

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 2021

God Is Kind

Pastor Jay Weidner
Laurium, Michigan

But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

Ephesians 2:4-10

THE MESSAGE THAT PAUL DELIVERS is at the heart of the beauty of Easter: when Jesus rose from the dead He took us with Him. He made us who were dead in sins alive with Him, saving us and seating us together with and in Him in the heavenly places. Now He continues to show the riches of His grace to us by His kindness through Jesus Christ. Paul's *ages to come* aren't simply future but include the time we live in now. This is what God is doing now.

So here, then, is the truth of Easter: God is kind. He raised up the helpless and gave us new life. God is kind, a message that bears repeating because so often He is depicted by us as being anything but kind. God is kind. He has saved us by His grace, gifted us with salvation and recreated us. We are the work of His hand created in Christ to do as He wants us to. In His kindness God has given us the works we are to do as gift that now we may walk in them.

Paul makes this clear in another of his epistles as well: *For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again. Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh: yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more. 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 5:14-17

The love of Christ now holds us fast because we understand that the death of Christ is for all of humankind.

Therefore, at the end, all will be resurrected without exception. even as the Scripture says. some to eternal life and some to death, but all will be raised.

So God in His kindness has stood in our stead to deliver us, and we in His kindness no longer judge people in their oldness, but we know that through Christ they are new. No one is to be seen in the old but spoken to according to the new. The new creation has come in Christ; old things are gone and everything is new. This is now the way things are in the Spirit: they aren't discerned by the fleshly mind. Only by the Spirit can we see and understand God's work rightly. With Easter, through God's kindness, our world has changed forever. Our world is now simply awaiting the revelation of that truth in human history, though in the Spirit it's already seen.

So in the lyrics of Charles Wesley:

Soar we now where Christ has led, Alleluia!

Following our exalted Head, Alleluia!

Made like Him, like Him we rise; Alleluia!

Ours the cross, the grave, the skies. Alleluia!

A blessed Easter to all of you.

God's peace.



He is
RISEN

He is not here: for he is risen, as he said.

Matthew 28:6

Light Overcomes Darkness

Pastor Elmer Yliniemi

Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? ... Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent.

Matthew 27:45-46, 50-51

AT NOON, IT SUDDENLY BECAME DARK. The sun hid its face. The earth began to shake; rocks and cliffs were split and tombs were opened. God had spoken! All heaven and earth trembled at the death of the Son of God. When man crucified the Light of the World, darkness covered the earth. Even the centurion confessed, "Truly this man was the Son of God."

The fall of man in the Garden of Eden was so great that it brought death to all mankind. *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) God's love for fallen man could not cancel His holiness and righteousness. A price had to be paid. Jesus, the perfect, sinless Son of God, was the only sacrifice that could satisfy God's righteousness and justice. Jesus left the throne of heaven to come to earth for one purpose: to die, to redeem you and me.

The events of Good Friday and Easter were not a surprise occurrence brought about by man. This was part of God's eternal plan. He promised a Savior for mankind already in the Garden of Eden.

When Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, He knew He had to go through the death on the cross. He could take the betrayal and denial of His closest friends; He could take the mocking and beating before the crowds, but His greatest agony was that He would be forsaken by the Father when He took upon Himself the sins of the world. Jesus knew the horror of our separation from God forever and experienced it in the space of time when He cried out, *My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?* It was not the Pharisees and scribes that killed Jesus that day. It was the love of the Father for you and me that sent His Son to the cross.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. (John 3:16)

While Jesus was on earth, He showed His love and power by teaching and performing miracles. He preached repentance and forgiveness, healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, opened the eyes of the blind and raised the dead. This threatened the power structure of that day, as it still does today. We don't like to have our position and our comfortable life threatened nor our secret sins exposed and dealt with. This often brings about anger and bitterness, as it did to the Pharisees and scribes of that day.

