

Christian MONTHLY

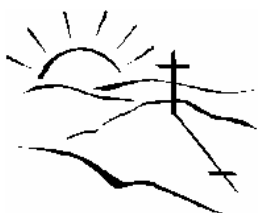
**DEDICATED TO THE
PROCLAMATION OF THE
WORD OF GOD**



Psalm 119:105

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path.

APRIL 2011



FOR THIS CAUSE CAME I INTO THE WORLD

These words, spoken by Jesus, are echoed and re-echoed from pulpits throughout the world and yet they are so often dismissed by the stony, unrepentant hearts of men as merely rhetorical and without personal significance or meaning. It is for this very reason the world becomes more chaotic with each passing day. Unbelief reigns and controls men's lives. God's Word, which is truth, is rejected and we witness the sad results.

The world, since the fall of Adam, has been plagued with sin and unbelief. Paul writes, *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)* We read in God's Word the dreadful consequence of sin, as the Apostle later in the same epistle writes, *For the wages of sin is death...* Not only did sin bring mortality unto men, but, even worse, it brings eternal separation from God to those who live in it.

However, the Apostle continues *...but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23)* In these words we find God's plan of salvation for all who believe according to the Scriptures, and herein lies the true meaning of Easter. Jesus said, *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. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. (John 3:16-17) The Lord Jesus still testifies today that men need not perish in their sins, *For this cause came I into the world. (John 18:37)*

If there is even one reader of these words of Jesus today who does not comprehend their meaning, may God, our dear heavenly Father, reveal them unto you. Jesus is telling you, dear friend, that it was for you, too, that He came into this world. He came to bring life and salvation to you and to all who will believe. He willingly took all your sins upon Himself, He willingly suffered in Gethsemane's garden beneath the burden of your sins, and He willingly allowed Himself to be nailed to the cross of Calvary. There He died so that you might live! It was on that first Easter morning that He arose from the grave victorious over death, hell and the power of the devil. In His victory, all who believe their sins forgiven in His name and precious atoning blood of reconciliation have the hope of eternal life according to His faithful promise.

Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. 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: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes,

of the Gentiles also: Seeing it is one God, which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law. (Romans 3:19-31)

And you, dear fellow-traveler, who must journey here by faith; be reminded with me today of those sad and yet wonderful events which took place on that first Good Friday and Easter. Jesus loved us so much that while we were yet sinners, alienated from God by unbelief, He took upon Himself our sins. Our sin debt of ten thousand talents, which we could never hope to repay, was forgiven and we were set free.

No longer shackled in the bondage of sin, no longer a captive in the darkness of Egypt, no longer oppressed by the relentless taskmaster, but free indeed. We have been set free not because we were deserving, not because we merited liberty, not because we had earned the right through anything we had

**He has chosen you
from the millions in this world
to be His own!**

done or not done,
but, dear friend, it
was because of
God's unsearch-
able love for you
and me.

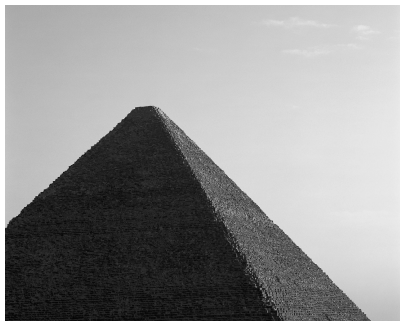
Jesus once said to His disciples, *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you...* (John 15:16) Think of it, dear friend! He has chosen you from the millions in this world to be His own! How humbling a matter this is when we consider how great a love He has for us. "Oh, the love that drew salvation's plan! Oh, the grace that brought it down to man! Oh, the mighty gulf that God did span at Calvary!" (William R. Newell)

May our hearts rejoice again this Easter time and each and every day to know that as our Savior arose victorious from the grave so shall we also be raised with Him on the last day according to His Word unto life eternal. He is the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End, the Author and Finisher of your faith and mine. He is coming soon and His reward is with Him. To Him who has loved us and given Himself for us be all honor and glory forever and ever.

