

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 2023

Precious Seed

Alvin Holmgren
September 2001 CM

IN THE BIBLE, GOD'S WORD is often likened to the natural seed that we sow in the earth. A familiar New Testament example is the Parable of the Sower, one of the many parables taught by Jesus. In the Great Commission, Jesus instructed His disciples to sow the seed when He said, *Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.* (Mark 16:15) The mission of the Church remains the same today.

In our part of the world, summer will soon be over, harvest has begun, and winter will presently be upon us. This is also the time when we return to our winter schedule: Sunday School begins, and other activities are put back into place. However, our reduced summer schedule is not to be looked upon as a vacation from the work of the kingdom—from the sowing of the precious Seed.

To begin with, I am sure that each of us has prayed for the work of God's kingdom. We have attended church services here at home, and, if possible, in the areas where we have traveled and spent our vacations. We have endeavored to minister to those in need. We have visited the sick and tended the dying. We have our national Church Convention as well as Fall Services in more than one location. The radio ministries are year-round broadcasts.

In contemplating the work that is before us, three passages of Scripture come to my mind. The first one is the 126th Psalm. It is believed to be a song of degrees concerning the return of the Israelites from their 70-year captivity. Time and space will not permit us to go into detail on that aspect of the Psalm. However, I believe we can look at both their captivity and their release as a type of redemption by Christ from the bondage of sin.

When the people of Israel were captives in Babylon, they hung their harps upon the willow trees (Psalm 137). Their deliverance was like a dream to them. It seemed too good to be true. Their mouths were filled with laughter, and their tongues with singing. Even the heathen said that their Lord had done great things for them. There were tears, but also a

promise of blessing: *They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.* (Psalm 126:5) He that goes forth weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. They who sow in the tears of godly sorrow and the joy of their salvation have a promise of blessing that is recorded by Prophet Isaiah. This is the second part of Scripture that I would like to consider.



The Parable of the Sower
Jan van't Hoff, Gospel Images

This prophet had a positive attitude for his labor and its fruitfulness. He said, *For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.* (Isaiah 55:10-11)

God's Word provides a twofold benefit: it provides bread for the eater and seed for the sower. The one who sows must

also eat, and the one who eats will also sow.

This brings us to the third passage of Scripture that has been my meditation: the need for patience, a virtue that God must supply. *Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain.* James 5:7) We know how difficult it is to wait. Patience is not learned in a day. But we must learn it if we are to receive the crown of life.

Today God's Word has taught us its similarity to the seed that we sow in the ground. It has also given sure promises of its effectiveness and its fruitfulness. In addition, it has asked us to remember how the farmer has to wait patiently for the crop to ripen and be ready for harvest.

Patience remains quiet and hopeful even when it sees no results. Patience trusts the secret inner workings of the Holy Spirit. It reckons with the perfect will of God who must be recognized as the Lord of all of those who sow the Seed, and as the Lord of the harvest as well. ~

God Is Greater

L. L. Laestadius

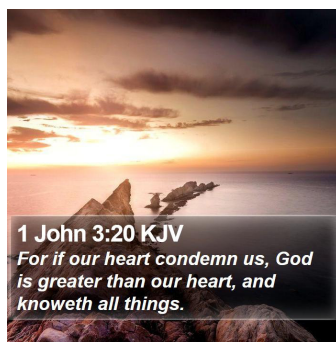
Sermon 51, New Postilla excerpts

And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him. For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knoweth all things. Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God.

1 John 3:19-21

NOW SAYS APOSTLE JOHN, *...if our heart condemn us, God is greater...* With these words he indicates that no Christian should believe his own heart when it condemns him; rather he must believe more the gracious promises of God, which indicate that Christ has come to save the sinners and not the righteous. A Christian must ever flee to the great Cross-bearer as a sinner and must believe he will become saved by grace and not by merit. If a Christian were judged according to his merit he would be lost entirely. But by grace will he become saved, if he believes firmly upon Him who is greater than self-righteousness, which preaches condemnation through one's own heart. That is why Luther also preaches that he fears his own heart more than the Sultan of Turkey. Every Christian, whose conscience is awake, indeed feels his heart to be evil, wicked and foul; namely, the carnal heart which is in the old man, which Paul names the "outward man." The soul, or the spiritual heart, which Paul calls the "inward man," is purified with the blood of Christ; now it remains for a Christian to be able to make a distinction, so that the enemy could not confuse the effects of the "outward" and the "inward," the "old man" and the "new man" in his nature. May the great Judge of Hearts grant us the light of His Holy Spirit that we could explain this matter!