His followers and disciples were still looking for an earthly king and kingdom. They could not understand their Lord being seemingly powerless in the face of death. But did

not Isaiah already prophesy that He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth. (Isaiah 53:7) When He was crucified, they heard His words, *Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.* (Luke 23:34)

The disciples saw only defeat. However, His final cry "It is finished!" was really a cry of victory, not defeat. This is when the powers of God shook the earth and everyone was filled with fear. When it seemed that man had gained control, God revealed His power over the universe.

Jesus had earlier said, *Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.* (John 10:17-18)



His final cry "It is finished!" was really a cry of victory, not defeat.

Imagine the hopelessness, fear and despair of life itself that the women and disciples of Jesus felt as they left the horrible scene they had just witnessed. One man, however, got the message. The message of eternity had become very real to one of the thieves on the cross who was facing a hopeless death. When he cried out to Jesus to remember him, Jesus said, *Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise.* (Luke 23:43) In His pain, the arms of Jesus were stretched out to help others. He promised paradise to this unworthy thief that turned to Him believing.

But praise God! The story does not end there! On the third day, as the women were going to the sepulchre to anoint the body of Jesus, they came face to face with an angel who said, *He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you. And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.* (Matthew 28:6-8)

Go quickly and tell that He is risen! That was the message the women received at the empty tomb. It is the good news that life is more powerful than death. This is the good news to a dying world living in fear and bondage.

Death could not keep Him, because He was without sin. Death cannot keep you and me if our sins are cleansed by the blood of Jesus and we walk by faith in Him. *I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live.* (John 11:25) This is what gives us hope!

Have you experienced the joy of that message? Whatever the storms of life may bring, He wants to tell you today, "Fear not! I have overcome the world, Satan and death! I will never leave thee nor forsake thee." He asks us to go quickly and tell others.

We can praise God for the amazing power of His victorious resurrection! *Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.* (John 16:33) ~

He Is Risen

Pastor Nicholas Kandoll
New York Mills, Minnesota

The first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, when it was yet dark, unto the sepulchre, and seeth the stone taken away from the sepulchre. Then she runneth, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the sepulchre, and we know not where they have laid him.

Peter therefore went forth, and that other disciple, and came to the sepulchre. So they ran both together: and the other disciple did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulchre. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulchre, and seeth the linen clothes lie, And the napkin, that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself. Then went in also that other disciple, which came first to the sepulchre, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead. Then the disciples went away again unto their own home.

But Mary stood without at the sepulchre weeping: and as she wept, she stooped down, and looked into the sepulchre, And seeth two angels in white sitting, the one at the head, and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them,

Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him. And when she had thus said, she turned herself back, and saw Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou have borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him, and I will take him away. 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. Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that he had spoken these things unto her.

John 20:1-18

"He is risen" is the traditional announcement that rings forth on Easter Sunday. This is the most central event for

Christians. Paul says that if Jesus didn't rise from the dead then our faith is in vain. If He isn't risen, then we won't rise either (1 Corinthians 15:14-19).

If someone wanted to disprove our faith all they would have to do is show us the bones of Jesus. It seems like this would be quite the tall order today. A cursory look of the History Channel or various magazines show us that people **think** they find His bones all the time. None of these claims ever really seem to hold water, though.

Most scholars, Christian and atheist alike, agree that Jesus existed, and He was crucified by the Romans, and His body disappeared. His followers then said they saw Him after He had risen from the dead, these being the same followers who were huddling in fear behind locked doors. They went on to give their lives for their Risen Lord.

Really the only hang up is what happened to His body. Here are the main three alternative theories that skeptics put forward in order to cast doubt on the resurrection of Jesus:

- 1.) That He was in a coma or a swoon, that Jesus didn't actually die
 - 2.) That His followers stole the body
 - 3.) That His followers all hallucinated
- These theories have all been thoroughly debunked by various biblical scholars.

1.) If Jesus managed to survive crucifixion and a spear thrust into His side and enter into a coma, that should have made the Romans believe He was dead. This still doesn't account for how He got out of the

tomb, past the guards and appeared to His disciples.