*May you have a blessed Easter in Jesus Christ our Lord,
Pastor Ken Storm
Tapiola, Michigan*

TRUE FREEDOM

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed. I know that ye are Abraham's seed; but ye seek to kill me, because my word hath no place in you.



John 8:31-37

I cannot help but think of the events of yesterday—the resignation of Egyptian President Mubarak, after thirty years of dictatorial rule—and of how the Egyptian people have a whole new day, so to speak, in which they have the opportunity to taste of freedom for the first time in their lives. They not only are tasting of this freedom, but they will now have the opportunity to live in true freedom, as long as the proper foundation and system is laid down by which they can be governed by some kind of democratic system. It is one thing to remove a dictator, but it is quite another matter to begin to live in the freedom that God has given to each human being by being conceived and born in His image.

In light of the previous paragraph, may we in our ALCA continue to live in the freedom of the Holy Spirit, recognizing that we exist in the Body of Christ because He has created this unity through His death and resurrection. We have come to experience this reality through faith which is demonstrated through our actions of humility, love, truth toward Him and one another, and our commitment toward and participation in the cause of God coming into the world: to gather a people unto Himself. Life has so many parallels with the spiritual, and even

as there are many parallels which can be drawn between what happened yesterday in Egypt and God's purposes in this world through and in the church, none probably is as powerful as the recognition that there is great power in the pen, or in today's world, through the internet. Apparently they used the internet to marshal people and ideas in order to bring their crises to a head and to effect the immediate change, but it remains to be seen as to how the same medium will be used to unite the country into a democratic nation.

I pray that our ALCA continues moving toward a greater understanding of the freedom that God has created for us to participate in with Him, with His Son, with the Holy Spirit, and with one another.

*Pastor Orval Wirkkala
Kingston, Minnesota*

God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Hebrews 1:1-3

Paul calls Christ the brightness of God's glory that we may learn that as the light from the lamp is of the nature of that which sheds the brightness, and is united with it (for as soon as the lamp appears the light that comes from it shines out simultaneously), so in this place the Apostle would have us consider both that the Son is of the Father, and that the Father is never without the Son; for it is impossible that glory should be without radiance, as it is impossible that the lamp should be without brightness... Let those who speak of "less" and "greater," in the case of the Father and the Son, learn from Paul not to measure things immeasurable. For the Apostle says that the Son is **the express image** of the Person of the Father.

Gregory of Nyssa, 4th century

GOD'S GLORY

For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:6

The Bible teaches that it is by faith that we believe that our present world was planned and created by God. Through God's command, the light came, the world was formed, and everything was created. Without living faith in the living God it is impossible to believe this.



However, we believe that not only did God want the natural light to shine in our world, he also wanted the light of His Word to shine in our hearts. The Apostle John wrote that the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. God gave His Word, His Son, Jesus, the same Word that was with Him creating the world, to mankind, to you and to me! But why? John also wrote in the same place: *In him was life; and the life was the light of men. (John 1:4)* That is, in God's Son Jesus was life. In Jesus is His plan of salvation—His plan of life for us. He wants us to come out of the darkness of sin and allow the light to expose us, to show us what we are. God wants our life to be focused on Him and His Son.

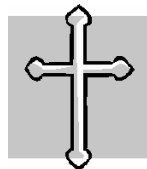
You may say, "What are you talking about? I am living, breathing, thinking, feeling. What is this talk of light and life? What more do I need?" We do need more. Paul tells us in his letter to the Romans that to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. If our life is dead, it is concerned only with this life, this world and its temporal satisfaction and pleasure. We do not see our own insufficiency, our own sinfulness. But when our life is spiritual—that is, controlled by God's Holy Spirit—we understand a need for a Savior. We remember God's instructions and promises. We remember that we need forgiveness for our sin.

Someone wrote a long time ago in the *119th Psalm, verse 105: Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.* We have been given God's Word to lead us and guide us. God is always faithful to us, but He wants us to be faithful to Him. He wants our obedience, not our sacrifices. God wants us to see the sacrifice that He prepared for our sins, not the ones that we sometimes think that we can offer. We see God's sacrifice in Jesus Christ. In the face of Jesus, we see God's glory. More than anything else God wants us to understand Jesus Christ and what He has done for us.