For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin... (Romans 7:22-23) Here Paul must be a sinner according to the flesh, but holy in spirit. The intellect cannot comprehend this: that a sinner is holy, the unclean is pure, and how the unrighteous is righteous. We possess the belief that when sins have been forgiven, we must believe also that the sinner is holy, the unclean is pure, and the unrighteous is righteous. A Christian is indeed, according to the flesh, unclean and unrighteous as the devil; but through grace he is holy and righteous, although the devil of self-righteousness preaches: "You are



not holy and righteous; but you are sinful, unrighteous, unclean and like the devil." Now that self-righteousness becomes an accuser and begins to condemn; and when this condemnation is proclaimed in the heart, and in his mind seemingly condemning a Christian, then John says: "If our heart condemn us, God is greater than self-righteousness;" and if self-righteousness condemns, God will release one from that condemnation. God has forgiven the sins of the penitent. The Son of God has paid for their unrighteousness, which He carried from the Garden to the hill of Golgotha and through Himself brought it down into the grave; and thereby He has made them holy and righteous. Believe now, you penitent, that you are by God's grace holy and righteous!

Be comforted now, you precious redeemed souls, for the accuser of God's children has been cast down upon the earth. He has no more power over those who have taken the great Cross-bearer and thorn-crowned King, Him who has conquered for their Advocate before the Father. John heard a loud voice from heaven say: *Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death. Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and of the sea! for the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time.* (Revelation 12:10-12)

Therefore rejoice and be exceedingly glad, you precious redeemed souls, for great is your reward in heaven! Rejoice, you elect, for your accuser has been cast out from heaven! He has no more power to accuse you before God. You have an Advocate before the Father and He prays for you and speaks well of you. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, all you God's children, and cry with a loud voice that you have overcome by the blood of the Lamb and by the testimony of His Word! If you strive in your most precious faith until death, you too shall soon sing, together with the angels and all the precious redeemed souls. You shall soon sing the new hymn upon Mount Zion, and say: *Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony.*

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

John 14:27

It is a very comforting and pleasing final word that He leaves them. It does not consist of cities and castles or of silver and gold; it is peace, the greatest treasure in heaven and on earth. He does not want His disciples to be fearful and mournful; He wants them to have true, beautiful, and longed-for peace of heart. "For so far as I am concerned," Christ says, "you shall have nothing but sheer peace and joy. All My sermons to you and all My associations with you have let you see and realize that I love you with all My heart and do for you everything that is good, and that My Father is most graciously disposed toward you. That is the best I can leave to you and give you; for peace of heart is the greatest peace." As it is said, "Joy of heart exceeds all other joy; sadness of heart surpasses all other woe."

Martin Luther

My Train

Author Unknown

Submitted by the late Alvar Helmes in February 2022

Editor of the Christian Monthly, April 1975 – June 1995

At birth we board the train and meet our parents,
And we believe they will always travel on our side.

However, at some station
Our parents will step down from the train,
Leaving us on this journey alone.

As time goes by,
Other people will board the train;
And they will be significant:
Our siblings, friends, children,
And even the love of your life.

Many will step down

And leave a permanent vacuum.

Others will go so unnoticed that we don't realize they vacated their seats.

This train ride will be full of Joy, Sorrow, Fantasy, Expectations, Hellos, Goodbyes, and Farewells.

Success consists of having a good relationship with all passengers,

Requiring that we give the best of ourselves.

The mystery to everyone is that we do not know at which station we ourselves will step down;

So, we must live in the best way: Love, Forgive, and offer the Best of Who we are.

It is important to do this because when the time comes for us to step down and leave our seat empty, we should leave behind beautiful memories for those who will continue to travel on the train of life.

I wish you a joyful journey on the train of life.

Reap success and give lots of love.

More importantly, thank God for the journey.

Lastly, I thank you for being one of the passengers on my train.



When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. Then came the soldiers, and brake the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him. But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they brake not his legs: But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe.

