

# 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.

August 2021

## Heaven in View

Pastor Jason Salmi  
Vancouver, Washington

**W**E ALL KNOW WHAT IT TAKES to get ahead in this life. The world of celebrity and success tells us that the guiding principle of our lives should be, “Look out for number one.” After all, if you don’t, no one else will. And this makes sense if one believes that this life is all that there is. If all that you get is what you get now, then it stands to reason that every one of us ought to “Get while the getting’s good,” and accumulate as much success, wealth and pleasure as we can. The way that this is done is simple: promote yourself at every opportunity. Make sure that you get yours before anyone else gets theirs. And if someone else looks like they may become a threat to your own success, then you should do whatever is necessary to knock them down (figuratively speaking, of course).

This way of thinking actually flies one hundred and eighty degrees in the face of what the Bible teaches us. And this is the case primarily because the Bible first tells us that this life is not all that there is. That what we get now in this life is only fleeting and passing away.

More than that, it doesn’t even begin to compare with what God has in store for us when we see His kingdom by sight, and no longer with the eyes of faith.

It’s only when this is understood that the words of Paul in his letter to the Philippians begin to make sense. *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 2:3-4) To anyone who sees this world and their life now as all they will ever get, words like that sound crazy! Count others as being more significant than me? Look to others’ interests as well as my own? That’s no way to get ahead in this life.

St. John wrote, *Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.* (1 John 3:2) Yes, when Jesus returns, we shall be like Him! That is to say that we will be resurrected to eternal life just as He was. Not only that, but through faith in Him, we are God’s children now. We are heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:17). Rather than this life being all that we get, we stand to inherit the very Kingdom of Heaven!

With that in view, we no longer listen to the advice of the world which tells us that we are best served by looking out first for ourselves. Instead, we are freed from slavery to our own passions and are able to serve others. Jesus is not only the One who frees us from sin, but serves as the example of how we really ought to live: *Let this (humble and self-sacrificing) mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.* (Philippians 2:5-8) The One who is the very highest made Himself the very lowest. In doing so, He purchased our redemption and earned for us the right to become children of God.

### Help Each Other

**Look not every man on his own things,  
but every man also on the things of others.**  
Philippians 2:4



Dear Saints, as children of God, let us all seek to love and serve others. And when asked why we live in a way that doesn’t make sense to the world around us, we may have the opportunity to share with them the love of Christ which has changed us. As Jesus said, *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.* (Matthew 5:16) And through you, Jesus will be drawing others to Himself. May the grace of the Lord be with you. ~

# My Help Comes from the Lord

Pastor Dennis Hannu  
Wolf Lake, Minnesota

*I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth. He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber. Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand. The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul. The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.*

Psalm 121:1-8

**T**HIS PSALM IS PART OF a group of psalms, 120-134, that are called the “Songs of Ascents” or “Songs of Degrees.” It is thought that they are called this either because the Israelites sang these psalms as they made their way up to Jerusalem, or they were sung or read on the fifteen steps in the temple between the Court of the Women and the Court of the Israelites.

The Songs of Ascents are traditionally sung during the Jewish Feast of Booths or Tabernacles in the autumn. The Feast of Tabernacles commemorates Israel’s wandering in the wilderness, thus the pilgrimage theme of these psalms. These psalms would be sung as the worshipers approached the hills of Jerusalem.

Psalm 121 opens up with the psalmist saying, “I lift my eyes to the hills.” It could be that the psalmist was looking at the hills of Jerusalem when he wrote this psalm. Hills and mountains are quite significant in the Bible as we see God speaking so often from mountains or hills as He communicates with His people. Moses encountered God at Horeb, the mountain of God, in the burning bush. He would later receive the Ten Commandments from God on Mt. Sinai. It was on Mt. Carmel that Elijah had his showdown with the prophets of Baal. In the New

Testament we see Jesus giving a sermon on a mountain. We also see Him on a mountain praying, and later He was transfigured before Peter, James, and John on a mountain. Jesus was crucified on a hill called Golgotha. It was from the mountain called Olivet that Jesus ascended into heaven.