One day we will see God's glory face to face. The Apostle Paul wrote: *For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known. (1 Corinthians 13:12)* There is a day coming when you and I will stand before the face of our Lord and Creator. May we prepare ourselves now in time, so that we are ready for that moment when eternity will begin.

*God's peace,
Ken Helmes
Espoo, Finland*

**But God forbid that I should glory,
save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ,
by whom the world is crucified unto me,
and I unto the world.**



Galatians 6:14

A true believer has nothing to glory in but Christ alone. Even in his very best performances he will be often deeply humbled, and cry out, "Lord, enter not into judgment!"—and well he may; for the ground of our glory, comfort and salvation is not in works, but in Christ, and the free grace of God, who, **for His Son's sake**, lays nothing to our charge but daily covers and richly pardons all our iniquities. And thus believers, walking steadily, might always be kept in solid peace; for the cross of Christ is a solid and unshaken foundation.

C.H.V. Bogatzky

THE EPIPHANY OF OUR LORD

The Epiphany is the revealing of Christ's divinity and rightful position as the second person in the Trinity. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the virgin Mary, thereby being truly God and truly man. *Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. (Romans 1:1-4)* This is God's own testimony of His only begotten Son after being baptized by John: *And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. (Matthew 3:16-17)*

Jesus, in perfect obedience to the Law, walked on earth as the first perfect man, fulfilling all righteousness as the son of Adam. Then the fallen sons and daughters of Adam could be redeemed. Sin was committed in the flesh, and also atoned for in the flesh by the God-man dying in the flesh, shedding His precious holy blood for sinners condemned and unclean. *For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him. (2 Corinthians 5:21)* Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. *(Hebrews 2:14-17)*

This revelation to the heart of a sinner works godly sorrow over sin, repentance toward God, and faith in Jesus Christ.

Washed in the blood of Jesus, we are translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of God. When we are born again in Christ, Apostle Paul teaches: *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17)* This gift of justification by Jesus Christ comes as a free gift, without any merit or worthiness on our part. It comes to us from a merciful God to sinners by birth and by choice. *For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:3-7)*

This is the message of the Gospel: there is life in Jesus' name and a sure anchor for the soul. *And this is*

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the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life. These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. (1 John 5:11-13) What an epiphany when the grace of God in Christ Jesus is revealed to a sinner! God has called us, brothers and sisters, young and old, to proclaim the everlasting Gospel of Jesus' blood and righteousness. Proclaim it, preach it, teach it, sing it, herald the Word of life as long as there is breath. The seed is planted and God gives the increase. The time is short; Jesus is coming again!

*In His service,
God's peace,
Pastor Mark Matson
Pasco, Washington*

Dear Little Children of God,

Once again it is that time of year when we remember what Jesus did for us when He died on the cross.

The little baby Jesus was born in a stable and was laid in a manger. God was always watching over Him; God protected Him from the ever-present enemy even in His wee toddler life. Jesus grew up, but we only know of Him when He was twelve in the temple and when He began His ministry at the age of 30.

Jesus walked among the people, healing, teaching, listening, and always caring for His own. As He became more well-known, some people followed Him because they liked what He had to say, and many with diseases or other ailments wanted to be healed by Him. Jesus did heal and comfort many. Some who followed Him were always looking to find fault with Him. These were the Pharisees, and they never left Him alone.

Do you remember, children, that Jesus had twelve special men He chose to help Him? He was always teaching them about Himself and His Father God. These men were called disciples (they were learners).

It was getting close to the time when Jesus would die and He gathered with His disciples in a room prepared just for them. Here they ate the Last Supper—the breaking of bread and wine together before Jesus would die. One disciple's name was Judas, and, before going to the supper, he went to the chief priests and Pharisees and asked them what price they would pay him if he led them to Jesus. The chief priests and Pharisees wanted to kill Jesus and they wanted Judas to take them to Jesus. Judas knew of the special garden where Jesus liked to go, and Jesus and His disciples would go there after supper. As Jesus sat at the supper, He passed the bread and, as they ate, they dipped their bread in a bowl. Jesus told them, "The one who dips his bread with Me in the dish is the one that will betray Me." This was Judas.

