

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.**

December 2016

Have You Seen the Light?

the late Rev. Andrew Mickelson

Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.

Luke 2:29-32

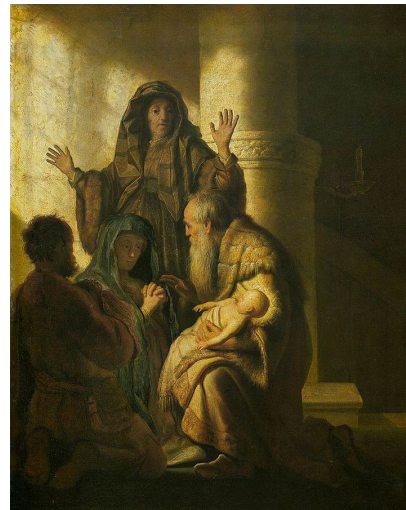
THUS SPOKE THE DEVOUT AND RIGHTEOUS Simeon when his eyes beheld the Christ-child to whose coming he had earnestly looked forward, for God had revealed to him that he would not see death before he saw the salvation which God had prepared for all people. This man believed the Word of God which had been spoken by His prophets of old, and he looked for the coming of Jesus Christ.

Therefore, he alone with the prophetess Anna, of that great multitude of people in Jerusalem, knew Jesus as the Christ whom God had prepared as the Savior of the world. The multitude, although seeing Him, did not know Him, for they did not believe or understand the Word of God.

So it has been throughout all the ages, even unto our day, that the salvation of God has been in the midst of the people but because of their unbelief they did not see or understand. Only the humble brother Simeon and sister Anna, whose eyes had been opened by faith and whose understandings had been enlightened by the Holy Spirit, were able to see and know Him when He appeared in their midst, for God had taught them to look for His coming, not with pomp and glory, but in a humble and lowly manner.

Thus He has always been found among the humble and lowly, among the despised and rejected of men, even as was He Himself. They too, like Simeon and Anna, have taken Him to themselves and blessed God for His salvation, goodness and grace toward sinful men; and the desire has come to them also that they might depart in peace from this vale of sorrow and sin for that glorious home that they have seen with the eyes of faith.

Surely, this light has enlightened the Gentiles and is to the glory of His people Israel. Compared with the multitudes of the people, few have seen the light and received the Lord. Dear reader, are you among those few? If not, why? Have you been looking for Him where He is not found? Have your eyes been uplifted? Are you searching the vaulted skies? Cast your eyes down, for lo, He descended from His glory on high and has come to His own, the lowly, humble and despised of the



Simeon and Anna Recognize the Lord in Jesus
Rembrandt, Wikimedia Commons

world who have received Him. He has given them power to become the sons of God, for they have believed on His name. He is here, beloved, though you cannot see Him with your natural eyes like Simeon and Anna beheld Him but He Himself said ... *blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed. (John 20:29)* Just as assuredly as you believe that Christ was born in Bethlehem, and you are celebrating this

Christmas Day in commemoration of that eventful day, just so assuredly is He here in our midst, and still is with His own. They are those who are continuing the work that He began, preaching repentance and the forgiveness of sins in the name of Jesus Christ and because of His shed blood. Do not allow Him to go unnoticed this Christmas Day, but receive Him to yourself by letting Him make your heart His abiding place.

Therefore, despise not the lowly children of God, for in so doing, you despise Him. He said, *He that heareth you heareth me; and he that despiseth you despiseth me; and he that despiseth me despiseth him that sent me. (Luke 10:16)* *He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me, (Matthew 10:40)* for ...*lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. (Matthew 28:20)*

Receive Him, oh contrite and sin-sick souls, by receiving His children and His blessing that is proclaimed by them, namely, the forgiveness of all your sins, and you shall receive the true Christmas Spirit, which is the Holy Spirit that brings with it joy and peace and rejoicing over the salvation that God has prepared before the face of all people. This will then be the happiest Christmas you have ever known, and your heart shall join the angelic choir in singing: *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. (Luke 2:14)* ~