The psalmist asks the question, “From where does my help come?” He looks to the hills and wonders where his help comes from. He then makes this great statement, “My help comes from the Lord, who made heaven and earth.” The hills and mountains of this earth offer no help for us, but rather the One who created them and so often used them to communicate with His people is the One who helps us. The Lord is indeed the One who provides everything we need to sustain life in the here and now. He is never asleep on the job

but rather keeps watch over us always. He is our strength and our protector. He is with us always even unto the end of the world.

The church still today looks to the hills and asks the question, “From where does my help come?” The answer lies within the Lenten season. It is during this season that we make our annual journey toward “Holy Week.” We make our way by faith to the hill called Mt. Calvary. There we behold our Lord being crucified, and we realize He is being crucified because of my sin. We sing with the song writer:

O Sacred Head now wounded,  
With grief and shame weighed down,  
Now scornfully surrounded,  
With thorns Thine only crown!  
Once reigning in the highest  
In light and majesty,  
Dishonored now Thou diest,  
Yet here I worship Thee.  
Lo, here I fall, my Saviour,  
Tis I deserve Thy place:  
Look on me with Thy favor,  
Vouchsafe to me Thy grace.  
Receive me, my Redeemer;  
My Shepherd, make me Thine,  
Of every good the Fountain,  
Thou art the Spring of mine!

-Paul Gerhardt

It is from this hill that we find our help. It is on this hill that we see Jesus our Lord and as we observe, by the eyes of faith, Jesus in His suffering, death, and resurrection, we are reminded of another mountain recorded in *Hebrews 12:18-24*:  
*For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that*

*burned with fire, nor unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard intreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:)* But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

Our help truly has come from the Lord who spoke this world into existence and has breathed new life into His fallen creation. *2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

God’s peace.



# Glory Versus the Cross

Gene Edward Veith

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**M**OTHER TERESA WAS A LIVING saint, according to the popular mind, compassionately caring for the sick and dying and projecting a love that brought cynical secularists to their knees. After her death, the Vatican put her on a fast track to sainthood. But then a book on her life published some of her personal writings that showed Mother Teresa was wracked with spiritual depression and a sense that God had abandoned her.

The atheist Christopher Hitchens, who had earlier written a book attacking Mother Teresa for her pro-life views, crowed at the news. See, he wrote in Newsweek, she didn't believe in this Christianity stuff at all. But even many who admired her were flabbergasted that this saintly woman who talked so much about serving Christ had such trouble feeling His presence. Maybe she wasn't a saint after all.

For me, though, the news of Mother Teresa's dark night of the soul made me think that maybe she really was a saint. Not in the Roman Catholic sense of a spiritual superhero. But in the biblical sense of a sinner whose hope is in Christ and not in herself. She did not follow her feelings, trust in her good works, or enjoy mystical experiences. Rather, she walked by faith and not by sight (2 Cor. 5:7).

Luther was like that. He was subject to titanic glooms, as the poet Francis Thompson called them, times of spiritual struggle, terror, and despair. But Luther said that these inner trials drove him to trust the Word of God, not his feelings, and to cling not to his experiences but to the objective cross of Jesus Christ.

In writing about these matters, Luther identified what would become our contemporary culture's blind spot when it comes to spiritual matters. He distinguished between what he called a "theology of glory" and "the theology of the cross."

A theology of glory expects total success, finding all the answers, winning all the battles, and living happily ever after. The theology of glory is all about my strength, my power, and my works. A theologian of glory expects his church to be perfect and always to grow. If a theologian of glory gets sick, he expects God to heal him.

And if he experiences failure and weakness, if his church has problems and if he is not healed, then he is often utterly confused, questioning the sufficiency of his faith and sometimes questioning the very existence of God.

But, Luther pointed out, when God chose to save us, He did not follow the way of glory. He did not come as a great hero-king, defeating His enemies and establishing a mighty kingdom on earth. Rather, He came as a baby laid in an animal trough, a man of sorrows with no place to lay His head. And He saved us by the weakness and shame of dying

on a cross. Those who follow Him will have crosses of their own: "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matt. 16:24).

Not that we have to suffer for our own sins. But faith in the Gospel, putting our trust in what Christ accomplished for us on His cross, entails acknowledging our own weakness, the failure of our own works, the complete abnegation of our glory.

