

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 2016

The Certainty of the Resurrection

Pastor Chuck Bylkas
South Range, Michigan

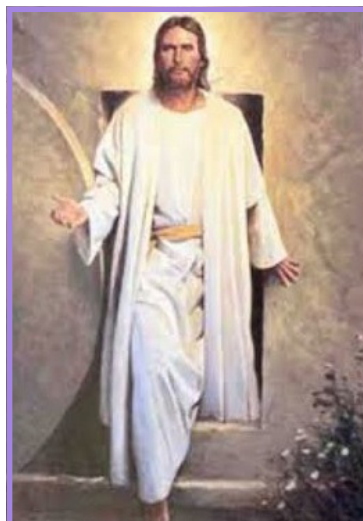
But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.

1 Corinthians 15:20-22

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN ONCE WROTE: "Our new Constitution is now established, and has an appearance that promises permanency; but in the world nothing can be said to be certain except death and taxes." Franklin expresses his hope that the Constitution for the founding of our nation would be sound enough to stand the test of time.

While Benjamin Franklin's quote is profound in its own way, God's Word teaches us that there are many other things that are as certain, or even more certain, than death and taxes. As we begin the season of Easter, we celebrate God's sure promise of resurrection. As the Apostle Paul says, *For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.*

Jesus says, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live. (John 5:24-25)* In the Gospel of John, the Gospel writer quotes the words "verily, verily" twenty-five times. The phrase can be translated "truly, truly" or "certainly, certainly" and comes from the Greek word from which we get the English word "Amen." The promises and declarations of God are true and certain.



Luther says it well:

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? This is so true that even Satan cannot deny it. Christ's resurrection and victory over sin, death and hell is greater than all heaven and earth. You can never imagine his resurrection and victory so great but that in actuality it is far, far greater. For as his person is mighty, eternal, without limit, incomprehensible, so also is his resurrection, victory and triumph mighty, eternal, without limit, incomprehensible. Were hell a thousand times more, and death ten thousand times more, it would be but a spark, a mere drop, compared with Christ's resurrection, victory and triumph. Christ's resurrection, victory and triumph gives Christ to all who believe in Him. Since we have been baptized in his name, and believe in him, it follows that even if you and I underwent sin, death and hell a hundred thousandfold, it would amount to nothing; for Christ's resurrection victory and triumph, which have been given me in the baptism and in the word by faith, and therefore are my own, are infinitely greater. If this is true, and I most certainly believe it to be true, then let sin death and hell dog my steps and growl at me. What will they do to us? What can they do?

No matter how great our difficulties seem, the certainty of the resurrection is far greater. Instead of sin, we have righteousness, instead of defeat we have victory, instead of death we have life. Christ has overcome everything for us. May God grant us grace to look beyond our sufferings and by faith, lay hold of the finished work of the Risen Lord, Jesus Christ. "Amen."

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. (John 16:33) ~

Further Benefits of the Resurrection

Martin Luther

O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:55-57

The question arises: If Christ has taken away death and our sins by His resurrection and has justified us, why do we still feel death and sin within us? For our sins torment us still, we are stung by our conscience, and this evil conscience creates the fear of hell.

FEELING AND FAITH ARE TWO different things. It is the nature of faith not to feel, to lay aside reason and close the eyes, to submit absolutely to the Word, and follow it in life and death. Feeling however does not extend beyond that which may be apprehended by reason and the senses, which may be heard, seen, felt and known by the outward senses; For this cause feeling is opposed to faith and faith is opposed to feeling. Therefore the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews writes of faith: *Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. (Hebrews 11:1)* For if we would see Christ visibly in heaven, like the visible sun, we would not need to believe it. But since Christ died for our sins and was raised for our justification, we cannot see it nor feel it, neither can we comprehend it with our reason. Therefore we must disregard our feeling and accept only the Word, write it into our heart and cling to it, even though it seems as if my sins were not taken from me, and even though I still feel them within me. Our feelings must not be considered, but we must constantly insist that death, sin and hell have been conquered, although I feel that I am still under the power of death, sin and hell. For although we feel that sin is still in us, it is only permitted that our faith may be developed and strengthened, that in spite of all our feelings we accept the Word, and that we unite our hearts and consciences more and more to Christ. Thus faith leads us quietly, contrary to all feeling and comprehension of reason, through sin, through death and through hell. Then we shall see salvation before our eyes, and then we shall know perfectly what we have believed, namely, that death and all sorrow have been conquered.