2.) If it's all just a vast conspiracy theory and the disciples planned and executed a grave robbery why would they go and die for Jesus? Would you willingly die for a lie? It doesn't make any sense.

3.) I think it's more likely that someone rises from the dead than it is for multiple people in multiple places to all hallucinate the same thing.

All of these theories are very much disproven by the disciples and their actions. It's hard to say people were lying when they went on to die for those very beliefs. We can take comfort in the fact that our faith is not in vain, that Jesus did, in fact, rise from the dead. We can take comfort in the fact that just as He rose from the dead so, too, will we.

If this type of study interests you there is a book entitled *The Case For Christ* by Lee Strobel that you may enjoy.

HE IS RISEN INDEED!



Appearance of Jesus Christ to Maria Magdalene
Alexander Andreyevich Ivanov, Wikimedia Commons

The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

Psalm 118:22-24

Christ is again manifest. He has been, and He still is, the despised and rejected of men. But He is the foundation on which His Church rests, and the ornament of the beauteous fabric. It was a glorious day when, rising from the dead, He was displayed as the Son of God. It is indeed to each believer a glorious day when He shines in their hearts as all their salvation.

Henry Law

Given and Shed for YOU

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children of God,

Hello to you! I hope all is well with you today. My family and I are doing well.

As I begin this letter, I am reflecting on the loss of our daughter-in-law and granddaughter who were taken from this life just a year ago, March 6. When you receive this, it will be past that year mark and our family with our son and his children and a host of friends will have paused to remember those we lost. We know that they loved God and His Son Jesus and have gained their heavenly reward, which is given to those who believe. They knew that Jesus died that they may have eternal life. We press on in that hope also. We will experience a big change in our life, as our son will move from our home to his own newly-modeled home. He and his children have lived with my husband and me for one year. God has carried us all the way and the prayers of His children have been felt. We have been blessed by so many. Thank you for your prayers.



JESUS WAS WITH HIS FATHER God before the beginning of time. Then the time was fulfilled for the Savior to come into the world, and God sent His only Son to be born as a babe of a woman named Mary. He grew up as a child, like I did and like many of you who are still young.

When Jesus was just twelve, He went with His parents for a trip to Jerusalem for the week of Passover. On this trip Jesus began His Father's work that He was sent to do. His Father's work was to teach the people about His Father God and to preach the good news of why He came. *Mark 1:15: The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.*

Jesus was 33 years old when He was crucified. He suffered many things at the hands of the Jews who shouted, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" and at the hands of the soldiers who whipped Him, laughed at Him, and pounded the nails in His hands and feet. They raised the cross upright and secured it

in the ground. Then a soldier thrust a spear into Jesus' side, and out came water and blood.

But it wasn't just the Jews and soldiers involved in His death: it was you and me and all the sins of the world that hung Him there. His was the blood SHED FOR ALL MANKIND to take away sin, AND it was personally shed for YOU!

No, we were not there that dreadful day, but Jesus had to die for all mankind. We were not there in person to dump all of our sins at His feet, and seek forgiveness before He gave up the ghost and died, but we are forgiven through the blood He shed. Jesus loved us so much that He gave His life for each of us so through believing in His name we can have eternal life.

In *John 10:10-11*, Jesus says: *The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.*

Vs. 18: No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

Jesus had told His disciples several times that He would be betrayed by men and killed, but that after three days He would rise again. This was a hard thing for them to hear and to comprehend.

After Jesus was laid in a tomb, the stone door was made tight. Soldiers were put near to watch over it to make sure none of Jesus' followers came to steal His body and make everyone think He did rise after three days.

No, there was no need for soldiers, as by the authority that Jesus speaks of in the above verses, He did arise the third day just as He had said. He spent 40 days more on the earth with His disciples and many others. Then on a given day He walked His last steps on this earth as He led His disciples out to a place called Bethany. He raised His hands heavenward and blessed the disciples, and while He was blessing them, He was lifted up from the ground and taken up to God in heaven.