Jesus broke some bread and handed it to the disciples and said, *Take, eat; this is my body*. Then He passed the wine and said, *This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins*.

Jesus and the disciples (except Judas, who had gone to find the priests and collect his money) went to the garden of Geth-

semene where Jesus spent time in prayer with God, praying for strength as He knew it was His time to die. While they were there, Judas came with the men who wanted Jesus dead and they took Him away to be crucified.

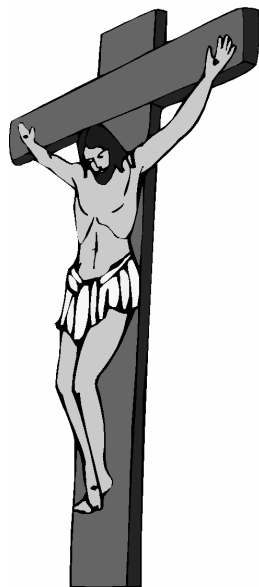
Jesus had to stand before a judge who asked Him questions; Jesus answered with the truth, which angered the people. The crowds that had gathered wanted Jesus dead, too. It really made them angry when Jesus said that He was the Son of God. The judge asked, "What do you want me to do with this man?" The crowds shouted, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Jesus was beaten, spit on, slapped and made fun of; He bore it all quietly.

Jesus was led out to the hill of Golgotha. They made Him carry His own cross and it was VERY heavy. They called a man from the crowd to help Him. At Golgotha, they nailed His hands and feet to the cross and the same was done to two prisoners. The three crosses were stood up with Jesus in the middle. One prisoner made fun of Jesus. The other asked Jesus to remember him when Jesus got to heaven. Jesus told the latter man that he would be in heaven with Him that very day.

After Jesus died He was laid in a tomb, and then on the third day He arose. This was Easter morning. He would not stay in the grave as He had power over death.

After spending many days with His friends, Jesus took a few of His disciples on a mountain and spoke with them there. God put a cloud around Him and took Him up into heaven.

Some day Jesus will come back the same way He left, and will take all those who love Him to that beautiful home He has for us in heaven. Let us be thankful that we have faith to believe on Him, and that Jesus loved us so much that He would die on the cross so that one day we could live in heaven with Him forever. I pray you have a very nice Easter and that you will remember to thank God for His Son, Jesus.



*God's peace,
Gwen Wilson*



THE BARREN FIG TREE

Now in the morning as he [Jesus] returned into the city, he hungered. And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it,

and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away! Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done.

Matthew 21:18-21

The barren fig tree, figuratively speaking, depicts the nation of Israel, which displayed an abundance of greenery but bore no spiritual fruit. There was ample godliness in Israel, but as a nation it lacked living faith. This can also be applied to Christendom at large, but our focus will be on the spiritual aspect which involves the individual and concerns every one of us, because we, like the Israelites, are inclined to confuse the green leaves—godly works—with the spiritual fruit—living faith. The leaves are tangible and readily perceivable, but the fruit, when present, is hidden among the leaves and is spiritually discerned.

We must bear in mind that a productive tree is sustained by nutrients from two different sources: the sugars, which are provided by the leaves, and the minerals, referred to as the salts, which are provided by the roots. The first is affected by climatic conditions and the latter by ground conditions. Together, they provide the nutritional balance needed for the cellular growth of the tree, as well as the developing of the fruit buds and maturing of the fruit.

Applied to Israel, the abundance of leaves reflects ideal climatic conditions. Grace—the supply of sugars—was more than adequate for bearing an abundance of true spiritual fruit. However, since its roots were not established in the Word of

truth—the supply of minerals—but set instead in the traditions of men, the effects of grace were merely superficial, producing only leaves. Therefore, the benefits of grace, as a nation, were temporal rather than eternal.

