying who Jesus is and what He was saying by feeding the 5,000.



*The Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes* by James Tissot  
Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

R. C. H. Lenski explains:

“Not because you saw signs” means that these people only saw *wonders* and never saw *signs* at all, i.e., signs full of great meaning. ... Jesus healed many sick at the place where presently he also fed the multitude, and these healings, too, were “signs” full of significance. ... These people failed to see what was so gloriously pictured to them, the divinity of Jesus, his ability to feed their souls as he had fed their bodies, his Savior qualities as the Messiah sent of God. They had held the wonder bread in their hands, had eaten it with their mouths, but had never understood its true meaning with their hearts.

Over against the negative he puts the positive, “but because you ate the loaves and were filled.” Jesus drives this home by using [a] coarse word [derived] from [the word for] fodder or hay; they were satisfied like the ox when his belly is full of fodder. That is all the people obtained ... “out of the bread” that meant to give them so much more. [1]

Jesus said, “Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you.” (John 6:27)

They said to Him, “What sign will You perform then, that we may see it and believe You? What work will You do? Our fathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”

Then Jesus said to them, “... the bread of God is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world. ... I am the bread of life.” (John 6:30-35)

The loaves are signs signaling that Jesus is the bread of life. Jesus is the true manna given by the Father in heaven. This true manna brings things into a whole new realm. It is not a manna that fills only our stomachs. Jesus said, “I am the bread of life. Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die.” (John 6:48-50)

[1] R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. John’s Gospel* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1943), 2450-451.