The Bible tells us a day is coming when Jesus will return through the clouds just as He went. On His return, He will take all who believe on His name with Him to heaven.

It will be sweet to be reunited with our loved ones again and have the privilege (a special right granted only to particular people or a group) of getting to live again FOREVER!

I pray that all who profess to love Jesus really do, and that their lives are examples of reverencing Him.

Keep your hearts open to Jesus and learn of Him, the Lover of your soul. NO ONE loves you more. I will leave you with Paul's closing remarks in *Philippians 4:19: My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

I wish you all a blessed, happy Easter!

In God's peace.

Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Matthew 28:16-20

The Fifth Commandment

Excerpt, The Large Catechism

Thou shalt not kill.

We have now completed both the spiritual and the temporal government, that is, the divine and the paternal authority and obedience. But here now we go forth from our house among our neighbors to learn how we should live with one another, every one himself toward his neighbor.

Therefore God and government are not included in this commandment, nor is the power to kill, which they have, taken away. For God has delegated His authority to punish evil-doers to the government instead of parents, who aforetime (as we read in Moses) were required to bring their own children to judgment and sentence them to death. Therefore, what is here forbidden is forbidden to the individual in his relation to any one else, and not to the government.

Now this commandment is easy enough, and has been often treated, because we hear it annually in the Gospel of St. Matthew (5:21), where Christ Himself explains and sums it up, namely, that we must not kill, neither with hand, heart, mouth, signs, gestures, help, nor counsel. Therefore it is here forbidden to every one to be angry, except those (as we said) who are in the place of God, that is, parents and the government. For it is proper for God and for every one who is in a divine estate to be angry, to reprove and punish, namely, on account of those very persons who transgress this and the other commandments.

But the cause and need of this commandment is that God well knows that the world is evil, and that this life has much unhappiness; therefore He has placed this and the other commandments between the good and the evil. Now, as there are many assaults upon all commandments, so it happens also in this commandment that we must live among many people who do us harm, so that we have cause to be hostile to them.

As when your neighbor sees that you have a better house and home, a larger family and more fertile fields, greater possessions and fortune from God than he, he is sulky, envies you, and speaks no good of you.

Thus by the devil's incitement you will get many enemies who cannot bear to see you have any good, either bodily or spiritual. When we see such people, our hearts, in turn, would rage and bleed and take vengeance. Then there arise cursing and blows, from which follow finally misery and murder. Here, now, God like a kind father steps in ahead of us, interposes and wishes to have the quarrel settled, that no misfortune come of it, nor one destroy another. And briefly, He would hereby protect, set free, and keep in peace every one against the crime and violence of every one else; and would have this commandment placed as a wall, fortress, and refuge about our neighbor, that we do him no hurt nor harm in his body.

Thus this commandment aims at this, that no one offend his neighbor on account of any evil deed, even though he have fully deserved it. For where murder is forbidden, all cause also is forbidden whence murder may originate. For many a one, although he does not kill, yet curses and utters a

wish, which would stop a person from running far if it were to strike him in the neck.

Now, since this inheres in every one by nature and it is a common practise that no one is willing to suffer at the hands of another, God wishes to remove the root and source by which the heart is embittered against our neighbor, and to accustom us ever to keep in view this commandment, always to contemplate ourselves in it as in a mirror, to regard the will of God, and with hearty confidence and invocation of His name to commit to Him the wrong which we suffer. Thus we shall suffer our enemies to rage and be angry, doing what they can, and we learn to calm our wrath, and to have a patient, gentle heart, especially toward those who give us cause to be angry, that is, our enemies.