As a result of the hypocrisy, Israel ceased being a great godly nation, a status it once enjoyed. The wilting of the fig tree is a depiction of its demise. We can see the same thing happening to Christendom and the demise is clearly evident already here in our beloved America, and for the very same reason.

When the depiction is applied spiritually, the individual is the tree. In this sense, the matter of bearing fruit is brought so close to us that none of us can evade the issue. God requires spiritual fruit on a individual basis, as John the Baptist warned the people of his day: *...the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. (Matthew 3:10)* If the truth is circumvented in this time of grace, the same truth will cut us down and condemn us eternally, at the time of death. Hopefully, this will happen sooner and bring us to our senses while there is yet grace, so that the situation could be remedied.

Though God requires spiritual fruit, it can only happen when our roots are firmly established in the Word of truth, for no amount of external pressure can bring forth true spiritual fruit. The opposite is true when it comes to bearing leaves, because leaf-bearing is greatly influenced by external pressure, since it is subject to climatic conditions. The greenery may well be enhanced by the whip of the Law, but this only adds to the problem when greenery is confused with fruit. This confusion is among the leading causes of the problems within the church.

For many generations here in America, we, like the Israelites, have enjoyed the most favorable climatic conditions for bearing spiritual fruit, especially those of us who have been reared in Christian homes. We have enjoyed the benefits of grace: the remission of sins, the warmth and security of the church, the fellowship of believers. This has provided a favorable environment wherein we have come to know the will of God, and the sayings of Jesus Christ and His mission. The sugar provided by the leaves has been more than adequate, and we have enjoyed these benefits because they are readily compatible with our natures.

But what about the unsavory minerals provided by the ground, which are also vital to life but are contrary to our natures because they involve self-denial? Has this been our concern, or are we preoccupied by the leaves, as were the Israelites? Our flesh glories in the quantity and greenness of the leaves because our own righteousness is magnified, rather than the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Christ is glorified when we are concerned with the condition of the ground and our roots, with Christ and His redemptive work in our behalf, and when we reach out by faith and appropriate it unto ourselves and receive it as being sufficient for our salvation, without adding any of our own works.

This is not
to say that
bearing leaves
is undesirable.
Surely not!

**If we are in the truth,
the leaves will appear spontaneously
and in the proper proportion...**

Only that over-production is undesirable. In regard to this, James clearly states, "Faith without works is dead." Leaves are absolutely essential for bearing spiritual fruit, as for natural fruit. The balance (moderation) is the concern here. We need to be attentive so that the growth of foliage does not overwhelm the growth of fruit. As demonstrated by the wilted fig tree, the over-production of leaves can be fatal, because it is the result of a severe nutritional imbalance which may not be reversible.

Over-production can be fatal if we are overly concerned about good works, even those deemed vital to Christianity, such as personal appearance, conduct, and various church-related activities and functions. A prime example is mission work. Although scripturally mandated, it is an issue associated with the leaves. Therefore, it needs to be kept in proper perspective, lest it become a diversion and a mere show of good Christianity. If our attention and energy are devoted to outward acts of good works and these move to the forefront and become our preoccupation, we are in serious trouble, because the matters of the heart which directly concern life and involve the minerals move into the background and eventually become non-issues. When this happens, we become alienated from the truth. Unless we come to our senses while the condition is still reversible, we will become like that fig tree and suffer the same fate eternally.

Our main concern needs to be whether our roots are firmly established in the truth of the Word. If we are in the truth, the leaves will appear spontaneously and in the proper proportion, though the quantity and greenness will vary among individuals, as will the quantity of fruit.

A periodic pruning will also be necessary to keep the foliage in proportion to the trunk and roots, so our godly zeal, which manifests itself as good works, will not overwhelm the fruit that is being instilled within us through the hearing of the Word. God has His own way of accomplishing this through His Word, but it will not be to our liking since it involves the unsavory minerals, which is essentially a chastening. The writer of Hebrews makes known: *Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby. (Hebrews 12:11)* The peaceable fruit of righteousness is living faith.