And as we find ourselves in the cross of Jesus, we can find Him in the far lesser crosses that we have to bear. When Christians suffer, according to Luther, Christ is with us in our suffering. Spiritual depression can drive us closer to Him, who knows better than anyone what it feels like to be wracked with physical pain, to be abandoned and rejected by those He loved, to be forsaken by His Father.

In Luther's terms, Christ is "hidden" in our sufferings. If a child is hiding in the room, we do not see him, but he is nevertheless there. Similarly, in our sufferings, we do not perceive the hidden Christ, but He is nevertheless truly present, to be apprehended by faith.



***But Luther said that these inner trials drove him to trust the Word of God, not his feelings, and to cling not to his experiences but to the objective cross of Jesus Christ.***

To be sure, after the cross, Christ was glorified. God raised Him from the dead, and He ascended to God's right hand. And Christ will come again "in glory" to judge the living and the dead. And we too are raised to new life. We too will be glorified in the eternal life to come, where we really will experience victory, have all of our problems washed away, and enjoy complete understanding.

But our access to that glory is through the cross. "To God alone be glory," we say. Notice how the critical word in those Reformation slogans is "alone" (sola). God does have glory in Himself. But we do not.

Even in the secular spheres, contemporary Americans are mad after the theology of glory, expecting success on the job, perfect families, and either self-help remedies or government action to solve all our problems. But Americans today cannot handle suffering. We would rather die than suffer. We would rather be killed than suffer. Send for Dr. Kevoorkian!

But the truth of Christianity is evident in that everyone does, in fact, have problems, struggles, and sufferings. And this can be their point of contact for Christ, who on the cross not only "was wounded for our transgressions" but also "has borne our griefs" and "carried our sorrows" (Isa. 53:4-5). ~



Next to the Word of God, music deserves the highest praise. The gift of language combined with the gift of song was given to man that he should proclaim the Word of God through Music.

Martin Luther

# That the World May Know, Our God Reigns

Gwen Wilson  
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children,

Hello to all of you. I pray you are well. We are doing well, thanks to God. He carries you and us and all of His children.

I've been thinking about where you may be in your life, and where I and my family are after dealing with losing our daughter-in-law and granddaughter last March. It has changed our lives. We would never have dreamed things could change so much for us.

These thoughts bring me to some individuals in the Bible who had big stuff in their lives and they were never the same. Yet God was ever present and gently leading, sometimes with correction.



## Adam and Eve

Adam and Eve were the first people on the created earth, living in a perfect world where there was no sin. There was not much of care in the world. All was perfect.

After they ate the fruit that was forbidden, wow, did life change! They discovered that they needed clothes, then they ran and hid from God fearing what He might do to them. They were forced to leave that beautiful garden, NEVER to return.

God was obviously very displeased with them, but He in His love created clothes for them from animal skins. These were the first animals whose blood was spilled to cover wrong.

They had to begin a life of hardship, hard work, sweat and tears. The memory of their perfect garden life soon faded but would always be remembered.

God was leading them yet, and would for the rest of their days carry them through every trial.

## Joseph

Young Joseph had to travel with his family from his birthplace to a new home far away. He was growing up in the new land called Canaan. His job was watching the sheep in the fields. He was seventeen at this time. He was his father's favorite son. His brothers hated him for this and could not speak nice to him.

Joseph was given the gift of dreaming and had some very serious dreams. When his brothers heard the dreams, they hated him even more. The dreams were signs that the brothers would serve this youngest brother.

Joseph's brothers were shepherds and were tending sheep in some distant fields. Joseph's father sent him to check on them and see that all was well. When the brothers saw Joseph coming, they made a plan to kill him so they would not have to hear any more of the dreams. They said, "Here comes the dreamer!" Imagine having your siblings turn so cold against you. One brother named Reuben would not consent to killing him and suggested throwing him into a pit instead. Reuben's plan was to wait until the brothers forgot about Joseph sitting in the pit. Then Reuben would get Joseph out and take him safely back to his father. A better plan but still awful, right?

On this day Joseph was wearing a beautiful colorful coat his father had given him. His brothers had agreed to Reuben's plan, and they took the colorful coat off of Joseph and threw him into the pit. Fortunately the pit was dry. Better, but still not good, right? The brothers sat down to eat and, seeing some Ishmaelite traders coming, decided to sell their brother to them. These brothers kept coming up with quite the ideas, each one in an attempt to redeem themselves and quiet this "dreamer." Joseph was pulled from the pit and handed over to the traders who paid for him, and he became their slave.