We must constantly insist that death, sin and hell have been conquered, although I feel that I am still under the power of death, sin and hell.

Take as an illustration the fish in the water. When they are caught in the net, you lead it quietly along, so that they imagine they are still in the water; but when you draw them to the shore, they are exposed and begin to struggle, and then they first feel they are caught. Thus it also happens with souls that are caught with the Gospel, which Christ compares with a net (Matthew 13:47). When the heart has been conquered, the Word unites this poor

heart to Christ and leads it gently and quietly from hell and from sin, although the soul still feels sin and imagines to be still under its power. Then a conflict begins, the feelings struggling against the Spirit and faith, and the Spirit and faith against our feelings; and the more faith increases, the more our feelings diminish, and vice versa. We have still sins within us, for instance pride, avarice, anger and so forth, but only in order to lead us to faith, so that faith may increase from day to day, and the man become finally a thorough Christian and keep the true sabbath, consecrating himself to Christ entirely. Then the conscience must become calm and satisfied and all the surging waves of sin subside. For as upon the sea one billow follows and buffets the other, as though they would destroy the shore, yet they must disappear and destroy themselves, so our sins strive against us and would fain bring us to despair, but finally they must desist, grow weary and disappear.

In the second place, death is still at our elbow. It also is to exercise the faith of him who believes that death has been killed and all his power taken away. Now, reason feels that death is still at our elbow and is continually troubling us. He who follows his feelings will perish, but he who clings to the Word with his heart will be delivered. Now, if the heart clings to the Word, reason will also follow; but if reason follows, everything will follow, desire and love and all that is in man. Yea, we desire that all may come to the point when they may consider death to be dead and powerless. But

this cannot come to pass until the old man, the old Adam, be entirely destroyed, and meanwhile that process has been going on of which Christ speaks in Matthew 13:33, where he compares the kingdom of God to leaven, which a woman hid in three measures of meal. For even if the kneading has begun, the meal is not yet thoroughly leavened. So it is here. Although the heart clings to the belief that death and hell are destroyed, yet the leaven has not yet worked through it entirely. For it must penetrate all the members of the body, until everything becomes leavened and pure, and there remains nothing but a pure



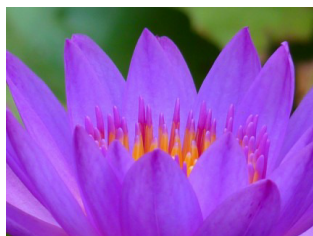
Our Lord Jesus Christ James Tissot
Wikimedia Commons

faith. This will not be brought about before the old man is entirely destroyed; then all that is in man is Christ-like from center to circumference.

These two things, sin and death, therefore remain with us to the end that we might cultivate and exercise our faith, in order that it may become more perfect in our heart from day to day and finally break forth, and all that we are, body and soul, become more Christ-like. For when the heart clings to the Word, feelings and reasoning must fail. Then in the course of time the will also clings to the Word, and with the will everything else, our desire and love, till we surrender ourselves entirely to the Gospel, are renewed and leave the old sin behind. Then there comes a different light, different feelings, different seeing, different hearing, acting and speaking, and also a different outflow of good works. Now, our scholastics and papists have taught an external piety; they would command the eyes not to see, and the ears not to hear, and would put piety into our hearts from the outside. Ah, how far this is from the truth! But it comes in this way: When the heart and conscience cling to the Word in faith, they overflow in works, so that, when the heart is holy, all the members become holy, and good works follow naturally.