John 19:30-35)

MEMORIAL DAY IS A TIME to remember with thanksgiving the great sacrifice which numerous men and women have given to bring and preserve our great freedoms which we still enjoy this day. It is something that we should never forget, and also ask God that He would have mercy on the United States which has gone so far from what it was founded upon, and bless us still for His name's sake.

Our text speaks of the greatest battle fought, and the greatest sacrifice given, that we might be free indeed. It is Jesus Who fought this battle for us against the great enemy of our soul, and wrought victory. Yes, in His dying for us, He crushed the serpent's head, and shed His holy blood for the cleansing balm that will heal all the sin wounds that Satan inflicted with his fiery darts, and to give eternal life to all who believe. This great sacrifice was eternally acceptable to the heavenly Father for the salvation of mankind, and He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. This is the greatest and most blessed Memorial Day ever. May we never forget what Jesus suffered for our peace, what bondage He put Himself under, that we might be free, what hell and condemnation He endured, that we might be in heaven forever, what condescending to the lowest hell unto death He went, that we might be lifted out of the lowest hell, and resurrected unto newness of life, and to eternal life in heaven. O Beloved, is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by, when you see all that Jesus endured for us? It should melt our cold hearts in fervent gratitude for His mighty love for us. Thank You, Jesus!

Paul Coponen; Chassell, Michigan

Submitted by Ralph and Barbara Somero; New Ipswich, New Hampshire

Our Goodly Heritage

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children far and near,
Hello to each of you. I pray this finds your day going well.
My husband and I just returned from our annual ALC convention. It was a wonderful time together under the hearing of God's Word and joining our many voices together to sing about our God, His Son and our walk of faith. There were a lot of young people, and they had very good turnout at the youth gatherings. It's just a great place to be.
I want to touch on our godly heritage today.

OUR GOOD AND
GODLY HERITAGE

is something we should not take for granted. It is precious. In it and through it we have a great hope, and that is everlasting, never-ending life in heaven. That is a serious matter and I pray that we would hold it close to our hearts. It is a gift that we have done nothing to deserve, the gift that came from God Himself through His Son Jesus whom He sent from the heavenly glory to be like us in flesh and blood but pure and holy. Then at the end of His life here He would take the entire world's sin, along with mine and yours, and even endure His Father God turning His face away from Him, and dying on that rugged cross, pouring out all His blood - FOR US - in payment for all of our sin! We have done nothing to deserve this forgiveness but it IS towards us and again it is a gift.



Sometimes a person may be given a gift and the giver may tell the receiver, "You deserve it." But in the case of what Jesus did for mankind, we did not deserve it, but we can thank the Lord and receive His forgiveness by faith.

Lets look at Psalm 16. Matthew Henry's Commentary says this is golden Psalm and should be highly treasured.

Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust.

David is asking God for protection from death and from sin that is ever ready to make one stumble. We see a similar example in Christ's prayer to God, "Father, save me from this hour."

O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord: my goodness extendeth not to thee;

But to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.

Here we, along with David, can admit and recognize that God is our Lord and pray to be good stewards in reaching out and sharing Christian charity to fellow believers. That would be what God desires.

Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips.

I think it safe to say that we know what false gods are and that worshiping them is a dead work. Anything we make of greater importance than Jesus Christ is wrong. In the Old Testament the idol worshipers killed animals and drank the blood and poured it out to their idols. God will not and cannot accept this, nor even make mention of the false god's names.

The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot.

The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly (beautiful) heritage.

David solemnly and humbly, with confidence, sees that the Lord is his all in all and is the reason for him inheriting what he has. It is not because of anything he has done, but he, along with us, have been chosen to inherit such goodness. It's a beautiful thing and I pray each believer takes it by faith and gives up themselves and desires to only follow the Lord.

I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.

I have set the Lord always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory (whole being) rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.

David is thankful for God's counsel and we can be also. God leads, guides and instructs us even in the night. He is ever ready to help and watches over us. We can rejoice to be in God's family and rest fully in the hope that we are so fortunate to have before us, the hope of heaven and eternal life. Do think on that.

For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.

Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

This verse references Jesus when He was to die for the people. He descended into hell (the grave, that was to be for all after the fall in the garden of Eden). We know that God was not going to leave His Son there, just as He will not allow the grave to have any power over us who believe. It will only be a resting place.

