

Christian MONTHLY

DEDICATED TO THE PROCLAMATION
OF THE WORD OF GOD



Psalms 119:105

**Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path.**

Blessed are the

Pure
in heart:
for they shall see God.
Matthew 5:8

February 2016

Blessed Are the Pure in Heart

the late Alvin Holmgren
August 2000 CM

WE KNOW THAT THE
HEART is not pure in
itself — that is, in its
natural state. In fact,
the Bible says that

*the heart is deceitful above all things, and
desperately wicked: who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9)*

This Old Testament quotation is verified in the New Testament by the teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ when He said, *For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. (Matthew 15:19)*

How, then, can we, the sinners that we are, ever hope to see God since that blessing is reserved for the pure in heart? This question touches the very foundation of our Christian faith. In the writings of Martin Luther, he contrasts the two types of righteousness that have existed from the days of Cain and Abel: God's righteousness and that produced by the efforts of man.

The righteousness of God, which He imputes to a sinner by faith, provides the purity of heart that enables a person to see God. On the other hand, man's righteousness, however holy and beautiful it may appear, is generally outward in nature, and can be hypocritical and deceptive. The Lord wants a good tree whose fruit is good. We must look to another source than to our sin-corrupted hearts to find this goodness.

The elders who have gone before us have likened the various conditions of heart described in these Beatitudes to stepping stones on the way to new birth. Jesus called them "blessed" because they are part of the work that the Holy Spirit must do: to prepare a person to need, and to accept, the only righteousness that can be described as pure, so that we may see God.

Let's observe each of these conditions as they are given us by the Lord in the fifth chapter of Matthew:

*Blessed are the poor in spirit... Blessed are they that mourn...
Blessed are the meek... Blessed are they which do hunger and
thirst after righteousness... Blessed are the merciful... Blessed are*

*the pure in heart... Blessed are the peacemakers... Blessed are
they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake...*

In his years in the ministry, my father placed emphasis on these teachings. He saw in them the work of the Holy Spirit to bring a person from spiritual darkness to a spiritual awakening, and to the awareness of his sinfulness. Then he was led to the place of new birth, where he received purity of heart — that purity Jesus referred to in the sixth Beatitude when He said, *Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.* Thereafter, the continuing work of the Holy Spirit can be seen when He has taken His abode in a heart that, in its natural state, was an enemy to God. Such a person becomes a peacemaker, and is known as a child of God.

A sinner becomes pure in heart when the Holy Spirit, by the reconciling Word, offers forgiveness in the name and through the shed blood of Jesus, and enkindles living faith in the heart. Then, through faith, the contrite sinner can see God, the Father.

The pure in heart come to see God in a new light. They come to know Him as their heavenly Father. No longer do they live in that fear of God that engenders bondage, but they receive the spirit of adoption that cries, *Abba, Father. (Romans 8:15)*

In this blessed and saved state, the assurance of salvation remains constant because it rests upon the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. However, the carnal nature must still be dealt with because it remains unregenerate, and behaves as an enemy of God.

A believer is endowed with the unction and power of the Spirit so that in the spiritual warfare that follows new birth, he may die to sin and endeavor to live unto righteousness.

I do not mean to leave you with the understanding that these eight conditions described by our Lord are limited to one-time experiences. God continues to bless you, His children, and to fulfill these promises each day as you walk with Him and look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. ~

Let Us Walk in the Light

Pastor Elmer Yliniemi
Spruce Grove, Minnesota

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

1 John 1:1-3

As Christians, we have many doubts about the promises of God. Does God really care about me? Is there really life after death? Is my faith sufficient to reach home? Did Jesus come to save a sinner such as I am?

John wrote this epistle to wipe out doubts and to build assurance by giving us a clear picture of Jesus Christ. He wrote, *we have heard... we have seen... we have looked upon, and our hands have handled.* John saw Him heal the sick and teach the multitudes. He saw Him die, rise again, and ascend to heaven. John knew Him as God. He lived with Him and saw His work.

John was an older man by the time he wrote these words. He was the only surviving apostle and an eyewitness of Jesus Christ. He wrote these letters to give the new generation of believers assurance and confidence in God.