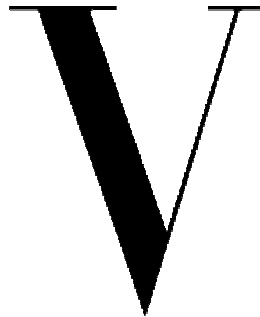
Therefore the entire sum of what it means not to kill is to be impressed most explicitly upon the simple-minded. In the first place, that we harm no one, first, with our hand or by deed. Then, that we do not employ our tongue to instigate or counsel thereto. Further, that we neither use nor assent to any kind of means or methods whereby any one may be injured. And finally, that the heart be not ill disposed toward any one, nor from anger and hatred wish him ill, so that body and soul may be innocent in regard to every one, but especially those who wish you evil or inflict such upon you. For to do evil to one who wishes and does you good is not human, but diabolical.

Secondly, under this commandment not only he is guilty who does evil to his neighbor, but he also who can do him good, prevent, resist evil, defend and save him, so that no bodily harm or hurt happen to him, and yet does not do it.

If, therefore, you send away one that is naked when you could clothe him, you have caused him to freeze to death; if you see one suffer hunger and do not give him food, you have caused him to starve. So also, if you see any one innocently sentenced to death or in like distress, and do not save him, although you know ways and means to do so, you have killed him. And it will not avail you to make the pretext that you did not afford any help, counsel, or aid thereto, for you have withheld your love from him and deprived him of the benefit whereby his life would have been saved.

Therefore God also rightly calls all those murderers who do not afford counsel and help in distress and danger of body and life, and will pass a most terrible sentence upon them in the last day, as Christ Himself has announced when He shall say (Matt. 25:42-43): *I was an hungred, and ye gave Me no meat; I was thirsty, and ye gave Me no drink; I was a stranger, and ye took Me not in; naked, and ye clothed Me not; sick and in prison, and ye visited Me not.* That is: You would have suffered Me and Mine to die of hunger, thirst, and cold, would have suffered the wild beasts to tear us to pieces, or left us to rot in prison or perish in distress. What else is that but to reproach them as murderers and bloodhounds? For although you have not actually done all this, you have nevertheless, so far as you

Commandment



were concerned, suffered him to pine and perish in misfortune.

It is just as if I saw some one navigating and laboring in deep water, and struggling against adverse winds, or one fallen into fire, and could extend to him the hand to pull him out and save him, and yet refused to do it. What else would I appear, even in the eyes of the world, than as a murderer and a criminal?

Therefore it is God's ultimate purpose that we suffer harm to befall no man, but show him all good and love; and, as we have said, it is specially directed toward those who are

our enemies. For to do good to our friends is but an ordinary heathen virtue, as Christ says (Matt. 5:46).

Here we have again the Word of God whereby He would encourage and urge us to true noble and sublime works, as gentleness, patience, and, in short, love and kindness to our enemies, and would ever remind us to reflect upon the First Commandment, that He is our God, that is, that He will help, assist, and protect us, in order that He may thus quench the desire of revenge in us.

This we ought to practise and inculcate, and we would have our hands full doing good works. ~

Easter and the Forgiveness of Sins

Pastor Bryan Wolfmueller



[Jesus] was delivered up for our offenses, and was raised again for our justification.

Romans 4:25

With these words St. Paul declares the “why” of the resurrection, the purpose of Easter: Jesus was raised for our justification. But what does this mean?

“Justification” means to declare righteous and holy, or to be forgiven of all sin. St. Paul, then, is saying that Jesus was raised to forgive our sin. Jesus, in His death and in His resurrection, is taking our place, the place of all mankind. Just as Jesus’ condemnation is our condemnation and His death is our death, so Jesus’ coming out of the grave is our life and salvation, our forgiveness.

This is one of the favorite topics of C.F.W. Walther, the first pastor and synodical president of the Missouri Synod. In an Easter Sermon preached in 1846, he says:

Jesus, when He was raised from the dead, was absolved for all sin, but since it was not for Himself but for all people that Christ died, who was it really that was set free, who was it really that was absolved when Jesus rose from the dead? It was all people! Just as all Israel triumphed when David defeated Goliath, so all humanity triumphed when Jesus defeated sin, death and Hell. And so we hear Paul saying in his second epistle to the Corinthians, “We are convinced that one has died for all; therefore all have died.” And again in his epistle to the Romans, “Then as one man’s trespass led to condemnation for all men, so one man’s act of righteousness leads to acquittal and life for all men.” Just as Christ’s condemnation was the condemnation of all mankind, Christ’s death the death of all mankind, Christ’s payment the payment for all mankind, even so Christ’s life is now the life of all mankind, His acquittal the acquittal of all mankind, His justification the justification of all mankind, His absolution the absolution of all mankind.