God led Jesus through the valley of darkness as He was suffering at the time of His death and kept Him solidly on the path of life.

When Jesus was making His last trip to Jerusalem, His disciples did not want Him to go because they knew people would be waiting there to kill Him. But Jesus set His face like flint and there was no changing His plan ordered by God His Father, and with joy He was going to die. After Jesus died He was going back to His place in heaven at the Father's right hand. Here He dwells where there are pleasures forevermore.

Just think, we will not sit at God's right hand but we will inherit these same pleasures, life eternal forever.

I want to encourage you, dear reader, to seek the Lord all the days of your life. He has blessings for us more abundant than we can imagine. Those blessings begin in our life here and then in perfection of heaven.

I hope you have a wonderful day. Every believer is precious to God and He has your name written in the palm of His hand. Now that is love. A **goodly heritage** is Jesus living in our hearts, in the body of believers, and finally in heaven.

When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened (hampered). Proverbs 4:12

Be still, and know that I am God. Psalm 46:10

The kingdom of God is within you. St. Luke 17:21

God's peace.

The Congregation (and Its Oddities)

Pastor Phil Wilson
Hockinson, Washington

WE ARE LIVING in trying times. Should it be any surprise to us? Jesus prophesied to His disciples that such times as these would come to pass prior to His return. The Word tells us in Romans 8 that the whole of creation is in bondage waiting for deliverance. This bondage fell upon all of mankind when the first parents fell into the trap laid by the liar and deceiver and they sinned; death and destruction entered into the world because of that seemingly insignificant transgression. Now as we look around us we see nations rattling their sabers; the powder keg which is the Middle East, with Israel at the center; we hear of earthquakes, tsunamis, hurricanes, and floods; loved ones are stricken with cancer, maimed in accidents; marriages and families are ripped apart by every sin known to mankind; societal battle lines between right and wrong are drawn deeper and deeper into the sand... Jesus entered into this in His incarnation, walked in it as a man, and spoke to His disciples: *And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. (Luke 21:28)*

Many of these tribulations happen to “someone else” and, therefore, we are not affected much by them. As the tragedies hit closer to home, we suddenly begin to take notice and, like the fable of old, may cry out, “The sky is falling!” We do not take heed of the words of Jesus: *But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them... (John 16:4)*

Anyone involved within the physical church is accosted with another problem, a problem that too often enters and grips our lives, controlling our conversations with others and our dinner-time chats with family. What I am writing about are the daily struggles that enter into the body of believers; some call it politics, others issues, others “soul care” or “Christianity,” gossip possibly the driving force of all.

There was a man in the Bible who was healed of blindness by Jesus. While his friends, family, acquaintances, and leaders in the synagogue should have been elated, they rather bickered among themselves, wondering how it could be that this man Jesus, a sinner, could heal another and what should they do with the parents of this blind man who were in the throes of societal pressure. In the middle of the surrounding chaos, the clear message of faith rang forth: *...One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see. (John 9:25)*

As troubled and tainted by sin as the church on earth may be, where else could one go where he may hear the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ? We attend a troubled and tainted church. Yes, the enemy of the soul follows us to church. We may look around us and be overwhelmed, captivated, or repulsed by the issues of the day, wrongly thinking that we must be the only congregation in the world that argues about things. How do we measure up against others? Are we embarrassed, ashamed, or disappointed about our worship style, our simple building, our hominess, or (heaven forbid) our doctrine? Are the winds of change and discontent so great that you cannot hear the voice of the Good Shepherd calling out with love to the penitent? Are your own struggles concerning your congregation so great that you could never ask another to attend your church? My prayer is that none of these would be the case. Put aside the cares of this life and rest in what Jesus offers; yes, even our church with all its oddities. Church: a being full of wrinkles, sores and uncomely members; but, underneath, a place where the songs of Zion are sung, the children are taught, the sacraments are administered for strengthening on the journey, and repentance and remission of sins is preached in Jesus’ name. May God help us all through the Holy Spirit, which points us to Jesus, the One who has borne all our oddities. ~

A Call to Christlikeness

YESTERDAY THE LAMB WAS SLAIN and the door-posts were anointed, and Egypt bewailed her firstborn, and the destroyer passed us over, and the seal was dreadful and reverend, and we were walled in with the precious blood. Today we have clean escaped from Egypt and from Pharaoh; and there is none to hinder us from keeping a feast to the Lord our God—the feast of our departure; or from celebrating that feast, not in the old leaven of malice and wickedness, but in the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth, carrying with us nothing of ungodly and Egyptian leaven.