THE PROBLEM CONFRONTING THE CHURCH was their commitment, the same as today. Many believers were conforming to the world's standards. They didn't stand up for Christ, but compromised their witness. John shows the difference between light and darkness, and the need to grow in love for God and each other. The believers needed assurance that they had eternal life and that their faith was true.

God has created us to be in a relationship with Him. Because of the fall of man, that relationship was destroyed. But we have a good God, who made it possible to restore that vital link through His Son, Jesus Christ. Jesus consecrated for us a new and living way to the presence of God.

John exhorts us in the third verse to be grounded in the Word that became flesh, for without this, true fellowship is impossible. Believers are to be united. They are to be renewed daily through the power of the Holy Spirit. True fellowship is made possible only through a living faith in Jesus Christ.

John conveyed the message that God, through Jesus, came to reveal. This message connects heaven and earth by Jesus Christ. God is light and He is pure. There is no darkness in Him.

There were many false teachers in John's time, just as there are today. Some taught that they could gratify the lusts of the flesh because their bodies would be destroyed anyway. However, no one can claim to be a Christian and still live in immorality. We cannot love God and live in sin at the same time. We lie and do not the truth.

Others taught that they could please God by rigid discipline of the body. Yet others deceived themselves by believing they had no sin. They did not take sin seriously. They wanted to be considered Christians, but they saw no need to confess and repent of their sins.

John urges us to confess our sins, and receive forgiveness in the precious blood of Jesus Christ. When we have become the children of God, all our sins are forgiven. However, even as Christians, we sin and need to confess those sins. This confession is not to gain God's acceptance, but to remove the barrier to our fellowship with God — a barrier which can create doubt and weaken our faith.

John continues, *And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full. This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us. (1 John 1:4-10) ~*



Walk in the Light by Rosser1954
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Spring Services in Minnesota

The Minneapolis North congregation would like to extend a warm welcome to all for our spring services with brother Steve Wuori. The services will be held Friday, April 29th, and Saturday, April 30th, at 7:00 in the evening and Sunday, May 1st, at 10:30 in the morning. Those planning to attend should contact Charlotte Barney at charbarney@gmail.com so that we can plan in advance for meals.

Todd Barney, Secretary

The Lord's Table

Will Matson
Yacolt, Washington

Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.

Romans 5:1-2

THE LORD'S TABLE, the Lord's Supper, or "Communion," as we often call it, is communion together around the broken body and shed blood of our Lord, and seems to be such a mingled cup for me lately. It is a place where I physically, both through the mouth and the ears partake of the Gospel. A place where my sinfulness and old memories of self-righteous behavior or words, which I am afraid may have damaged another's tender, perhaps weak, faith, rise up to plague me and are drowned in the blood like Satan's fiery darts. A precious triumphal cup, yet it seems to overflow with both joy and sorrow. The joy that I, a sinner, am invited there to partake along with the children of God, a place I may pray where it seems the Gospel most comforts, most assures the mind.

But the sorrow. The sorrow of loved ones no longer there. And as I pray for these, that they would desire and realize the wonderful communion around the body and blood of our Lord, sorrow rises also for those struggling with sins, and addictions, who no longer come because of feeling too unworthy to be there. Today during our Communion service, while feeling a little torn over these missing brothers, some of the words of Hebrews 3:6 came to mind; "hold fast... the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." I do not believe we are always to take "rejoicing" to be us exultantly rejoicing. In this place I believe it is talking of how our "hope" our "faith" literally triumphs "against" or in the close presence of "judgment."