(C. F. W. Walther, *Christ’s Resurrection—Your Absolution*, Quoted from the essay *Walther, Law and Gospel and the State of the Church Today* by Rev. Daniel Preus)

Try as I might, there is no saying this better or more clearly than Pastor Walther does here. These words are worthy of careful thought and meditation.

First, consider the comparison between Jesus and King David. Just as all of the people of Israel won victory when David slew Goliath, so all the people of the world won the victory when Jesus overcame sin, death, the devil and Hell. Jesus is the conqueror who mounts in triumph and rides forth from the gloom of death into life eternal, and we ride with Him, for He has taken upon Himself our humanity that He might redeem us and deliver us.

Second, Walther quotes Paul, *For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous.* (Romans 5:19) Through the sin of one man, Adam, the darkness and dread of sin and death plunged upon the entire human race. But, through the life of one man, Jesus Christ, the light of life and forgiveness shone upon the entire human race. *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 15:21-22)

What does it mean that Jesus was “raised for our justification”? It means that Jesus was on the cross suffering the wrath of God which we deserved, winning the forgiveness of all of our sins, all so that we could share in His resurrection and eternal life and enjoy the benefits of His cross: life, salvation, and the forgiveness of sins.

The Lord’s Blessings in Christ.

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Romans 5:1-5

En-Courage One Another

Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington

Words are funny things. I am often struck in a new way by a word that we've used for years and years. The word "encourage" calls to my mind inspiring someone when times are difficult, using words to comfort a person in pain, or offering hope for the future to a loved one in distress. It can almost be seen as a "cheerleader" type of word, like "Come on! You've got this! Keep on keeping on!"

Then I read a book that used the word encourage written as en-courage. That one little hyphen was a light bulb moment! En-courage literally means to fill with courage! Here's an online KJV dictionary definition:

To give courage to; to give or increase confidence of success; to inspire with courage, spirit, or strength of mind; to embolden; to animate; to incite; to inspire.

The first definition is "to give courage to." How did I miss that all these years?! It's right there in the word itself: en (put in) courage. What, then, is encouragement in the scriptural sense?

WHEN MOSES WAS DRAWING NEAR to the end of his life, God told him that he would not lead Israel over the Jordan River into the Promised Land. God had chosen Joshua, the son of Nun, for that task. God tells Moses, in Deuteronomy 3:27-28: *Get thee up into the top of Pisgah, and lift up thine eyes westward, and northward, and southward, and eastward, and behold it with thine eyes: for thou shalt not go over this Jordan. But charge Joshua, and encourage him, and strengthen him: for he shall go over before this people, and he shall cause them to inherit the land which thou shalt see.*

For many chapters, Moses then talks to the people, reminding them of God's law: he speaks against idolatry, retells the Ten Commandments and about the golden calf. He reminds them that they are God's chosen people, and gives them much instruction in the law. He tells of blessings for obedience to God and curses for disobedience. The covenant is renewed and Moses tells the people that **when** they fall away, if they repent, God will forgive and have mercy on them. If they repent the Lord God will restore them, gather them, prosper them, delight in them.