*the late James R. Johnson
Submitted by T. Fraki
New York Mills, Minnesota*



**For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of:
for necessity is laid upon me;
yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!
1 Corinthians 9:16**

Let us learn that a simple word may be blessed to the saving of precious souls. Often we are tempted to think there must be some deep and logical argument to bring men to Christ. Often we put confidence in high-sounding words. Whereas it is the simple exhibition of Christ, carried home by the Spirit, which awakens, enlightens and saves. ...*Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts. (Zechariah 4:6)* If the Spirit is breathing on the people, these little words, **"Follow Jesus,"** spoken in love, may be blessed to the saving of the whole congregation.

Robert Murray M'Cheyne

FROM THE MOUTH OF BABES

Velika and Addison (Ethan and Heidi's girl) were playing the other day and singing "Jesus loves me, this I know..." as they rocked their baby dolls. How precious to hear two little girls who live 5,000 miles apart come together and sing in unity of spirit.

*Karen Niemitalo
Trinity, North Carolina*

"Happy Birthday, Jesus! I'm so glad it's Christmas. All the tinsel and lights, and the presents are nice, but the real gift is You!" . . . so true . . . and precious when sung in a 4 year old voice.

*Cathy Kandoll
Amboy, Washington*

Keep my little voice today, Keep it gently while I play;
Keep my hands from doing wrong, Keep my feet the whole day long;
Keep me all, O Jesus mild, Keep me ever, Thy dear child.

Author Unknown

LONG AGO LETTERS FROM CHILDREN

[Editor's Note: The following letters have not been edited.
They are just as they were printed in the past.]



Dear boys and girls:

I am 11 years old and attend the Apostolic Lutheran Sunday School in Centerville, Wash.

I believe in Easter because Jesus died on the cross to save sinners. Before Jesus was taken, He was praying at the Mount of Olives. After a while He saw a group of men coming toward Him. He asked what they wanted. They said that they wanted Jesus. When He saw Judas with them, He knew that he had betrayed Him.

They took Him to Pilate. Then Pilate said that he found no fault in Jesus. But the people kept calling, "Crucify Him!" They put a crown of thorns on His head and made Him carry His cross through Jerusalem. When they got to Calvary, they set up the cross of Jesus and put a robber on each side of Him. They mocked Him and He said, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

After a while it became very dark, and Jesus said, "Father into Thy hands I commend my spirit," and He died. He was put into a

tomb, and a big stone was put over the opening. Pilate sent soldiers to guard it.

On Easter morning Jesus arose and the angels came and rolled the stone away. The soldiers were so afraid that they fell on the ground. When the women came, the angel told them to tell the disciples that Jesus was risen.

I think that we should remember this story instead of Easter bunnies and eggs at this time of year especially and always try to be ready for Jesus' second coming because we never know when He will come again. God's Peace.

*Darrel Hilman
April 1966 CM*

I go to Sunday School to learn more about the Bible. I go to learn the Ten Commandments. I learned that when Jesus died upon the cross, He redeemed us from all of our sins. If we believe in Jesus Christ and His redeeming work, when we die, we will have everlasting life in heaven.

*Carmelle Wilson
August 1967 CM*

What Jesus Means to Me—by Brian Niemi

JESUS means A LOT to me because He died for my sins. He came to this earth to die for all our sins and Now He is in Heaven. He performed miracles so that people would believe He is the SON OF GOD.

He was perfect. He IS perfect. He died to SAVE our SOULS.

If I was the only person on earth, HE would have died JUST FOR ME!

Because He loved me very much, I LOVE HIM!

*Brian Niemi
April 1976 CM*

Dear Christian friends,

I am 9 years old. I love god because he sent his Son Jesus to die for me. he made the heavens and earth and you and me he made the aniamals too. I like to go to church and sunday school and my teacher is Janice Riikonen and I am in 3rd grade. for god so loved the world that he gave his only begoten son.

*God's peace
Love, Janette Patterson
December 1977 CM*

DYING TO SELF

When you are forgotten, neglected or purposely set at naught, and you don't sting or hurt with the oversight, but your heart is happy being counted worthy to suffer for Christ...