May I be blunt, my struggling friends? You may struggle to your dying day with a hellish thirst, perhaps for alcohol or drugs, or some other sin that leaves you burning with shame, longing for freedom from a fiery plague that seems to permeate your entire being, to be your very being, body and mind. (You may. I pray you do not have to.) Do you think that Jesus forgot about you and your sin-struggle when "He bore our sins in His own body on the tree"? May I assure you, HE DID NOT? He took your hellish fire of temptation in His own body on the tree. Isaiah says: *He was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised [literally-crushed] for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. (Isaiah 53:5) He was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. (Hebrews 4:15)*

Faith/hope is the chain that binds you to Christ who has entered in within the veil of heaven. Do you find yourself burning up with some temptation? "Hold fast" that "hope"! Hold fast to the end though you seem to fall more than you rise and walk! Hold fast the hope that Jesus has paid it all, endured it all and does not stop calling you back to His flock, to His broken body, "broken for you" and to His shed blood, "shed for you for the remission of sins". And even if it seems Satan himself is dragging you backward into the pit of hell, as your fingers slip the last half inch over the edge "Hold fast" and *hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (1 Peter 1:13)* Though the fiery temptation scorches



The Last Supper James Tissot
Wikimedia Commons

you to the very edge of the grave, yet hold fast to Jesus, to what He has done and may the last thing you see be His loving eyes, His nail-scarred hands, His side, His very heart pierced for you! And *hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.*

But while you're still here in the land of the living, come, be under the hearing of His Gospel! The Apostle Paul said, *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance [worthy of everyone accepting/believing it], that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. (1 Timothy 1:15)* Come, torment the devil by confessing your sins and continuing to believe on the only name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. (Acts 4:12) Church is a fellowship of fellow sinners who all have struggles with sin and need to be under the constant preaching of the Gospel. We also need the example of our brothers and sisters clinging to Jesus despite all. Give up on yourself, but please do not give up on Jesus and His forgiveness. He has brought the only true everlasting "peace on earth," that is the knowledge of peace with God through Him, and has shown His Heavenly Father's "good will toward men."

From a fellow sinner saved by grace, in God's peace and care.

Simeon and Anna Praise God

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children, far and near,

Hello to each of you! I pray that this year will be a very good year for you. I want to share the account of Jesus being presented at the temple, although it is a little backtrack from last month's page. I had mentioned the wise men last time, but I wanted to touch on two more people who were blessed to see Jesus as a baby. You can find this in *St. Luke 2:21-40*.

WHEN JESUS WAS JUST EIGHT DAYS OLD, He was circumcised and He was called Jesus just as the angel had said He should be named.

Then about 30 days later, after Mary's time of purification had ended according to the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary brought Jesus to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord. The Law of Moses said that every firstborn male child shall be called holy to the Lord. At this time the parents would be required to offer a sacrifice.

A man named Simeon (one who was given to religious truth and worship) had waited all of his life to see the consolation (the one who would be the comfort) of Israel. The Holy Ghost had told Simeon that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ. The Holy Ghost had made known to him that he should go to the temple on this very day, so he went.

While Simeon was there, the parents of Jesus brought Him in to do what was required according to the custom of the Law. How happy Simeon was to behold the very child he had waited for so long!

Then Simeon took Jesus up in his arms and blessed God, saying, "Lord, now let 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."

Joseph and Mary were astonished at what they heard. They had already heard many amazing things since the Holy Ghost came upon Mary and she conceived this babe in her womb, and then all that took place at His birth, and now more things to ponder with this special child.

And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in

Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against; (Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. (vs. 34-35)

Simeon was telling them that this child will stir up many people, some to belief in Him and others who would not believe, and many would speak against Him. That is still happening today.

The other special person I want to tell you about is Anna. She was a prophetess (one who speaks for God through divine inspiration). She had been married just 7 years and now had been a widow for many years. She devoted her life to God and served Him day and night with fastings and prayer, never leaving the temple. She came in that very instant where Simeon, Joseph, Mary and baby Jesus were. She also gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all them that looked for redemption (deliverance from sin) in Israel.

What a blessed day it was for this little group in the temple. Oh, I can only imagine how full their hearts were when they had performed the necessary things there and returned to their homes. Joseph took Mary and Jesus back to their home in Nazareth.