This is signified by the sabbath that was to be hallowed and on which the Lord lay quietly in the grave. It signifies that we should rest from all our works, should

not stir, nay, should not allow any sin to stir within us, but we should firmly believe that death, hell, sin and the devil are destroyed by the death of Christ, and we are righteous, pious, holy and therefore contented, experiencing no longer any sin. Then all the members are calm and quiet, being convinced that sin and death are vanquished and prostrated. But this cannot be brought about, as I have said, until this impotent, wretched body and the old Adam are destroyed. Therefore it is indeed necessary that we are required to keep this sabbath. For as Christ lies in the grave on the sabbath, never feels nor moves, so it must be with us, as we have heard: Our feelings and actions must cease. And I say again that this cannot be accomplished before the old Adam is annihilated. Nevertheless we still experience sin and death within us, wrestle with them and fight against them. You may tie a hog ever so well, but you cannot prevent it from grunting (until it is strangled and killed). Thus it is with the sins in our flesh. As they are not yet entirely conquered and killed, they are still active, but when death comes, they must also die, and then we are perfect Christians and pure, but not before. This is the reason why we must die, namely, that we may be entirely freed from sin and death. These words on the fruits of the resurrection of Christ may suffice for the present, and with them we will close. Let us pray God for grace that we may understand them and learn to know Christ aright. ~



Our Legacy

Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

Psalm 46:10

Grace, mercy and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ be with you all now and forever. Amen.

We often hear how people want to leave behind a **legacy** that will mark their life.

This, in essence, would be what they wanted to be known for, or what was their greatest effect on the world in which they lived. It makes very good sense to say that the **legacy** of a world leader would have much more impact than the **legacy** of common folk like us, since more people are affected by the decisions of a world leader than by the life we live in our particular calling/vocation.

What is meant by **legacy**? It is defined as something handed down or left with the succeeding generation, whether it is material or moral.

As we continue toward Jerusalem with Jesus on His way to glorify His Father, perhaps we could use the word **legacy** to help us understand a bit more of the joy of purpose in the heart of the Father and His Son approaching this day of glory, this day that Jesus the Christ would reconnect the world with God through His death on the cross. This was to be the highest, defining, climactic point in the history of the world. We could say it was the **legacy** that God wanted to leave behind for all to benefit from, for no one would be left outside of the redeeming work our Father and His Son. They want all to become partakers of this **legacy**, for the inclusion of all is the greatest desire and joy of God's heart, to provide the riches of grace in the forgiveness of sins through Christ, Who became sin for the world. This sinless One took upon Himself the entire sin debt of the world on our behalf.

Now that is a **legacy**, for through it we have peace and joy today and we have an expectant hope of that which is to come in heaven above!

May we grow in the knowledge of our inheritance, given to us through the **legacy** of God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, for God is glorified when we become a partaker of His **legacy**, the forgiveness of sins in Christ Jesus!

*Pastor Orval Wirkkala
Kingston, Minnesota*

All Things Must Be Fulfilled

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children,

God's peace to all of you. I hope you are well. I want to share with you some events from the time of Jesus's crucifixion to His ascension, as He fulfilled Scripture.

GOD BEGINS TO FULFILL SCRIPTURE through His Son when Jesus came into this world as a baby. In the first book of the Bible, Genesis 3:15, Jesus was prophesied and **it was fulfilled** in Matthew 1:18 when Mary conceived by the Holy Ghost and bore a son and called Him Jesus.

Jesus was here on earth as a baby, a child, a boy, and finally a man. He was true God and true man, but without sin. He knew everything there was and is to know about mankind. He was altogether holy and without spot, and He loved mankind. His heart was full of grace and truth.

When Jesus was just 12 years old, He was found in the temple asking and answering questions of the elders. Jesus was doing His Father's business, and people were amazed at His wisdom.

Jesus had a cousin named John. He came before Jesus and, by God's leading, was sent to prepare the people's hearts to receive Jesus. John was by the Jordan River, telling the people to repent and be baptized, and that there was one coming after him who was mightier than he. John said he was not worthy to undo the shoe latches of this mighty One. John spoke of Jesus.

Jesus came to the river to be baptized. *But John forbid him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him. 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 (landing) upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. (St. Matthew 3:14-17)*

The Last Supper was first spoken of in *Genesis 14:18: And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.* As Melchizedek was a picture of Jesus, Jesus gives us bread and wine, His own body and blood for refreshment for the Christian in our battle. This fulfillment is found in St. Matthew 26-29.