That is dying to self.

When your good is evil spoken of, when your wishes are crossed, your advice disregarded, your opinion ridiculed, and you refuse to let anger rise in your heart or even defend yourself, but take it all in patient, loving silence...

That is dying to self.

When you lovingly and patiently bear any disorder, any irregularity, any annoyance; when you can stand face to face with waste, folly, extravagance, spiritual insensibility, and endure it as Jesus did...

That is dying to self.

When you are content with any food, any offering, any raiment, any climate, any society, any solitude, any interruption by the will of God...

That is dying to self.

When you never care to refer to yourself in conversation or record your own good works or itch after commendation, when you can truly love to be unknown...

That is dying to self.

When you can see your brother prosper and have his needs met, and can honestly rejoice with him in spirit and feel no envy, nor question God, while your own needs are far greater and you are in desperate circumstances...

That is dying to self.

Author Unknown

❧❧❧ If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

Philippians 2:1-4

THE 2011 ALC CONVENTION

The Copper Country Apostolic Lutheran congregations look forward to having you join them for the 2011 annual convention and meetings in **Houghton, Michigan**. Business meetings and worship services will be held in the Sports Development Complex (SDC) at Michigan Technological University. The opening service will be **Wednesday, July 6, 2011**, at 7:00 pm at the Zion Lutheran Church in Hancock, Michigan. Services will continue **Thursday, July 7th**, through **Sunday, July 10th**, at the MTU campus. Lodging arrangements should be made as soon as possible. Hotels, cabins, college dorms and private homes are available. For registration and housing, please contact Barb Mattila (906)482-3811. There are campgrounds in the area for anyone traveling with an RV/camper. Self-contained RV/campers can utilize the university parking lot. Shower facilities will be available. The convention website at www.alcconvention.com has more information.

Glenn Chapman, Chairman
(906)482-0044

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Lois Matson, Editor
CHRISTIAN MONTHLY
PO Box 2996
Battle Ground, WA 98604 USA
Phone: (360) 904-6951
Fax: (360) 686-4131
E-mail: cm@apostoliclutheran.org

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Anders and Clara Sundqvist, Managers
THE BOOK CONCERN
PO Box 2126
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Phone: (360) 896-7344
E-mail: books@apostoliclutheran.org

APOSTOLIC LUTHERAN CHURCH OF AMERICA

website: www.apostoliclutheran.org

Western Mission: western@apostoliclutheran.org
Eastern Mission: eastern@apostoliclutheran.org
Foreign Mission: foreign@apostoliclutheran.org

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The Only Plea

In the course of life I saw,
 An open book of righteous Law.
Behind the book hereto referred,
 A solemn Justice weighed its word.
The accusers stood aside a space,
 With sure repose, they made their case.
The man accused had every flaw,
 Beyond a doubt he broke the Law.
The very worst of all mankind,
 He'd spurned its guidance line by line.
He stood before the Judge ashamed,
 As all his wretched ways were named.
For in his heart of hearts he knew,
 That all the charges made were true.
As his accusers then sat down,
 The Judge turned to him with righteous frown:
*"Well, young man, what is your plea?
 Guilty or not, which will it be?"*
And what could he say for freedom sought?
 Damnation was his rightful lot.
But wait!...a spark...a hope flickered aflame,
 As a "still small voice" whispered his name.
An advocate had been to prison,
 And talked there of one dead and risen!
Or was it from way back in the day,
 When Father and Mother spoke that way?
Whate'er the source, the plea he'd use,
 The only hope! Thought he, "I've naught to lose."
The silence then at last was broke,
 When with trembling voice the guilty spoke:
 "I...I plead the Blood of Christ."
 With a startled look of raised eyebrow,
The Judge slammed the book. Said, **"FREE HIM NOW!**
 *This man is of our righteous King, To try him is a reckless thing!
And to think, the sentence would be quite large,
 Someone must pay for this baseless charge!"*
So free by the Blood he left with a shout,
 The accusers themselves condemned and cast out.
 Donny Matson, Yacolt, Washington