The Gift of Life

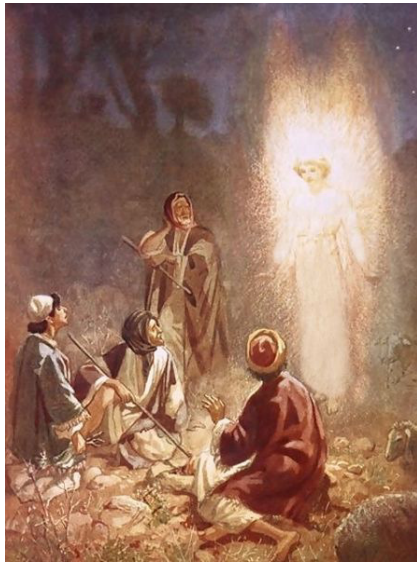
Pastor Jay Weidner
Laurium, Michigan

And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.

Luke 2:10-11

MANY THINGS HAVE CHANGED IN THE two thousand or so years since the angel proclaimed these words. Transportation has become much easier, shepherding is much more sophisticated, and Jerusalem has become a modern city. It is true that many things in this world have changed since the angel first made this proclamation but the proclamation still remains the same. In spite of all the external differences wrought by technological advancement, the world remains a sinful place that needs a Savior. The things that we have synthesized by our own endeavor have made it more convenient to live, but they have not made it possible to live. Only the coming of Jesus Christ, the virgin-born Son of God, could bring life as it is to be lived. This proclamation has spelled out the meaning of life for two thousand years and will continue to do so forever.

Jesus came to bring life and that is what this season is about—life. It is that God looked upon the world in its death and sin and out of His great compassion chose to give the gift of life in His Son. He chose to take the sin of the world and visit it upon His Son that through the death of Jesus the world should receive life.



*The Angel's Tidings, William Brassey Hole
Courtesy of Google Books*

It is a gift, the gift of all gifts, for it is something no human being could gain through striving; it could only be given. It is high time that we learned to celebrate the gift. A gift has no value if we possess it in such a way that we so fear its loss that we can't enjoy its presence. Then it is not gift but curse. Jesus, the same Person the angel was speaking of, spoke very plainly about this to His disciples. *For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. (Matthew 16:25)*

This is the true celebration of the gift of life; it is in the giving of it for Jesus' sake. For the life that is lived for Christ is never spent or exhausted; one need never fear its loss, for it is eternal and perpetually renewed. Life in Christ is not gained by grasping it selfishly but by yielding it freely. This is the message of Christmas: it is the giving of life, for as our Lord says, *It is more blessed to give than to receive. (Acts 20:35)* May God grant to us all the true blessing of this season, now and throughout the year, that we would give our lives in the celebration of His. ~

O H GOD, YOU HOLD THE ENTIRETY OF THE UNIVERSE, the entirety of creation in Your big hands. All that is within, invisible and visible, You control. For this reason, with great hope, with expectation, we present our petitions in the name of Your Son.

We ask that You would preserve us in Your way. Preserve us in the faith of Jesus as we walk through this day and life. We ask for the leaders of this land where we live. For the newly-elected officials, we ask and trust that Your will would be worked. We know that You promised in the Garden that through the Seed of the woman the head of the serpent would be crushed. We know that You've also promised in Your Word that You work all things for good to those that love you. Oh God, by the grace of Jesus Christ, and in Him, we love You, as we've seen the wonderful fulfillment of these promises. So we commit all this to Your hands, that You would continue to provide, protect, and preserve us unto the Last Day or unto the last breath, whichever may come first. We thank You for Jesus Christ and what He's done in the fulfillment of that wonderful promise for us, for the covering that He's provided, for the washing that He's given, and that our sins have been carried away. We ask that You would continue to provide even our physical needs, the homes You've given, the roofs over our heads, the food You've provided, the livelihoods we have. We know that even in these Your hand is sure, that You will give us exactly what we need for as long as You would have us to be here. We ask for faith to believe this, and to know that You will continue to give.