Jesus came to be offered as a sacrifice once for all the

sins of mankind. The Old Testament book of *Isaiah 53:10* says: *Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.*

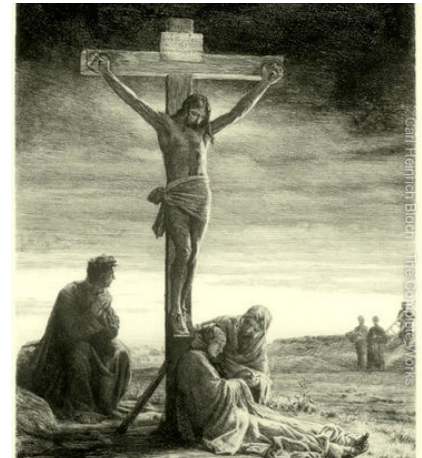
In Matthew 27, Mark 15, Luke 23, and John 19, you can read about Jesus' crucifixion. **Here prophecy was fulfilled.** Jesus Christ had to die for all mankind. At this time all things were made new.

Do you children remember the temple that was built for God? Do you remember there was the holiest place behind the thick veil where only the priests would go once a year to make an offering to God for the sins of the people? This veil was torn in two from top to bottom when Jesus died as He made a new way for us to come to God and that was through Himself. We can be free to come to Him.

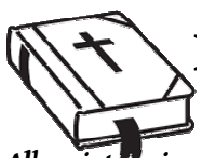
Psalms 16:10: For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell (grave); neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption (decay). This verse speaks prophetically of the grave not being able to keep Jesus, as He would rise from the dead the third day. He arose triumphantly on Easter morning. He spent 40 days more on the earth with His disciples and followers, and then God took Him up to Himself in heaven.

One day Jesus will return in a cloud, just as He left. He will come back to take those people who love Him and serve Him in faith, to Himself in heaven, just as God took Jesus to heaven.

Oh, dear children, I pray that you will keep Jesus and God in your hearts and serve Him only. He loves you so much; you can see His love for you in how He gave His life for you. The Bible tells us that we would maybe give up our life for a friend, but Jesus gave His life for every man. His love is SO great. ~



Crucifixion of Christ Carl Heinrich Bloch
Courtesy of earlbloch.org



Freedom to Love the Whole Word of God

Steven E. Anderson
Greer, South Carolina

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

2 Timothy 3:16-17

ALL WHO HAVE COME THROUGH the Strait Gate consider and testify how wonderful all the counsel of God is,

how right and just are His precepts, and what a great blessing it is that one who was once under condemnation of sin is now eternally reconciled to the righteous and holy God. These are they who have received the blessing of Christ as He prayed in His High Priestly prayer, *And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. (John 17:3)*

It is noteworthy that Jesus here speaks of knowing God, and knowing also Jesus Christ who was sent of God. We here see the necessity of coming to comprehend the righteous nature of God, and how impossible it is that man should approach unto Him, before we can truly comprehend Christ in His office of Savior, Deliverer and Redeemer. It is sin which separated the entire race of Adam from God. *Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned. (Romans 5:12)* Paul testifies in the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians that we all have borne the fallen image of the first Adam, for we all are descendants of a corrupt seed which was driven from the presence of God in the Garden because of disobedience.

Here we begin to see the portal of the Strait Gate. It is necessary that we be reconciled to God in order that we might live, yet it is impossible that we of ourselves can even begin to approach unto Him. This gate that is called Strait is so narrow indeed that no man living can pass through. God desires that this knowledge be preached abroad to all mankind, that they might begin to seek a way of escape from sure and eternal death in their sinful condition. God accomplishes this by the preaching of His holy Law, for it is written, *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. (Romans 3:20)* It is of utmost and eternal importance for you and me, for our children and their children, and for all who are without concern for their eternal state, that this Scripture concerning the Law of God be held dearly, and preached clearly.

The Law then having done its perfect work to show a person that their just reward is eternal death, that is, eternal separation from God because of sin, we must consider further the words of our Lord when He said we must know not only God, but also *Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent. (John 17:3)* God never changes; therefore it is impossible that His holy nature should change. But there must be a change before we can be received into His favor. The sinner who laments his condition and just reward of death, who sees no way in himself to please God, is ripe for the Gospel. Such a person now experiences the first death, for *except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit. (John 12:24)*

Now the word of faith is preached unto such a one concerning Him who has dealt with our sins. *And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled: In the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight. (Colossians 1:20-22)* This word brings a person to rejoicing, to sing the song of the daughters of Zion, to offer to God not works of righteousness, but to say with Hosea, *Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. (Hosea 14:2)*