And Moses went and spake these words unto all Israel. And he said unto them, I am an hundred and twenty years old this day; I can no more go out and come in: also the Lord hath said unto me, Thou shalt not go over this Jordan. The Lord thy God, he will go over before thee, and he will destroy these nations from before thee, and thou shalt possess them: and Joshua, he shall go over before thee, as the Lord hath said. And the Lord shall do unto them as he did to



*Sihon and to Og, kings of the Amorites, and unto the land of them, whom he destroyed. And the Lord shall give them up before your face, that ye may do unto them according unto all the commandments which I have commanded you. **Be strong and of a good courage**, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.*

Moses begins to fill the people with courage. Moses en-courages them that the Lord will go before them into this new land, and He will destroy their enemies. Joshua will go before them.

Then Moses en-courages Joshua with similar words:

*And Moses called unto Joshua, and said unto him in the sight of all Israel, **Be strong and of a good courage**: for thou must go with this people unto the land which the Lord hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it. And the Lord, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he*

will not fail thee, neither forsake thee: fear not, neither be dismayed. (Deuteronomy 31:1-8)

Be strong and be en-couraged in the face of your enemies. Do not fear! Do not be dismayed! The Lord your God will be with you. He will not fail you or forsake you.

These shadows in the Old Testament give us courage in the New. Our Lord Jesus has gone before us, and He has destroyed our enemies: sin, death and the devil. He will never leave us or forsake us. His promises are sure. Our victory is accomplished.

Let us proclaim the Gospel to our neighbors, giving voice to the wondrous works of God. Let us speak the Good News of Life to a dying world. Let us en-courage—plant courage in—one another, and all the more as we see the Day approaching.

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The Triumph of the Seed of Abraham

Pastor Chuck Bylka
South Range, Michigan

Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect. For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise. Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator. (Galatians 3:16-19)

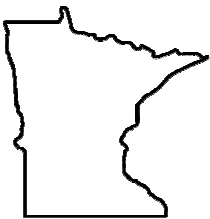
The story of Abraham is certainly a remarkable one. God called Abraham (then Abram) to leave his home country to go to an unknown land that God will show him. God promises to make of Abraham a great nation, to make his name great, and to bless all families of the earth through him. The problem is that Abraham is already seventy-five years old and has no children. Where will this great nation come from? It is not until Abraham is a hundred years old that God blesses Abraham and Sarah with Isaac. Just when the promise is beginning to come to fulfillment, God commands Abraham to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice. If Abraham does so, what will become of God's promise? In faith, Abraham obeys, but God intervenes to spare the life of Isaac and all of Abraham's descendants to follow.

As compelling as Abraham's story is, God's promise to bless all families and nations of the earth through the seed of Abraham would not be fulfilled until many generations later. The Apostle Paul says that the promise would not be fulfilled by many seeds, but by one seed ...**which is Christ**. This is the same seed spoken of in the garden of Eden, who would crush the head of the serpent. This is the same seed that would fall to the ground and die in order to bear much fruit. **And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. (John 12:32)**

During the time of Holy Week and Easter, we celebrate the triumph of the seed of Abraham. Jesus Christ enters into death in order to destroy it. As He goes to Calvary's cross, Christ delivers us from sin, death and the devil. We have the forgiveness of sins by His blood, newness of life and the certain hope of eternal Life, through the death and Resurrection of the seed of Abraham. May God fill our hearts with joy as we celebrate the finished work of Our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ!

But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man... 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. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted. (Hebrews 2:9, 14-18)

Yours in Christ.



Modified Annual Convention

We are pleased to announce that the Spruce Grove congregation in Wolf Lake, Minnesota, will host a modified Annual Convention this summer with in-person delegate meetings and limited services. Meetings will be held on Friday, June 25, and services will be Saturday and Sunday, June 26-27, 2021. There will be an online option for delegate participation in the meetings and the services will be broadcast online.

Our desire is to return to normal in-person meetings and services, but due to space limitations and governmental health restrictions, we cannot yet hold a full convention.

Please check the ALCA website at www.apostoliclutheran.org for more details in the coming months, and please keep the Spruce Grove congregation in your prayers as they prepare for this event.

On behalf of the Central Board of the Apostolic Lutheran Church of America,

Gary Bertram, Chairman
David Myllymaki, Secretary