The brothers, minus Reuben, came up with another idea to kill an animal, and they dipped Joseph's coat into the blood and took it home to their father, who thought his son was killed by a beast and mourned greatly. The brothers were silent and kept what they knew to themselves.

Things were not going well for Joseph. His brothers had turned against him, he lost his beautiful coat, he was sold and became a slave, and he was taken to the strange land of Egypt, far from home. The Ishmaelites sold him to Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh. Joseph did not see his father or brothers again for 22 years.

Joseph never stopped serving his God and God used Joseph in Pharaoh's house. The years passed and Joseph found favor in the eyes of Pharaoh, but there were plenty of hardships, too. At one time he sat in prison for two years after being accused of being with Pharaoh's wife, which was a lie told by the wife. Joseph was again used by God to interpret Pharaoh's dream and was given an even higher position in Pharaoh's house. Joseph saved the country and the people, including his brothers and father, from a terrible drought.

This account ends wonderfully with Joseph being reunited with his family and his old father, who was overjoyed to see his son again. God turned many a terrible thing into good and He can do and has done that in our lives.

## Moses

Baby Moses was loved by his father, mother, and sister. The new king of Egypt oppressed the people of Israel. He was nervous because he realized the Israelites were mightier than his people. He ordered that every boy born would be tossed in the river, but the girl babies could be saved. Of course, the order was not followed by the nurses who helped deliver the babies, and God allowed the people to grow great in number.

Moses was one of those babies who was to be destroyed but his mother hid him at home as long as she could. She was determined to save him and wove a basket that served as a

little boat and placed Moses in the grass at the river's edge. Can you imagine if your mom had to do that with you? I think that would be just awful as a mom. His sister hid nearby to see what would happen to him. How scary that was for his sister! She loved her baby brother and I'm sure was sick with worry for him.

Pharaoh's daughter came to bathe and found him. After Moses' own mom fed him until he was a little bigger, Moses was brought to live with Pharaoh's daughter. It makes my heart sad for Moses' mother, father and sister to have him taken away to live at a stranger's house for the rest of his life. How his parents and sister's hearts must have broken. They put their trust in God and He carried them.

Moses was robbed of his childhood with his family, but as we know God was with him and using him greatly in Pharaoh's house. He eventually was called by God to lead His people out of Egypt. It was a huge task and it was HARD a lot of the time but God led and carried him. God saw Moses' life from beginning to end and used him to carry out His plan for His people, who had been slaves for 400 years. That's a long time with many generations of people.

Moses probably never expected that his life would be the way it was or end the way it did.

In many accounts in the Bible, young men, girls and boys have had very difficult things come their way, but God was

living in their hearts and each one was used to spread the word of faith and hope to many a lost soul.

God can use you and everyone who believes in Jesus to spread the good news of the saving grace of Jesus to a lost soul or a seeking one. We never know who we may even have a short chat with that will open the door to speak of Jesus and what a sacrifice He made, and His great Father's love and forgiveness for each person and His desire that all would be saved and come live with them. **That the world may know, our God reigns!**

We can think of difficult times we have been through or maybe are even going through right now. Hang onto Jesus. Give your troubles to Him, big or small; He wants to hear them all. He promises to bring us through to the very end. I know it can be hard to put one's full trust in God's will but He knows that. I want to encourage my own heart and yours to pray for strength to trust fully. God will give us what we need.

Don't keep secrets that will harm you or anyone else. Talk to a trusted person and you will feel better. Joseph's brothers kept a bad secret and it hurt their father and did them no good. either.

I hope you will all have a good day. Keep serving your Lord and He will bless you. Enjoy your summer.