Yesterday I was crucified with Him; today I am glorified with Him; yesterday I died with Him; today I am quickened with Him; yesterday I was buried with Him; today I rise with Him. But let us offer to Him Who suffered and rose again for us—you will think perhaps that I am going to say gold, or silver, or woven work or transparent and costly stones, the mere passing material of earth, that remains here below, and is for the most part always possessed by bad men, slaves of the world and of the prince of the world. Let us offer ourselves, the possession most precious to God, and most fitting; let us give back to the Image what is made after the Image. Let us recognize our dignity; let us honor our Archetype; let us know the power of the mystery, and for what Christ died.

Let us become like Christ, since Christ became like us. Let us become God’s for His sake, since He for ours became Man. He assumed the worse that He might give us the better; He became poor that we through His poverty might be rich; He took upon Him the form of a servant that we might receive back our liberty; He came down that we might be exalted; He was tempted that we might conquer; He was dishonored that He might glorify us; He died that He might save us; He ascended that He might draw to Himself us, who were lying low in the fall of sin. Let us give all, offer all, to Him Who gave Himself a ransom and a reconciliation for us. But one can give nothing like oneself, understanding the mystery, and becoming for His sake all that He became for ours.

Gregory of Nazianzus

Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled

Pastor Joel Baker
Plymouth, Minnesota

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know. Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way? Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

John 14:1-6

SOME OF OUR SAINTS ARE being promoted to their heavenly home. Many of our saints are currently struggling both physically and otherwise. The stage has been set, as those who are standing for righteousness, honesty, truthfulness, and life itself, for attacks upon those individuals and soon the Church itself. The boldness of the enemy/the ungodly has been unleashed. Yet we need not have a spirit of fear nor be intimidated as we walk with Jesus. He promises to prevail against the gates of hell and that the Holy Spirit within us will assist us in doing so also.

So what are we to do?

1) Have hope—Jesus has prepared a place for each of us who believe in and trust in Him. Those who are being promoted into His presence and can see and experience that place are being blessed.

2) Comfort and encourage the widows, widowers, friends, and family who are grieving and missing loved ones now with the Lord.

3) Give generously to groups who uphold God's Word and bring it into the public square on your behalf, as well as our missionary partners and Foreign Missions—and who are financially accountable to an oversight group.

4) Pray, pray, and pray some more for Jesus' intervention to set things right according to His will.

5) There have been some outstanding examples of people helping others in need, even in our own congregation. Use

their examples as role models. Call people you haven't seen for a while and check on how they're doing and what kind of prayers and/or help they need. 6) Immerse yourself in God's Word and take notes. Attend the men or women's Bible Study in your congregation or at a Bible-believing Church near your home.

7) Resist the pressure to conform to the values of this world knowing there may be a cost for doing so. Whatever you do, do so in love and respect as much as it depends upon you.

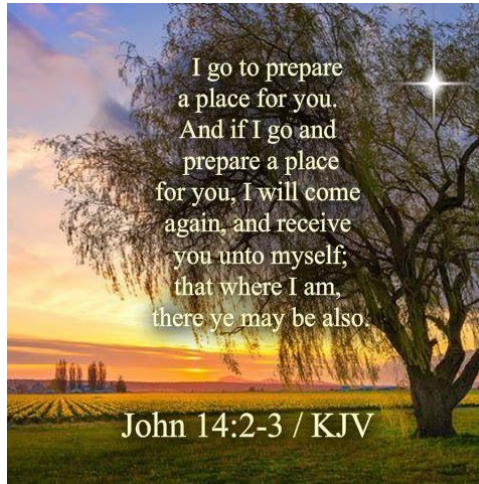
This type of resistance may look different for each of us.

8) Share your hope in the Lord whenever and wherever you are able and how that hope is available to all people.

I'm sure you will think of ways or the Lord will lead you into ways along with these suggestions.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord: And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates. (Deuteronomy 6:4-9)

Shalom2u/God's peace.



Let Us Rejoice!



As Christians we truly have much to be thankful for. God provides for our every day needs that we ask of Him and as He sees fit. Above all, He has given us the Gift of salvation in His Son, Jesus Christ.