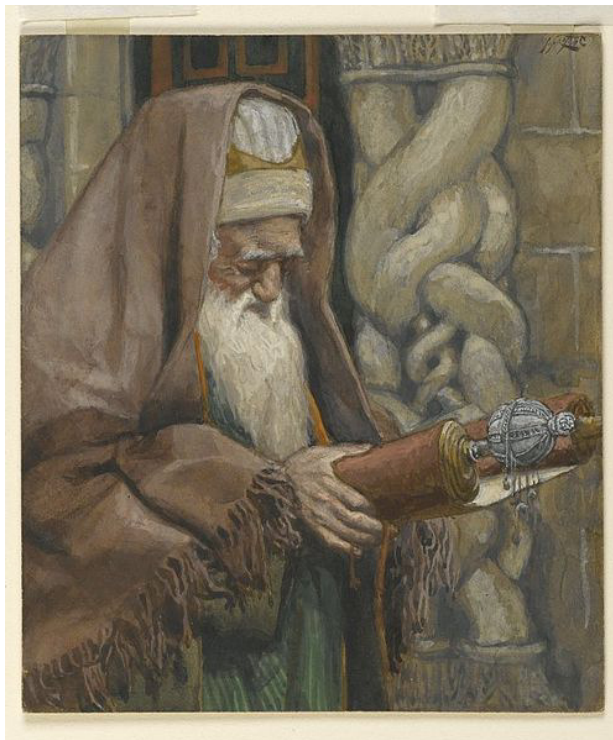
In time Simeon, who was old and who had seen the Messiah as he had been promised, died a very happy man. Anna in time would have died, too, but with joy in her heart to know her Savior.

One day, this same baby who grew to be a man and taught the people about Himself and His Father God, died on the cross and rose again the third day. He went back to heaven and we now wait for Him to return. He came for you and me and all mankind, to save us from sin, so that one day we may be with Him in heaven FOREVER!

I WANT TO ENCOURAGE all of you who read this to stay on the path, read the Bible, learn about Jesus and ask God to lead you all the way home. He has promised to be with His people always, even to the very end of our lives, and to the end of the world. Heaven is going to be SO beautiful. Keep believing in this one Jesus who loves you more than you can ever know. You will have hard times in this life

but nothing is too hard for Jesus to help you through. Call on Him; He has promised to hear you.

God's peace.



The Aged Simeon James Tissot
Wikimedia Commons



Fairest Jesus

J.M. Njoroge

Submitted by Alvar Helmes; Battle Ground, Washington

THE SHARP DISTINCTION between the *historical Jesus* and the *Christ of faith* common in New Testament studies has proven to be an inexhaustible mine for those searching for melodramatic ideas to bounce around during important Christian holidays. The historical Jesus is taken to be the merely human person who was born and raised in Palestine and was crucified during the days of Pontius Pilate. The Christ of faith is assumed to be a mythical, supernatural figure invented by the early admirers of the earthly Jesus. Such thinking flourished in eighteenth century German biblical scholarship, particularly after the posthumous publication of the private notes of Herman Samuel Reimarus between 1774 and 1778.

Inspired by Reimarus's doubts concerning the historicity of the biblical record, many other scholars published monographs in which they cast Jesus in various religious and cultural roles unhinged from the supernatural. The whole movement, which became known as "the old quest of the historical Jesus," was brought to a near screeching halt by the 1906 publication of Albert Schweitzer's book, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, whose title also branded the movement. Schweitzer demonstrated that the scholars of the old quest shared something in common—they relied heavily on their presuppositions about who they believed Jesus was and so "each individual created him in accordance with his own character."⁽¹⁾ In other words, each one of them ended up producing the Jesus they went out looking for in the first place.

Unfortunately, the tendency to recast Jesus in our own image continues even in our day. In scholarly circles, it is represented by the Jesus Seminar which refuses to allow the possibility of the supernatural for those who have "seen the heavens through Galileo's telescope."⁽²⁾ Even among believers, it rears its ugly head whenever we prefix the name of Jesus with the possessive pronoun "my" in order to secure our turf from unwelcome scrutiny. A few years ago, a friend and I attended a church in which several people broke out in convulsive laughter in the middle of the worship service. My friend later informed me that they were laughing in Jesus. I knew something about the historical Jesus, but this was my first encounter with the *hysterical Jesus* and further evidence of his protean flexibility in human hands.