*God's peace.*

## The Ninth and Tenth Commandments

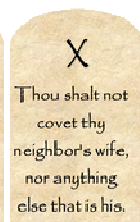
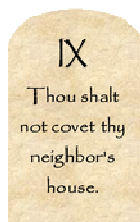
*The Large Catechism*

**Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house.  
Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife,  
nor his man-servant, nor his maid-servant, nor his cattle, nor anything that is his.**

These two commandments are given quite exclusively to the Jews; nevertheless, in part they also concern us. For they do not interpret them as referring to unchastity or theft, because these are sufficiently forbidden above. They also thought that they had kept all those when they had done or not done the external act. Therefore God has added these two commandments in order that it be esteemed as sin and forbidden to desire or in any way to aim at getting our neighbor's wife or possessions; and especially because under the Jewish government man-servants and maid-servants were not free as now to serve for wages as long as they pleased, but were their master's property with their body and all they had, as cattle and other possessions.

Moreover, every man had power over his wife to put her away publicly by giving her a bill of divorce, and to take another. Therefore they were in constant danger among each other that if one took a fancy to another's wife, he might allege any reason both to dismiss his own wife and to estrange the other's wife from him, that he might obtain her under pretext of right. That was not considered a sin nor disgrace with them; as little as now with hired help, when a proprietor dismisses his man-servant or maid-servant, or takes another's servants from him in any way.

Therefore (I say) they thus interpreted these commandments, and that rightly (although their scope



reaches somewhat farther and higher), that no one think or purpose to obtain what belongs to another, such as his wife, servants, house and estate, land, meadows, cattle, even with a show of right or by a subterfuge, yet with injury to his neighbor. For above, in the Seventh Commandment, the vice is forbidden where one wrests to himself the possessions of

others, or withholds them from his neighbor, which he cannot do by right. But here it is also forbidden to alienate anything from your neighbor, even though you could do so with honor in the eyes of the world, so that no one could accuse or blame you as though you had obtained it wrongfully.

For we are so inclined by nature that no one desires to see another have as much as himself, and each one acquires as much as he can; the other may fare as best he can. And yet we pretend to be godly, know how to adorn ourselves most finely and conceal our rascality, resort to and invent adroit devices and deceitful artifices (such as now are daily most ingeniously contrived) as though they were derived from the law codes; yea, we even dare impertinently to refer to it, and boast of it, and will not have it called rascality, but shrewdness and caution.

In this lawyers and jurists assist, who twist and stretch the law to suit it to their cause, stress words and use them for a subterfuge, irrespective of equity or their neighbor's necessity. And, in short, whoever is the most expert and cunning in these affairs finds most help in law, as they themselves say: The laws favor the watchful.



This last commandment therefore is given not for rogues in the eyes of the world, but just for the most pious, who wish to be praised and be called honest and upright people, since they have not offended against the former commandments, as especially the Jews claimed to be, and even now many great noblemen, gentlemen, and princes. For the other common masses belong yet farther down, under the Seventh Commandment, as those who are not much concerned whether they acquire their possessions with honor and right.

Now, this occurs most frequently in cases that are brought into court, where it is the purpose to get something from our neighbor and to force him out of his own. As (to give examples), when people quarrel and wrangle about a large inheritance, real estate, etc., they avail themselves of, and resort to, whatever has the appearance of right, so dressing and adorning everything that the law must favor their side, and they keep the property with such title that no one can make complaint or lay claim thereto.

In like manner, if any one desire to have a castle, city, duchy, or any other great thing, he practises so much financiering through relationships, and by any means he can, that the other is judicially deprived of it, and it is adjudicated to him, and confirmed with deed and seal and declared to have been acquired by princely title and honestly.

Likewise also in common trade where one dexterously slips something out of another's hand, so that he must look after it, or surprises and defrauds him in a matter in which he sees advantage and benefit for himself, so that the latter, perhaps on account of distress or debt, cannot regain or redeem it without injury, and the former gains the half or even more; and yet this must not be considered as acquired by fraud or stolen, but honestly bought. Here they say: First come, first served, and every one must look to his own interest, let another get what he can.

And who can be so smart as to think of all the ways in which one can get many things into his possession by such specious pretexts? This the world does not consider wrong, nor is it punished by laws, and will not see that the neighbor is thereby placed at a disadvantage, and must sacrifice what he cannot spare without injury. Yet there is no one who wishes this to be done to him; from which we can easily perceive that such devices and pretexts are false.