God has not promised though, that life would be a "bed of roses" in the journey, but He does allow bumps in the road to come. He wants us to experience these rough places, to strengthen our faith and grow close to Him through these places. There are days that the world about us seems to be in a lot of turmoil, and as humans we may allow our flesh to get caught up in this, but we must remember, that God is still in control of everything. He does not want us to worry even about our every day living, but wants us to pray to Him for our needs and ask for strength to endure all things. No matter what we face in our life, God hears and answers our prayers.

God is wonderful. He understands all that we go through, and has promised He will be there for us all the days of our life till we meet Him on the shores of Heaven, where we will be able to rejoice always!

In God's peace.
Nancy Jarvi

Forgetfulness

Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington

Sometimes while reading the history of God's chosen people, I wonder how they could have been so forgetful. It seems like two minutes after they've been delivered from slavery in Egypt, they're complaining and murmuring against God (and Moses). They even worshipped a golden calf, proclaiming that these were the gods that brought them out of Egypt.

Sometimes I forget that the same forgetfulness still cycles through the lives of God's people today. We forget that we've been delivered, and we forget to give thanks for that deliverance.

THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL grumbled and complained almost immediately after being rescued from slavery in Egypt. They so quickly forgot the deliverance that the Lord had worked for them.

And they took their journey from Elim, and all the congregation of the children of Israel came unto the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departing out of the land of Egypt. And the whole congregation of the children of Israel murmured against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness: And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots, and when we did eat bread to the full; for ye have brought us forth into this wilderness, to kill this whole assembly with hunger. (Exodus 16:1-3)

And the Lord brought them quail.

And all the congregation of the children of Israel journeyed from the wilderness of Sin, after their journeys, according to the commandment of the Lord, and pitched in Rephidim: and there was no water for the people to drink. Wherefore the people did chide with Moses, and said, Give us water that we may drink. And Moses said unto them, Why chide ye with me? wherefore do ye tempt the Lord? (Exodus 17:1-2)

And the Lord brought them water from a rock.

A few chapters later, they have forgotten and are dancing around the golden calf, and the Lord's anger burned against the sin of the people. *And the Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. And the Lord said unto Moses, I have seen this people, and, behold, it is a stiffnecked people: Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them,*

and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation. And Moses besought the Lord his God, and said, Lord, why doth thy wrath wax hot against thy people, which thou hast brought forth out of the land of Egypt with great power, and with a mighty hand? Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people. Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, thy servants, to whom thou swarest by thine own self, and saidst unto them, I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and all this land that I have spoken of will I give unto your seed, and they shall inherit it for ever. And the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people. (Exodus 32:1-14) Three thousand men of Israel were killed by the sword, and the Lord sent a plague on the people as well.

Throughout the history of Israel, the people grumbled and then turned again in repentance, and each time the Lord delivered them, raising up a judge or a king or a servant to save them.

When we grumble against circumstances in our lives, we really grumble against God, and then we turn in repentance when we see our sin. And the Judge-King-Suffering Servant Jesus Christ came to rescue us from our bondage to sin. He has saved us from the clutches of the devil, from death, and from the wrath of the Father.

Let us remember—and not forget—the price that has been paid, and give thanks.

O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good; for his mercy endureth for ever. And say ye, Save us, O God of our salvation, and gather us together, and deliver us from the heathen, that we may give thanks to thy holy name, and glory in thy praise. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel for ever and ever.

1 Chronicles 16:34-36



Christian Monthly Vol. LXXIX—No. 8

Subscription Rate: 1 Year

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

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

Send articles for publication to:
Lois Matson, Editor
Email: cm@apostoliclutheran.org
Phone: (360) 904-6951
Postal Mail to:
CHRISTIAN MONTHLY
20211 NE Yacolt Mountain Road
Yacolt, WA 98675

Address subscriptions, payments,
and Book Concern orders to:
Anders & Clara Sundqvist, Managers
Email: books@apostoliclutheran.org
NEW Phone: 360-601-5117
THE BOOK CONCERN
PO Box 104
Hayti, SD 57241

Apostolic Lutheran Church of America

www.apostoliclutheran.org

Western Mission: western@apostoliclutheran.org

Eastern Mission: eastern@apostoliclutheran.org

Foreign Mission: foreign@apostoliclutheran.org

The *Christian Monthly* (ISSN 0009-5494) is published monthly for \$12 per year by the Apostolic Lutheran Book Concern, 45036 SD Hwy 22, Hayti, South Dakota 57241. Periodicals postage paid at Hayti, South Dakota.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: **Christian Monthly**, PO Box 104, Hayti, SD 57241.