As we're before You praying, there are so many things that we could come and ask You for. We trust that Your Spirit would be with us in this prayer, that those all over this world who need Your intervention, whoever they may be, whether we know them or not, that Your arms of love, Your big hands of grace, would reach down this day and gather them into Your arms, whether it be comfort they need in loneliness, in loss, whether it be the knowledge of sin that they need that You would show that to them through Your Word. All these things we trust that You through Your omnipotence will have covered, and that Your Spirit intervenes even on our behalf and presents these things before Your throne today.

We ask as the pastor stands before us with the open Word that you would give us faith to accept Your Word as it's presented, that You would open Your Word to him so that we could understand it, that it would be to the benefit of our eternal salvation, and that Your Spirit through the Word would continue to preserve and enable us to walk according to it and to trust Your wonderful promises. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Donny Matson
Yacolt, Washington

The Washing of Regeneration

C.O. Rosenius

Day by Day with God, Volume 9, Number 29

Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost.

Titus 3:5

IN THESE WORDS WE SEE WHAT TREASURES of grace the Lord has attached to baptism. We see that and how much we receive from it. It says no less than: He saved us. And to be saved means to be delivered from all our sins, from the power of death and the devil, and on the contrary to be put into the infinite inheritance and favors of eternal life. It means at once to get back all the grace, the adoption with God, the glory and splendor for which we were intended in creation. By sin we had fallen from them, but by all His doing and suffering, yes, by His death and resurrection Christ gained back our title to them. Oh, what a matchless counsel of love!

And all this Christ wanted to connect with, and, so to say, include in, the water of baptism, and He wanted to be able to distinguish the individual possessor of all this grace by means of a visible sign in His Church. He wanted to make us at least embrace His great, but spiritual and invisible, gift and draw comfort from it.

To the outward eyes the water of baptism, the outward, seems very trifling, but it is, nevertheless, a water rich and precious beyond measure. It is as if the owner of a great estate would say about a small ring of gold: "Whosoever will get and receive this ring will own myself and all my possessions." Even if that ring has only a small value in money, it would now be wonderfully precious, because it would not only represent its money-value. Now the whole of the person who has given the promise and also all his great possessions would be included in the value of the ring, only because of the word of promise attached to the ring, namely, that the one getting and receiving it would own all this. It is that way also with baptism: without the Word of God it is also only water of no value. But by the word of promise Christ attached to this water, it is a Sacrament wherein all grace and eternal bliss have been included.

It is full of instruction to see how often God has used this method of attaching invisible and heavenly gifts of grace to earthly and visible things and signs. The weak, sensual, skeptical human heart has always needed such things. We

have many examples of this in the Old Testament, examples plainly symbolizing our salvation by Christ. When the children of Israel were to be saved from the sword of the angel of murder it happened by the visible sign that the two side posts and the upper door post were marked with the blood of the Passover. And when they had been bitten by the fiery serpents in the wilderness, they would be saved from death if they looked upon the fiery serpent of brass on the pole. About this sign of salvation it says expressly: "For he that turned himself toward it was not saved by the thing that he saw, but by thee that art the Savior of all. For it was neither herb, nor mollifying plaster, that restored them to health: by thy word, O Lord, which healeth all things." (Wisdom: 16:7, 12 Apocrypha)



In 2 Kings 5 we also have a pertinent symbol of the washing of faith and the attitude of our reason thereto. When Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, came to the prophet Elisha to seek cleansing and remedy for his leprosy, Elisha only sent him the following promise through a servant: "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and thou shalt be clean." Then Naaman was wroth and wanted to go away because the prophet did not come personally to perform some solemn ceremonies, but only sent a simple message with a servant. But when finally

Naaman let himself be persuaded to obey the word of the prophet and go out into Jordan, he immediately became quite healthy and clean as promised. And why did he become so? Certainly not because of any quality of the Jordan water. No, only because of the word of promise attached to it: "Wash, and thou shalt be clean!"