Now is revealed the righteousness which is of faith. God, by the redeeming work of Jesus Christ, has dealt

justly and eternally with our sin. He has not merely winked at sin, or overlooked it that it might again affect us, but has meted out the punishment required by the Law. *Behold, all souls are mine; as the soul of the father, so also the soul of the son is mine: the soul that sinneth, it shall die. (Ezekiel 18:4)* God testifies of Christ that He has made Him a perfect offering for sin, and has satisfied all judgment upon Him, that we might escape and be free. *Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. (Isaiah 53:10)*



God, by the redeeming work of Jesus Christ, has dealt justly and eternally with our sin.

The Strait Gate has shown us that we are dead because of sin, and all that we were must pass away. *Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. (2 Cor 5:17)* Flesh and blood does not inherit the kingdom into which we are received, but we must be born again. This is clear because the old life in the flesh brought death, yet we must live in the presence of God. Jesus said, *Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. (John 3:3)* To whom does new birth apply, and what does it accomplish? Jesus said it applies to all who are born of the first Adam. *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. (John 3:6)* God, who both slays and makes alive, grants unto His children new life by His Spirit. *But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. (Romans 8:9)*

God grants us this new life by the indwelling Holy Spirit, by whom we receive also new intentions, new desires and a new citizenship. This is made evident in both the talk and walk of the believer. We once walked as carnal, yet now we walk as spiritual. We once bore the sin nature of the First Adam; we now bear the righteous nature of the Last Adam, who is Christ. *And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. (1 Corinthians 15:49)* What is it to bear the image of Christ, or to put on Christ, but to do even as He testified, *Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart. (Psalm 40:7-8)* Those who possess the Spirit of Christ will find within themselves a love for holiness and righteousness. Where once the Law was burdensome, now sin is burdensome. Where once, while in the flesh, we served sin, we now, being in the Spirit, serve righteousness. Yea, we confess with Paul, *For I delight in the law of God after the inward man. (Romans 7:22)* The believer now loves the entire Word of God, both the eternal Law and the everlasting Gospel. We love to do the righteousness expressed in the Law, even though we must lament with Apostle Paul of the sin that is yet in our flesh. And, since we still have sin in the flesh, we love also the Gospel which continually testifies sins forgiven in the name and blood of Jesus. ~

The Love of God

Pastor Dennis Hannu
Spruce Grove, Minnesota

THE APOSTLE JOHN, who is commonly referred to as the Apostle of Love, wrote in his first epistle these words: *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. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:9-10)* The love of God is clearly revealed to us through His Son, who suffers the punishment that was rightfully ours as fallen human beings. He lays down His life as a sacrifice for the sins of the entire world in order that the world might be saved. The magnitude of this sacrifice is staggering as we realize its impact for the world. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and has given us this message of reconciliation. *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)*

A God who loves in this way is hard to describe, as the song writer expresses in his hymn “The Love of God.” In the 1st verse, he writes:

“The love of God is greater far than tongue or pen can ever tell;
It goes beyond the highest star and reaches to the lowest hell;
The guilty pair, bowed down with care, God gave His Son to win:
His erring child He reconciled and pardoned from his sin.”

And in the 3rd verse:

“Could we with ink the ocean fill, and were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill, and every man a scribe by trade;
To write the love of God above would drain the ocean dry;
Nor could the scroll contain the whole, though stretched from sky to sky.”

This hymn was written in 1917 by Frederick M. Lehman who pastored Nazarene churches in Indiana and Illinois. He moved to Kansas City in 1911 where he became involved in starting the Nazarene Publishing House. The hymn has its roots in a Jewish poem called the Hadamut in the Aramaic language. The poem has 90 couplets or verses and was written in Germany in the 11th century by Rabbi Mayer. Throughout the poem the theme of God’s eternal love and concern for His people is evident. The 3rd verse of the hymn

“The Love of God” was evidently adapted from the section of the poem that reads as follows:

“Were the sky of parchment made, A quill each reed, each twig and blade,
Could we with ink the oceans fill, Were every man a scribe of skill,
The marvelous story Of God’s great glory Would still remain untold;
For He, most high The earth and sky Created alone of old.” (101 More Hymn Stories, Kenneth W. Osbeck)