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.



HAVE YOU MOVED? Please notify the Book Concern of address changes. We must pay return postage on undelivered mail.

The Strange and Diverse

Pastor Nathan Juntunen
Esko, Minnesota

Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

Hebrews 13:9

THE COMPLEXITIES OF LIFE SEEM to demand an equally complex description and philosophy of life. However, the constant demand of the Scriptures is to remain simple and pure. We consistently meet, in these very Scriptures, a Lord who serves the suppliant needs and arresting desires of children and fishermen, goatherds and washer-women who gain access to the holiest of holies, while the philosophers and Mensa qualifiers are left in their arguments out in the hall.

Alien (“strange”) and complex (“diverse”) teachings are, in all actuality, *only* what our world, at present, seems to qualify as binding. In other words, we are told that we must embrace *all* things if we are to be on the path of truth (perhaps you have seen the recent bumper sticker, “COEXIST,” employing various religious symbols). The only teaching acceptable in such a state requires the relaxation of principle, the watering-down of doctrine, and the reduction of what is referred to as prejudice. For “strange and diverse” are the ingredients absolutely necessary for the concoction of a proper “world view.” Anything else is characterized (or shall I say, vilified) as narrow, egocentric, and generally inferior. The family has been marginalized, its very structure questioned; the state is disqualified as dysfunctional and oppressive; the peer group: uncaring; the counselor’s office: ambiguous; the internet: faceless, limbless, and heartless. One seeks a body to which he may belong and finds only talking heads. He seeks a friend and finds only ridicule. He seeks the watchful eye and finds only abdication on the part of parent, teacher, judge, and peer. Why not, he concludes, be led away by the strange and diverse, for the familiar and consistent has been pulled out from under him and taken from around him, like one who takes off a garment on a cold day (Proverbs 25:20).

Isn’t it fascinating that the writer to the Hebrews finds a close relation in “strange and diverse teaching” to foods having no benefit. These entertain for a while and leave the partaker empty and hanging in the end. The teaching has a façade of truth about it, but holds only a vacant promise of rest. We have everything and nothing, all at the same time.

We cannot be our own person nor the person of the Lord without a flagrant violation of the tribe of those who hold “strange and diverse” as their motto of pride. We stand upon a much more simple and straightforward principle. The simplicity upon which we stand is tied to and borne from grace, not simplicity for its own sake; but, rather, a grace that is generated from God and ends in God. Simplicity detached from God and exercised for its own sake yields only another path of the many paths to truth upon which any monk of determined discipline may embark. Simplicity born of grace, and flowing as naturally as water down the mountainside, is that which ultimately strengthens the heart. God is gracious and accepting, and loves us for the sake of His Obedient Son. And in no other way can the world know this but for the spectacular wonder of the cross of Christ Jesus, whose simple and steadfast purpose ultimately wins the day and all eternity for the downcast and lonely soul. Overcome by Him, none can wander aimlessly, driven in submission to the vacuous claims of the “strange and diverse.” Overcome by Him, one loses his appetite for these, and finds strength in the final word from God in His Son. ~

Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.

Matthew 16:24-25

THE FIRST DESTRUCTION OF MAN was the love of himself. For if he had not loved himself, if he had preferred God to himself, he would have been willing to be ever subject unto God; and would not have been turned to the neglect of His will, and the doing his own will. For this is to love one’s self, to wish to do one’s own will. Prefer to this God’s will; learn to love yourself by not loving yourself.

What is, *Let him take up his cross?* Let him bear whatever trouble he has; so let him follow Me. For when he shall begin to follow Me in conformity to My life and precepts, he will have many to contradict him... and that from among those who are even as it were Christ’s companions.

Great is the world; but greater is He by whom the world was made. Fair is the world; but fairer is He by whom the world was made. Sweet is the world; but sweeter is He by whom the world was made. Evil is the world; and good is He by whom the world was made.

Augustine