This is a picture of baptism—and of us. At first we see only an insignificant servant of the Word who officiates at the baptism—and that with such simple and plain gestures. If we could see God Himself baptize with such heavenly solemnity, and hear Him promise us salvation, then we could believe that it is so important and precious. But now it is such an old and remote promise. Now we do not see anything before our eyes. Secondly, we stare at the water itself and think: Is for instance the water of my tears of repentance not better for the washing away of my sin, than the water only taken from the well and poured on the body? But if we go on only staring at the water and forget the word of promise then we become light-hearted despisers of the Word and remain in our leprosy of sin. ~

Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.

Hosea 6:1

THIS IS ALWAYS THE WAY God works the needful work in our hearts. He wounds that He may heal. He strips naked, that He may clothe. He makes hungry, that He may fill. He forsakes, that He may gather in love. He kills, that He could make alive. And all through our Lord Jesus Christ!

Paul Coponen

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

Down From His Glory

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

Hello Children,

Soon it will be Christmas! As I thought about the season that is special to people in general, but so much more special to Christians, I thought how fortunate we are to be granted faith in Jesus, the little Baby who came to fulfill prophecy. Let us look into the beautiful Word of God wherein lies absolute truth and ponder once again the Christ Child whose birth we celebrate at Christmastime.

*In the beginning **was** the Word, and the Word **was** with God, and the Word **was** God. The same **was** in the beginning with God.*

St. John 1:1-2

Forever from eternity Jesus **was** with the Father, His Father in heaven. Together God and Jesus created all things. Let's look at some prophecies about this Child who would come one day. From the creation of the world to the time when Jesus came as a Baby was 4,000 years! That's a LONG time. But all through those years God chose certain people who would be instruments in carrying out His plan.

GOD CREATED MAN, and man lived for a time in perfection on the earth. Then man sinned and perfection came to an end. People continued to multiply on the earth and sin was ever present. God looked down from heaven and He was not happy with what He saw. Men were so wicked. It grieved Him at His heart. *The LORD said, I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth...* (Genesis 6:7)

God told Noah that He was going to destroy man by a flood. God gave him instructions to build a large ark with enough room for Noah, his family, and two of every kind of animal and creeping thing. Noah had found grace in the eyes of God. And from the eight souls who were spared, the world began to fill with people again.

Time passed. Terah had a son named Abram, who was later called Abraham. God told Abraham to offer his only son Isaac for a burnt offering. Abraham obeyed, but in the end God spared Isaac's life because He saw Abraham was faithful. God told Abraham, "Through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed." Jesus the Messiah would come through Abraham's descendants.

The Old Testament book of *Numbers 24:17* says *...there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel. Matthew 1:2: Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren.*

The prophet Isaiah spoke of the virgin birth: *Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:14)*

Hosea 11:1: When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. Remember how Joseph and Mary took Jesus to Egypt to escape Herod and later He was called out of Egypt and went to live in Nazareth? *Matthew 2:13 says: And when [the wise men] were departed, behold, the angel of the*

Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.

In yet another Old Testament book is this prophecy: *But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. (Micah 5:2)*

We have covered some prophecies from the Old Testament. All the time, from forever before the creation of the world until the New Testament, Jesus **was** in heaven with God. When the time was right, God sent Jesus **down from His heavenly glory** to the earth to save sinful men.

St. Matthew 1:18: Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to [marry] Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.



Joseph was troubled at this, but God sent an angel in a dream and told him not to be afraid to take Mary for his wife. Joseph was reassured that the Baby in Mary's womb was of the Holy Ghost. This was God's only begotten Son.

When the time came for Mary to deliver her Child, a Son was born and they called Him Jesus. Mary wrapped Jesus in swaddling clothes and laid Him in a manger. The inns were full, so Jesus was born in a place where animals were kept. The animals' feed box was His bed.

The angels rejoiced in the sky overhead, saying, *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. (Luke 2:14)* The shepherds

who were watching their sheep came to see this Babe and rejoiced as they returned to their sheep in the fields.

Mary and Joseph marveled at the attention and Mary kept all these wonderful things in her heart. She and Joseph knew this Baby was no ordinary child and also that God was with them.

This little Baby would soon be hunted down by King Herod who wanted to kill Him. God protected Jesus as He had sent His Son to preach to the people and tell them that He was the Way, the Truth and the Life.