**“O love of God, how rich and pure! How measureless and strong!
It shall forevermore endure—The saints’ and angels’ song.”**

The refrain of “The Love of God” reminds us of the new song that is ours now in Christ. This new song is spoken of in the Psalms, in Isaiah, and in Revelation. It is the song of the Lamb of God who has taken away the sin of the world. Our song is a new song because we have been changed by the grace of God. We no longer sing the dirges of the old existence but the joyous melodies of the new. *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)*

To fully express the love of God would indeed take the effort of all of creation and would still fall short. Perhaps the thing that is overlooked in God’s love is the ability He gives us now to live. We are able to live out our lives on this earth under His care and the care of the ones He has placed in our lives.

Our mothers, for instance, have cared for us from our birth, and in May we celebrate Mother’s Day. It is a time for us to remember their selfless love for us. It is a time to honor mothers and the role they carry out in our lives. We thank God that in His kindness He gave us mothers, and we say thank you to our mothers for their love and kindness to us.

In May or June our students graduate from high school and move on in their lives into careers or higher education. They now have the opportunity to perhaps live on their own away from their parents for the first time. This is also a gift from God who has formed us in such a way that we grow and mature into adults. We then encourage the graduates to always remain in the love of God. *And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. (1 John 4:16)*

The love of God enables us to live in this world. He has knit us together in our mother’s womb and He cares for us all the days of our lives for we are indeed His offspring. “O Love of God, How rich and pure! How measureless and strong!”

In His Love.



Presenting: “The Salvation of Mankind”

Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington

Suppose, for a moment, that the whole of human history was a play, acted on a stage. It would need a writer, a producer, and a director. It would need a hero and a villain, and a pathetic waif in dire need of rescue. This grand production wouldn't be a comedy or a tragedy, but the greatest drama ever undertaken.

IN THE THEATRICAL WORK CALLED “The Salvation of Mankind,” Almighty God is the playwright, producer, and director. God the Father wrote the plan of salvation into the script before the foundation of the world. At the proper time, God the Son carried out the plan in willing obedience to the Father, coming to earth to save mankind. The director is God the Holy Spirit, who calls lost and condemned creatures to Himself, gathering, enlightening and sanctifying them in the truth.

This drama needs a setting, the stage on which the action takes place. God spoke the set—the very universe—into existence with His own Word. He put the stars and planets in their orbits, and He positioned the Earth at the proper distance from the Sun to sustain life. God provided air and water, plants and animals, and the systems and food chains that keep them in place. He created everything necessary for survival, and then He made humans in His own image. It was all very good.

Every play must have a villain. Satan has been in that role since his rebellion, when he drew a third of the angels into battle against Almighty God. The devil was thrust out of heaven, along with his followers. He deceived our first parents in the Garden and, through their disobedience, sin and death came into the world. Satan still uses deception in the battle between darkness and light. He disguises himself as an angel of light, but he is the prince of darkness. He's been a liar from the beginning, and he prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for people to devour.

We have a part in God's grand play. We're the reason that the Hero came to earth. God's love for the world was so great that the Son gave up the glories of heaven and took on human flesh. He lived a sinless life, though He was tempted as we are. After Jesus was forsaken by His friends, and also of the Father, He died on a cruel cross outside Jerusalem. Our Hero didn't stay in the grave, though! He arose the third day, victorious over sin, death and the devil. He returned to the right hand of His Father in

heaven, but He will come back one day to judge the living and the dead.

Though we have a part in the play, we did not choose it. We were helpless and hopeless, unable to save ourselves. Mankind had turned away from God and rebelled against His commands. Like lost sheep, we had all gone astray; every one of us had turned to our own way. We were dead in our sins, but He brought us to new life. He lifted us out of the slippery clay and set our feet on the Solid Rock.

Jesus died to redeem all people, but not all know this, and not all believe it. We need the calling, gathering, and enlightening of the Holy Spirit to bring us to repentance. Only God's heroic action can save His Bride, the Church of believers who trust in Him.

Almighty God has done the life-saving, life-giving work, and He continues to this day. He speaks through His ambassadors on earth, proclaiming the Good News that we've been forgiven. He breathes life into us, eternal life, through His means of grace. He washes us through the Word and Sacraments, and dresses us in a spotless white gown, as a bride adorned for her groom. He feeds us with His own body and blood in the Sacrament of the Altar. We wait for the fulfillment, knowing that His rescue is complete and that He will come to receive us to Himself.