Thus it was done formerly also with respect to wives: they knew such devices that if one were pleased with another woman, he personally or through others (as there were many ways and means to be invented) caused her husband to conceive a displeasure toward her, or had her resist him and

so conduct herself that he was obliged to dismiss her and leave her to the other. That sort of thing undoubtedly prevailed much under the Law, as also we read in the Gospel of King Herod that he took his brother's wife while he was yet living, and yet wished to be thought an honorable, pious man, as St. Mark also testifies of him.

But such an example, I trust, will not occur among us, because in the New Testament those who are married are forbidden to be divorced, except in such a case where one shrewdly takes away a rich bride from another. But it is not a rare thing with us that one estranges or alienates another's man-servant or maid-servant, or entices them away by flattering words.

In whatever way such things happen, we must know that God does not wish that you deprive your neighbor of anything that belongs to him, so that he suffer the loss and you gratify your avarice with it, even if you could keep it honorably before the world; for it is a secret and insidious imposition practised under the hat, as we say, that it may not be observed. For although you go your way as if you had done no one any wrong, you have nevertheless injured your neighbor; and if it is not called stealing and cheating, yet it is called coveting your neighbor's property, that is, aiming at possession of it, enticing it away from him without his will, and being unwilling to see him enjoy what God has granted him.

And although the judge and every one must leave you in possession of it, yet God will not leave you therein: for He sees the deceitful heart and the malice of the world, which is sure to take an ell in addition wherever you yield to her a finger's breadth, and at length public wrong and violence follow.

Therefore we allow these commandments to remain in their ordinary meaning, that it is commanded, first, that we do not desire our neighbor's damage, nor even assist, nor give occasion for it, but gladly wish and leave him what he has, and, besides, advance and preserve for him what may be for his profit and service, as we should wish to be treated.

Thus these commandments are especially directed against envy and miserable avarice, God wishing to remove all causes and sources whence arises everything by which we do injury to our neighbor, and therefore He expresses it in plain words: Thou shalt not covet, etc. For He would especially have the heart pure, although we shall never attain to that as long as we live here; so that this commandment will remain, like all the rest, one that will constantly accuse us and show how godly we are in the sight of God! ~



## My Shepherd

My Shepherd is the living Lord: now shall my needs be well supplied;  
 His loving care and holy Word will be my safety and my guide.  
 In pastures where salvation grows He makes me feed, He gives me rest;  
 There living water gently flows, and food is given, divinely blest.  
 Though I walk through the gloomy vale where death and all its terrors are,  
 My heart and hope shall never fail: my Shepherd holds me in His care.  
 Amid the darkness and the deeps, God is my comfort, God my stay;  
 His staff supports my feeble steps, His rod directs my doubt-filled way.  
 Surely the mercies of the Lord attend His household all their days;  
 There will I dwell, to hear His Word, to seek His face, to sing His praise.

Isaac Watts

# The Service of Parenting

Lois Matson  
Yacolt, Washington

Now before the feast of the passover, when Jesus knew that his hour was come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father, having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end. And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him; Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God; He riseth from supper, and laid aside his garments; and took a towel, and girded himself. After that he poureth water into a bason, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel wherewith he was girded. Then cometh he to Simon Peter: and Peter saith unto him, **Lord, dost thou wash my feet?** Jesus answered and said unto him, What I do thou knowest not now; but thou shalt know hereafter. Peter saith unto him, Thou shalt never wash my feet. Jesus answered him, If I wash thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean. So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. **If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them.**

John 13:1-17

**W**HEN JESUS WAS ON THE earth, the custom of the day was to wear sandals. As people walked the dusty, dirty roads of the towns and cities in Israel, their feet became very dirty as well. When anyone came to visit a home for a meal, the lowliest servant (or slave) in that home was given the task of washing the feet of the arriving guests. Using a basin of water and a towel, the servant would kneel and cleanse the guests' dirty feet in preparation for them to sit at the table and share in a meal.

Another custom of the day was that the tables were close to the ground, and many low sofas and pillows were scattered around it. When reclining at the table to eat, their feet were not tucked under the table as they are in our day, with our higher tables and chairs. It was important that people's feet were clean, because they were visible and brushing against the pillows and even against the other guests.

After Jesus had washed the disciples' feet at their final Passover meal together, He asked them if they knew what He had done. He said, "You call me 'Master' and 'Lord,' and you are right, for so I am. If I, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you."