The allure of the personality of Jesus is impossible to shake off, whether in profane expressions of provocation or in moments of fervent praise. Enthusiastic children sing about him in Sunday school, while seasoned, scrupulous, dyed-in-the-wool ivory tower scholars make flourishing careers out of studying or even quibbling with his words. The New Ager wants him for an ascended master. The Hindu wants him for a guru. The Muslim will accept him as a prophet of Allah. The secular humanist admires him

as a great moral teacher, and the oppressed of the world identify with his suffering. Like an immensely gifted athlete with some eccentric personality quirkiness, it seems Jesus will be welcomed into almost any team, provided the coaches retain a measure of confidence that they can tame him. We insist on meeting Jesus on our own terms, and our ideas of who he is invariably take the form of our most cherished images. Like the proverbial queen in *Snow White*, our questions about Jesus are sometimes motivated by predetermined answers. We ask, "Mirror, mirror on the wall, which Jesus is the fairest of them all?" and the only answer we will accept is the one that best suits our fancies.

But in spite of our audacious determination to craft a custom-made god out of the story of Jesus, the Jesus of the Bible remains in complete command of himself and us. When the dust settles, it is the eternally imposing figure of the one claiming to be the Incarnate Son of God that lies behind the hauntingly inescapable question, "Who do you say that I am?" (Matthew 16:15). Any honest search for an answer to this question must take our presuppositions to account in light of the available evidence. The main question we all have to contend with is our attitude towards a world in which there exists a Being totally outside our control and to whom we must subject our autonomy. In his book, *The Last Word*, philosopher Thomas Nagel may have spoken for many when he attributed his own preference for the non-existence of God to a "cosmic authority problem."⁽³⁾

We are easily broken over the pain and suffering we see around us, and well we should. But what a day of rejoicing it is when our hearts are broken by the sweet

When the dust settles, it is the eternally imposing figure of the one claiming to be the Incarnate Son of God that lies behind the hauntingly inescapable question, "Who do you say that I am?"

bitterness of seeing that suffering and our own sinfulness against the blinding purity of the Son of God; when our fists begin to loosen our grip on the stones we would self-righteously cast at others, and when we finally approach God, not as his advisors, but as sinners in need of mercy and forgiveness! When the intent is right and the mirror is the word of God in its historical context, the revelation that true beauty lies in Christ alone will only drive us ever closer to the restoration of our own beauty in God. Such an encounter with our Creator is not to be found amidst the cacophony of noises within the factory of dedicated god-crafters; it is best seen when nothing obscures our view of the cross. ~

"Fairest Jesus," by J.M. Njoroge, A Slice of infinity, originally printed 15 May 2014 (www.rzim.org).

Used by permission of Ravi Zacharias International Ministries.

(1) Albert Schweitzer, *The Quest of the Historical Jesus*, (New York: Macmillan, 1962), 4.

(2) Robert Funk, Roy W. Hoover, and *The Jesus Seminar*, *The Five Gospels* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1997), 2.

(3) Thomas Nagel, *The Last Word*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 131.

In Loving Memory of Everett Hannu

Linda Goddard
Greer, South Carolina

I WANTED TO SHARE SOME of my fondest memories of my grandpa! He was a loving Christian example to all who knew him. He had a smile that would light up the room and his singing voice is to be remembered by all who heard him! I still long to hear him sing in church again. We know he is now singing his praises in glory and he's singing praises unto the Father.

He was a loving husband to Florence; their love for each other was very evident. They were always laughing and they were a match made in heaven! They had 17 beautiful children who are all walking in faith and on the journey to the heavenly homeland. Their children all take after them with wonderful singing voices and a laugh that is known to all who know them. I ask that you would remember each one of them in prayer as they still long to have their dad here with them. Grandma needs prayers also as it's hard to keep journeying without her wonderful husband by her side. We all have the assurance we will meet him in heaven!

The last time I saw him, that he was talking, is engraved into my memory. It was the night before he was to go home from the hospital. I gave them my Christmas card and gift and also shared my news that I was expecting #8. He laughed and said he was so happy that God was blessing us with another child. I asked them how they handled having 17 and Grandma said you just take them from God's hands as they come and the Lord gives strength and wisdom as you need, one day at a time. I said goodbye and I can still hear him saying I love you too, and he gave me a big hug. Now I'm wishing I could have one more hug. It makes me not take these things for granted; treasure and cherish every moment you have with loved ones.