We can praise God for sending His Son to us, and that we have been given faith to proclaim Jesus as our Savior. We should ever be thankful for the Babe in the manger and worship Him **who left the perfect glory of heaven** to live on earth with mankind. From a little Baby to His death and even to this very hour, so many people hated Him and still do. But He loves everyone.

**Across the land across the waves,
Was a Baby born—this Jesus who saves. (GW)
Down from His glory!**

God bless you all this Christmas. God's peace.

The Name of Jesus

Martin Luther

And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS, which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb.

Luke 2:21

THE NAME JESUS IN OUR LANGUAGE means a Savior, a Helper. Some would have it mean a benefactor, but this translation is not so appropriate. Savior is its true meaning. The angel Gabriel gives the reason why Christ should bear this name when he announces to Joseph: *Thou shalt call His name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins.* (Matthew 1:21)

This name we must study with diligence and carefully remember that this Child is called Jesus because He is a Savior who delivers from the severest and greatest misery, namely, from sin, and not from the insignificant troubles and petty anxieties which this life has in store for this or that individual and which can but affect our body, our possessions or some other temporal matter.

God has instituted other means by which such perplexities as these are solved or averted. He has given us rulers and authorities to protect and defend their subjects against lawlessness. He has appointed parents to support and to educate their children; He has given physicians to advise us and assist us in our bodily infirmities. These, however, are all miserable helpers compared with Him who is a Savior and can save His people from sin.

He who would possess this Child Jesus as his Savior must ever remember that He is a Helper, not chiefly in the concerns of this life, which are otherwise provided for, as we have stated, but above all a Savior from sin and death unto eternal life. For where sin no longer rules, there death must also yield up his power. Surely we receive much more of God than we can ever expect to obtain from emperors or any temporal authorities.

If we do not believe that there is a future life, why then, of course, we need no other helpers than rulers, parents or physicians whose duty is to see to our temporal welfare. But if we believe that there is a life after this is ended, then, beyond all doubt, we need this our Savior. Neither king, nor father, nor mother, nor physician, nor anyone else, yea, not even an angel, can give us that life.

It is true our Lord Jesus will also be with His people in the troubles of this life and will assist them in their temporal distress even if kings and parents and friends fail or are not able to assist. Yet this is not His chief nor highest office; hence we do not preach of it especially.

His special office is to save from sin, eternal death and the dominion of the devil. Hence, he proclaims His name Jesus, to be known by all sinners, for they need a Savior. If there were no hell, no dominion of the devil, no eternal punishment or torment, men might live without Jesus the Lord, for then when one dies, all would be at an end, as it is with a tree when it falls or a cow when she dies. Hence, those who do not believe in God nor in a future life become a wild, licentious brood. But he who believes in God will immediately conclude that not all is ended with the close of this life but there is, beyond this, another life which is everlasting.

That God does not principally concern Himself about the present life of man is evident from the fact that He permits so many wicked scoundrels to live and to flourish here upon earth. But He has promised us an eternal life hereafter, and the Child Jesus came to be our Savior and our Guide to this future existence. If He brings us into that life, then has He assisted us indeed, no matter what trials we may in the meanwhile be called to endure here upon earth; yea, though they be so severe that it might seem as if God had forsaken us, it matters not, since we know that He saves unto eternal life. This must satisfy us, let the world wag as it will...

He has vouchsafed to us, through His Son, sure help unto eternal life. He leaves us to ourselves in this our transitory existence as if He cared not for us but only to this end that we should learn to know this Child and to believe in Him as the Savior, who is ready to help when no one else can help us, when our transgressions rise up against us and would deliver us into the pangs of eternal death.

So let this name be our dearest treasure, our firm reliance in every tribulation, and may we never forget that Christ, the Son of God, is our Lord Jesus the Savior.

Except in this hour of anguish, we, alas! care but little for our Savior. While we are in health and have our coffers full of money, we think not of Jesus; our business claims our attention and we rely upon our gold. The same is true in regard to other temporal endowments; reason, erudition authority are all thought sufficient in their proper sphere.