What does it mean to wash one another's feet? What did Jesus actually do when He washed their feet?

Peter's reaction to the foot-washing gives us a little insight. First Peter questions, "Lord, do YOU wash MY feet?" The words 'you' and 'my' are emphatic and in strong contrast

in the Greek. Peter was horrified that his Lord, his Master, would do the job of a lowly slave. When Jesus responds that he will understand later, Peter flatly states, "You will NEVER wash my feet!" This was not a job for his Rabbi, his beloved Teacher.



Jesus was teaching His disciples about *service*.

There is great opportunity for service in parenting. The natural and spiritual preparations begin even before the birth of the child. Caring for a newborn requires *service*, as any parent of a newborn can tell you. Training a toddler to become a civilized member of society requires *service*. And on it goes, through adulthood and beyond. This service may not be appreciated or even noticed by the child who is served.

Jesus served His disciples by washing their feet, but, ultimately, He served all of mankind to much greater lengths. His service was to death on a cross. For the fussy newborn and the selfish toddler. For the rebellious teen and the impatient parent. For you. For me.

Service is not without its reward. There is joy and blessing in the service of parenting. Jesus proclaims that we will be happy if we know and do these things. So press on in service, dear parent, though sometimes the task is difficult! Jesus has given us His example.

**If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them. John 13:17**

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## The Word of God Speaks

Pastor Jay Weidner  
Laurium, Michigan

*We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.*

2 Peter 1:19-21

*And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction.*

2 Peter 3:15-16

**T**HE WORD OF GOD IS a most gracious gift provided by God through the Holy Spirit to direct the understanding and guide the seekers of truth into paths of righteousness. As St. Peter said above, it is a light to lighten even the darkest path. However, when it is wrested from its context, torn from its sense and applied in piecemeal fashion it leads to destruction, also as St. Peter stated above. In every age we must be on our guard to make sure what we hear and read is truly God's Word and not the idea of human beings hidden in a strange mixture of words from the sacred text applied according to human contrivance.

Luther was well aware of this temptation in his time as well, as witnessed in these excerpts from his commentary on Psalm 117:

This is a short, easy psalm, doubtless made this way so that everyone might pay more attention to it and remember better what is said. No

one can complain about the length or content, much less about the sharpness, difficulty, or profundity of the words. Here we find only short, precise, clear, and ordinary words, which everyone can understand if he will only pay attention and think about them. All God's words demand this. We must not skim over them and imagine we have thoroughly understood them, like the frivolous, smug, and bored souls who, when they hear some word of God once, consider it old hat and cast about for something new. They think they have thoroughly mastered all they have heard. This is a dangerous disease, a clever and malicious trick of the devil. Thus he makes people bold, smug, forward, and ready for every kind of error and schism. This is really the vice known as ἀκηδία, slothfulness in God's service, against which St. Paul exhorts us (Rom. 12:11) to be fervent in spirit.

I have often felt this particular devil and temptation myself, and even today I cannot guard and cross myself against it too carefully. I confess this freely as an example to anyone; for here am I, an old doctor of theology and a preacher, and certainly as competent in Scripture as such smart alecks. At least I ought to be. Yet even I must become a child...

I am convinced by experience that God's Word can never be entirely mastered, but that Ps. 147 speaks truly: "His understanding is beyond measure" (v. 5), or Ecclesiasticus: "Who drinks of me shall thirst even more after me" (24:29). Now if I have such difficulties, what will happen to those smug, self-satisfied charlatans who neither struggle nor labor? Therefore I certainly believe that there is not one who truly knows everything the Holy Spirit says in this short psalm.

Luther, M. (1999). Luther's works, vol. 14: Selected Psalms III. (J. J. Pelikan, H. C. Oswald, & H. T. Lehmann, Eds.) (Vol. 14, pp. 7-8). Saint Louis: Concordia Publishing House.



At this Seminary we believe in studying God's Word as it is clearly presented in the text of the Sacred Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. If you struggle, as all of us do, with that devil of smug, self-assuredness and recognize the only means of combatting it is found in the study of God's Word as written, then please feel free to join us for class. The Word of God speaks for itself and I assure you, we listen.

God's peace.