The next time I saw him was the night Grandpa passed from life to eternity, on December 20th, 2013. I cried and couldn't seem to accept that it was his time to go; maybe the doctors could have done more. I had to pray for peace with his death because I couldn't seem to accept it. God did grant a peace.



I have a memory: he and I were discussing new translations of Bibles and I was saying, well, maybe they make it easier to understand. Sometimes I'm reading the Bible and I seem to get nothing out of what I read. He said this to me, perfect instruction and wisdom given to him by God: "You keep reading your Bible and pray that God's Spirit will open it to your heart and He will open it to you. That's just the devil telling you not to read your Bible." I took his advice and it is so true; sometimes God's Word speaks so closely to me!

For thou art my lamp, O LORD: and the LORD will lighten my darkness. (2 Samuel 22:29)

Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. (Psalm 119:105)

Thank you, Grandpa, for your Christian example, your love for all of us, your love for Grandma! You will be forever missed by your wife, your children, your grandchildren and great grandchildren, and your many friends.

You were a shining light in my life! I can't wait to see you again in heaven, so I can come and praise Jesus with you. You always talked about the blood of Jesus washing our sins away and putting away sin and hearing the Gospel message proclaimed: Believe all sins forgiven, in Jesus' precious and atoning blood. May we all continue in this

way, covered by His blood and resting in His merits and grace for all.

Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness of sins. (Acts 13:38) In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins: (Colossians 1:14) And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. (Luke 3:3) In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace. (Ephesians 1:7)

May God bless and keep you all in His care and keep His peace in your hearts.

God's peace.

There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass.

Joshua 21:45

WHAT A TESTIMONY TO THE FAITHFULNESS of God! He fulfilled His word to the letter, whether in grace or in government, as He brought His people through the wilderness and into the promised inheritance. As they looked back they could say, "All that God promised He has accomplished." So shall it be with those who now know Him as revealed in Christ Jesus. When we have ended our pilgrimage and we survey the way we have come from the vantage point of our eternal home in the Father's house, we shall praise and adore Him. He saved us and guided us to an assured habitation, and His Word has been our confidence through all the journey.

H.A. Ironside

Things We Cannot Know

Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington

THERE ARE TWO “UNKNOWN” THINGS mentioned in the Holy Scripture, two things that we as humans cannot truly understand. The first unknown is the blackness of the human heart.

And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. (Genesis 6:5) ...The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth... (Genesis 8:21)

The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one. (Psalm 14:2-3)

The prophet Isaiah said we're all like sheep that have gone astray. Every one of us has turned to his own way. But often we don't really get it. We think that we're a little bad, maybe, at times. We possibly don't love as much as we should or give as much as we should. Maybe we get a little angry sometimes. We might be selfish and ungrateful, occasionally.

We don't know the depth of our depravity.

The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9)

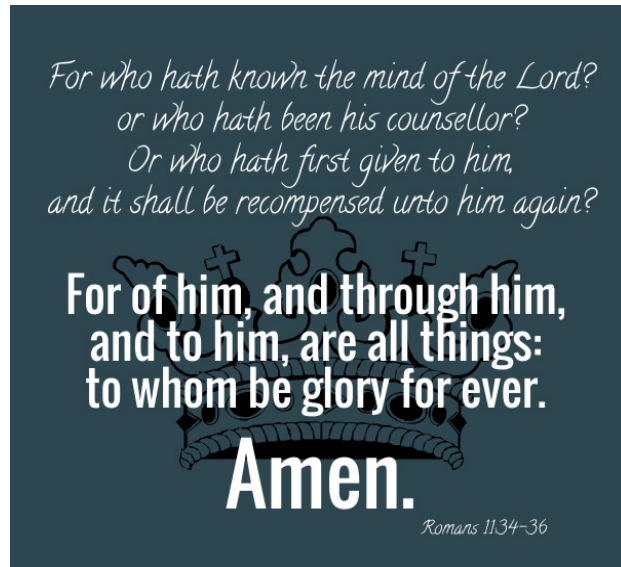
The second thing that cannot be known is the mind of the Lord. The thoughts and deeds of God toward His fallen creation are more than the human mind can comprehend.

Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered. (Psalm 40:5)

How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand... (Psalm 139:17-18)

O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? (Romans 11:33-34)

The thoughts of God toward us, and the work that He accomplished in saving us, are more than we can understand. Before the foundation of the world, He devised the plan to save the human race. At the proper time, He entered His creation as a human. He lived a sinless life. He set His face toward Jerusalem, toward the cross. And He died there for the sins of all mankind, for the sheep that had gone astray.



Through the revelation of the Holy Spirit, we may begin to comprehend the unknowable in the writings of the Apostle Paul: *Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the*

church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. (Ephesians 3:8-21)

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Lo, I Am With You Alway, Even Unto the End of the World **Matthew 28:20**

Pastor Ron Holmgren
Hockinson, Washington

JESUS HAD JUST GIVEN THE COMMISSION to His followers: *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.* (Matthew 28:19-20) The work of the kingdom of God was going to continue after Christ's ascension to heaven. It was time for the Church to become the carrier of the Gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth.

And so they went in the power of the Lord. However, they were not always well received, as we see in the book of Acts. One time, Paul, the Apostle of the Lord, concluded his message to the men in Athens and found different reactions among the people. On one hand, some mocked, and others said, *We will hear thee again of this matter.* (Acts 17:32)

What was the reason for their struggle with his message? They had heard him say that God had raised Jesus from the dead. Of all the things to claim, Paul had crossed the line of any right-thinking man. It was an absurd and unheard-of assertion. If he had only spoken of things that could be seen and proved by man, they might have continued to hear him. However, when it comes to the resurrection of the dead, man's reason fails him, and he rejects it. Just as Isaiah wrote about Christ's rejection due to His not fitting man's idea of a king, so it continues to this day when we speak of our risen King. He just doesn't fit in the realm of the natural mind.

This could be a source of discouragement to the Church, so Jesus ended His commission with the promise that we are not alone. We are to remember that He is ever with us. His Spirit is our ever-present companion. Do not lose heart when it seems that men reject the Gospel of Christ. Continue to proclaim the message of the forgiveness of sins by the redemptive work of Jesus, and know that He has all power to convert the lost by the hearing of His Word.

Paul himself is an example of how great power Christ has to change a man. Also, there are many among us today, like myself, who will ever be thankful that the Church was obedient to the Lord. In God's time, He sends His Holy Spirit to transform the lost soul. This is what Paul meant when he said, *We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.* (2 Corinthians 4:7)

Jesus was only here for forty days after His resurrection. I am sure the time went quickly, and then the apostles found themselves in the mission field: the whole earth. But they were never alone, and we can also be reassured that He is with His Church until the end of time. ~

HAVE YOU EVER HAD A MORNING when you woke up early and spent some time in the Word (Bible), yet behind, running through your mind all the time, are thoughts about someone else's problem that affects your life also? A problem that seems so easy to fix to you, but to them has become almost insurmountable? So, you worry about them and the concern in your heart can even make you discouraged. It was such a morning for me. Then, as I ending my time in the Word, I usually read a short devotion written by a man whose God-given insight I have come to appreciate very much. How amazing and comforting to read the verses he was led to say a few words about. The first was from the first book of the Bible: "Thou, God, seest me." A little Egyptian slave girl, running from an angry mistress, is comforted by what God was willing to do in her life by the knowledge that He saw her in her difficulty and was willing and able to help. Then the man went on to write about the verse in Psalm 139:17: *How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God!* One sentence stood out to me and brought such wonderful comfort and peace - "With an instant sympathy He [God] enters into our anxieties and discouragements." So this morning I wanted to share this wondrous thought with you: our God knows (sees) exactly what is going on in our lives and He cares and wants to dispel our "anxieties and discouragements" too. What a wonderful gift to think on this season!

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