A mother can furnish her children with nourishment and other necessities of life; a physician can attend to his patient and a lawyer to his client. But when this brief life of ours terminates, when conscience prompts the sinner to confess his guilt before the judgment seat of God, when the soul writhes in anguish and when the danger of eternal condemnation threatens, then is the time in which we must have Jesus the Savior.

Neither those in authority, nor father nor mother, nor physician nor jurist, yea, not even an angel, nor any other creature can in that awful hour bring us assistance. Where will you seek for help or counsel? Where else but with this Child? Yes, here alone, for Jesus is His name, so called because He can and will be present with His help wherever earnestly implored...

So let this name be our dearest treasure, our firm reliance in every tribulation, and may we never forget that Christ, the Son of God, is our Lord Jesus the Savior.

In Paradise it was said of Him, "He shall crush the head of the serpent," by which was meant that He would help us against the devil and his forces. May God, the Father of consolation and mercy, increase within our hearts from day to day this faith and assurance and retain us in the same forevermore through Jesus Christ His Son, our Savior. Amen.

The Evidence of a True Christian

Pastor Wayne Juntunen
Esco, Minnesota

MANY CALL THEMSELVES “CHRISTIANS.” The title of being called a Christian began at Antioch. Paul had been preaching and teaching there for a whole year. And people who were not believers in Christ began to call these disciples, or learners, “Christians” (Acts 11:26) because the Holy Spirit, through the preaching and teaching of Paul, gave these hearers who responded to the Word of God the grace to believe in the crucified and resurrected, Man-God, Jesus Christ, as their Savior and Lord.

This change in the spirit of these disciples is the evidence of being true Christians. We all, if we call ourselves Christians, have this inner testimony. This is what the Apostle Paul meant in his epistle: *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God.* (Romans 8:16)

Our heavenly Father desires that our love would be a true expression of His love... It has no selfish, self-centered motives, impure, or wrong reasons.

This witness of the Holy Spirit within us works in our mind, will and emotions. We have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). But because we are still real humans who still have a fallen nature, we do not always live in obedience to the will of God. This is why the Apostle Paul wrote in his epistle to the Romans that by the mercies of God we would be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2).

The Holy Spirit also works in our will. But in order that we would do what God wants us to do and not do what He does not want us to do, even if it might be something good, we are to walk in the Spirit and not in the flesh. Read Galatians 5:16-26:

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance:

against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another.

Thanks be to God there is forgiveness for us when we sin, but we don't have to sin. God, the Holy Spirit, works within us both to will and to do of His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13).

As we live in obedience to the prompting of the Holy Spirit, our emotions are also affected. We have an inner joy. In fact, the joy of the Lord is our strength (Nehemiah 8:10). Furthermore, we have an inner peace, a peace that passes understanding. It is the peace that Jesus Himself gives (John 14:27). It is a peace that cannot be taken from us (John 16:22),

even though we go through suffering, sorrow and want. All of this points to the greatest truth in all world—that God loves us! And it is this love that is to flow out of us as the external, or outward, evidence of being a true Christian. Jesus Himself said:

By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another. (John 13:35) The Apostle John, in his first epistle confirms this by saying: *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God.* (1 John 4:7) This love toward one another is not merely in words, as John also writes: *My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.* (1 John 3:18)

Our heavenly Father desires that our love would be a true expression of His love. Paul describes this as being “without dissimulation,” without hypocrisy (Romans 12:9). That means that it is an expression of love that is genuine. It has no selfish, self-centered motives, impure, or wrong reasons. It is a love of another because God loves him or her. We don't love so we can get some benefit for ourselves because true love never loves to “get” but only to “give.”

Also, true love speaks “the truth in love” (Ephesians 4:15), especially when sin needs to be brought into the light so it can be confessed and forgiven in the name and through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 John 1:9; John 20:23).

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, may the inward testimony of Christ living within you fill your hearts with righteousness, peace and joy. And may the love of God flow out from you as a fountain of water to refresh and bless one another. Amen!



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Corrie Karlsen, ALC Calendar Committee

The Birth of the Christ

Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington

Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.