When the “play” is over and it's time for the curtain to come down, the skies will open and our Lord will return with the voice of the archangel and the

sound of God's trumpet. The dead in Christ will rise first, and then the living believers in Christ will join them in the air. We will be like Him, and we will see Him clearly for the first time. This heavenly feast will last forever. Literally forever. Be there. You don't want to miss it. Almighty God is the Hero, and He gets all the glory! ~



Christian Monthly Vol. LXXII—No. 4

Subscription Rate: 1 Year

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

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

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and Book Concern orders to:
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The *Christian Monthly* (ISSN 0009-5494) is published monthly for \$12 per year by the Apostolic Lutheran Book Concern, 19113 NE 144th Street, Brush Prairie, WA 98606. Periodical permit paid in Brush Prairie, Washington.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: PO Box 2126, Battle Ground, WA 98604

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



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The Great Serves the Mediocre

Pastor Jay Weidner
Laurium, Michigan



WE LIVE IN A MOST AMAZING TIME. Our technology enables us to do so many things that are awe inspiring. We humans communicate over many thousands of miles in an instant. What once took days, and even months, to reach us is now available on electronic boxes for our viewing even as the events unfold. Our ability to produce food allows us to live with excess. We actually can and do overeat regularly. We do with ease what our forefathers could only conceive of as imagination.

We humans are really great. Except we're not. In spite of our ability to do so many things, we don't, or rather we won't. So people still regularly die of starvation or lack of medication; they suffer from abuse and deprivation. All the things our technology could help to alleviate often continue almost unabated, because we aren't great. What God gives us through innovation and invention is too often wasted on greed and self-indulgence. Why? Simply because we're not great, we're mediocre at best.

God is great. God is good. So we thank Him for our food. This grace for children speaks the truth in simple form concerning God. He is great. He sends rain on both the just and the unjust, as the Scripture says. He never acts in self-indulgence but always in our interest. The great serves the mediocre. A strange irony and yet the most concrete of realities. We have a God who came to us to serve and not to be served. Our God makes the mediocre human being great by becoming one.

He is aware of every one who suffers, He hears their prayers and sends us out to bless them, to bring them the blessings of our technology, and even greater, the message of His grace: the Gospel. He indwells us and by His Spirit moves us from the realm of the mediocre into the dwelling of the great. In Him we become what we never would be by choice; we become servants and that makes us great. (Matthew 20:25-28)

Humanity needs the Gospel. May we be human enough in imitation of our God to share it. Thanks be to God for all of you who are touched with His compassion; you have indeed seen God. (Matthew 5:8) ~

The First Easter

Dead they left Him in the tomb And the impenetrable gloom,
Rolled the great stone to the door, Dead, they thought, forevermore.

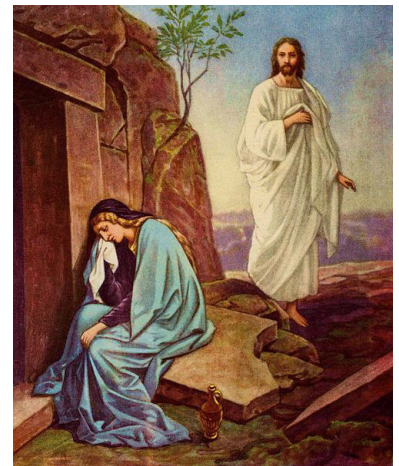
Then came Mary Magdalene Weeping to that bitter scene,
And she found, to her dismay, That the stone was rolled away.

Cometh Peter then and John, Him they'd loved to look upon,
And they found His linen there Left within the sepulcher.

"They have taken Him away!" Mary cried that Easter Day.
Low, she heard a voice behind: "Whom is it you seek to find?"

"Tell me where He is!" she cried, "Him they scourged and crucified.
Here we left Him with the dead!" "Mary! Mary!" Jesus said.

So by Mary Magdalene First the risen Christ was seen,
And from every heart that day Doubt's great stone was rolled away.



Edgar Albert Guest

Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turned herself, and saith unto him, Rabboni; which is to say, Master. Jesus saith unto her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God.

John 20:16-17