Matthew 1:18-25

THE MOST IMPORTANT BIRTH IN HISTORY—the birth of the Christ—we remember and celebrate at Christmas. Our calendar marks time from that moment. The world, though it may not realize it, honors this birth by setting it at the center of the crossroad in time, as BC stands for “before Christ” and AD represents the Latin phrase “Anno Domini,” which means “in the year of our Lord.” Over 2000 years later, this is a forgotten bit of trivia to many people. The significance of Jesus’ birth and the importance that it has had on the entire world goes largely unrecognized by the unbelieving world.

Mary, the virgin mother of our Lord, had been visited by the angel Gabriel and told that she would bring forth the Son of God. When she was “found with child,” scandal loomed over the birth of Jesus. Joseph, the man who would be the earthly father to the Savior of the world, was a just man, unwilling to make a spectacle of Mary. After his decision to quietly put her away, an angel appeared to Joseph in a dream. Joseph was assured that the Child that Mary carried was conceived of the Holy Spirit. Joseph was to call His name JESUS, for He would save His people from their sins.

The true gift that came at Christmas was the Incarnation of God Himself, in the form of a human. God became flesh, lived among us, grew to manhood, shed His blood and died on a cruel cross, giving Himself for the sin of the world. Jesus the Christ was fully God and fully Man. He existed from

eternity with the Father in heaven, and He left the glories of heaven to come to Earth to save sinful mankind. He walked as a human among us, yet without sin. He healed the sick, gave sight to the blind, raised the dead and brought the Kingdom of God to earth. He brought Life and Light to this dark planet, the only Life and Light we trust for salvation.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

John 1:1-14



May the blessings and peace of Christmas reign in your home this Christmas and through the coming year. Thanks be to God for His unspeakable gift!

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Why Jesus Came in the Flesh

AT CHRISTMAS WE REJOICE in the Incarnation of God, that the eternal Son put on flesh and blood. *The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. (St John 1:14)* But why? Why did Jesus take upon Himself flesh and blood? Why did God take humanity upon Himself?

The book of Hebrews answers this question for us, especially chapter 2, verses 14 and 15. First we are told that the Lord Jesus took on Himself the same flesh and blood that we have. He became a man like us, sharing in our flesh. *Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same. (Hebrews 2:14a)* Jesus is bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh.

The text then goes on to discuss why He took up flesh and blood, *that through death. (Hebrews 2:14b)* Jesus takes on a body so that He might die... flesh to be beaten, blood to be spilt. The shadow of the cross stretches to Bethlehem. As theologian Helmut Thielicke puts it: "The crib and the cross are hewn out of the same wood." The body that the Father prepared for the Son was a body to be sacrificed. *Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me... By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. (Hebrews 10:5, 10)*

What is the result of His sacrificial death? The text continues *...that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. (Hebrews 2:14c)* Jesus' death is the destruction of death and the devil. *For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. (1 John 3:8b)*

And what is the benefit for us? Since the fall into sin all mankind has been in bondage to death. But Jesus is the Savior who takes up a body to die, that through His death-destroying death He might *deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. (Hebrews 2:15)* By Jesus' death we are set free from death, from the condemnation of death, from the fear of death, and we are given life and salvation.

As we remember the Savior's birth this Christmastide, rejoice that Jesus came in the flesh in order to die and be the sacrifice for our sins.



Merry Christmas, and the Lord's Blessings in Christ,
Pastor Bryan Wolfmueller; Aurora, Colorado

2017 ALC Convention Invitation

The Esko Apostolic Lutheran Church congregation invites you to attend the 109th Annual Convention of the Apostolic Lutheran Church of America.



The convention will be held at the Esko High School, in Esko, Minnesota, from July 13-16, 2017. Information regarding our service schedule and lodging will be posted on the Federation website www.apostoliclutheran.org, as well as on the "ALC Convention 2017" Facebook page. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

We look forward to seeing you soon and pray for God's blessings as we continue to fellowship around His Word.

On behalf of the 2017 ALC Convention Committee,
Mike Liikala, Chairman
Loren Bergstedt, Co-Chairman