

# 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.

February 2023

## The Bright and Morning Star

Pastor Chuck Bylkas  
South Range, Michigan

*I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.*

Revelation 22:16-17

**P**HILIPP NICOLAI WAS A HYMN WRITER who lived in Westphalia, the northwest region of Germany during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Nicolai was perhaps best known for writing and composing the music for the hymns “Wake, Awake, For Night is Flying” and “O Morning Star How Fair and Bright” (#159 and #66 in our hymnal, *The Hymns and Songs of Zion*). These two hymns were so well regarded, that they became known as the King and Queen of Chorales.

Nicolai also served as a Lutheran pastor in the village of Unna during a dreadful time of pestilence. Between July of 1597 and January of 1598, over 1300 people died of the plague. During a single week in August, 170 individuals were victims of this deadly pestilence. In the midst of this deep distress, Nicolai wrote a series of meditations entitled



Portrait of hymn writer Philipp Nicolai, 17th century commemorative engraving made after his death in 1608.  
Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

“Freuden Spiegel” or “Mirror of Joy” in English. It was his prayer that these meditations would bring comfort to his readers in the midst of their great sorrow. Both “Wake, Awake” and “O Morning Star” arose from Nicolai’s “Mirror of Joy.”

In one version of “O Morning Star”, Nicolai reminds us that God blesses us even in the midst of sorrow: “Earth’s deep sadness may perplex us, and distress us, yet with heavenly joy You bless us.” God not only speaks light and life into a world of suffering and death, but also overcomes the dominion of darkness by the finished work of His Son, Jesus Christ. We have the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation through the cross of Christ. Nicolai echoes this thought in the fourth verse of the same hymn:

**Almighty Father, in Your Son  
You loved us when not yet begun  
Was this old earth’s foundation!  
Your Son has ransomed us in love  
To live in Him here and above;  
This is Your great salvation.  
Alleluia!  
Christ the living,  
To us giving  
Life forever,**

**Keeps us Yours and fails us never!**

Thanks be to God for His Son Jesus, the Bright and Morning Star, who paid our ransom with His Holy and precious blood, who gives us life and who never fails us.

*Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you...” (1 Peter 1:18-20) ~*

Bright  
AND  
Morning Star

**H**E WHO LOOKS UPON THE SON sees, in portrait, the Father. Mark what manner of portrait is spoken of. It is Truth, Righteousness, the Power of God: not dumb, for it is the Word; not insensible, for it is Wisdom; not vain and foolish, for it is Power; not soulless, for it is the Life; not dead, for it is the Resurrection.

Ambrose

# The Glory of the Lord Is Risen Upon Thee

Martin Luther

*Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee.*

Isaiah 60:1

**W**E HAVE FREQUENTLY SPOKEN OF the little word “glory.” It means honor, brightness, splendor. The Gospel is simply a grand report, a noble cry, having origin in a glorious reality; it is not a mere empty proclamation. A glorious being is to be compared to a sun or a light. The sun is a fountain of light, so to speak, and its luster is the glory, the diffusion, the distinction of that light. The luster may be called the natural expression of the sun, the sole medium whereby the sun is recognized in the world—through which it is diffused. Similarly, the glory of an individual is the fountain, the sun, the foundation, of his glorious reputation. His reputation is the luster of his glory. It is the medium whereby he is proclaimed, extolled, recognized as glorious. This much, you will perceive, is implied in the word “glory”—honor, renown, brilliancy.

Thus the Gospel is God’s glory and our light. It is our light in that it reveals to us God, ourselves and all else. It is God’s glory in that it is the medium whereby His work—all His glorious doings—are proclaimed, extolled, recognized and honored in the whole world.

But, carrying the analogy to a finer point, it might be necessary to say that the Gospel is not the actual brightness of the light, nor is it the light itself. It is the rising of the brightness, the approach of the light. It is simply a manifestation of the light and brightness which existed from eternity. As said in John 1:4, “In him was life; and the life was the light of men.” The light did not arise, nor was it openly manifested, except through the Gospel. Therefore, the Gospel is an expression, a cry, of divine brightness and glory. The Scriptures, in Psalm 29:3, in Psalm 68:33 and often elsewhere, call it the voice of God.

## ***The Gospel is an expression, a cry, of divine brightness and glory.***

It is called “Gospel”—good message—because it reveals and proclaims divine blessings, divine glory and divine honor or brightness. “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament showeth his handiwork.” Psalm 19:1. And what do we understand by proclaiming and revealing, except the proclaiming of the Gospel through the heavens—the preaching of it by the apostles? What is the brightness, the work, of God but the great and glorious riches of His goodness and grace poured out upon us?

Paul says (Titus 2:11), “The grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men.” How has it appeared? Through the preaching of the Gospel. Such seems to be the import of the words of Isaiah, “Thy light is come, and the glory of Jehovah is risen upon thee.” That is, the light and glory of God are revealed—are preached—to you. Christ is the light and the glory, according to the words, “And the glory of Jehovah is risen upon thee,” or is revealed. Again, verse 20 of this chapter, “Jehovah will be thine everlasting light.”

Now, the light and the glory are God Himself. For Christ says (John 8:12), “I am the light.” We heard before, in the

epistle for Christmas, that Christ is the effulgence of divine glory. Plainly, then, Isaiah is not here speaking of the rising of Christ in the sense of His coming birth. He refers to the rising of the Gospel after Christ’s ascension. Through the Gospel Christ is spiritually risen and glorified in the hearts of all believers, bringing them salvation. The Scriptures make more frequent reference to His rising in this sense than they do to the birth of Christ. The Gospel is the important feature. On account of it was Christ born. Upon it Paul bases his teaching. He says that God beforetime promised the Gospel concerning His Son, through His prophets, in the holy Scriptures.

We learn from our text here what the Gospel is and what is its message. It is the coming of light, the rising of divine glory. It speaks only of divine glory, divine honor and fame. It exalts only the work of God—His goodness and grace toward us. It teaches the necessity of our receiving God’s work for us, His grace and goodness, even God Himself, if we would secure salvation.

The Gospel produces in us a twofold effect. First, it rejects our natural reason, our human light. It conclusively shows them to be mere darkness. Had we within ourselves light instead of darkness, it would not be necessary for God to send the light to rise upon us. Light enlightens, not light, but darkness. This epistle lesson forcibly expels and severely condemns all natural wisdom, all human reason, heathen arts and the doctrines and laws of man. Conclusively, these are absolute darkness, since it is necessary for the light to come. So we should guard against all human doctrines and the conceits of reason as darkness rejected and condemned by God, and should wake and arise to behold only this light, to follow it alone.

Second, the Gospel casts down all the glory of and pride in our own works, our efforts, our free will. We cannot draw

comfort nor derive honor from these. On the contrary, they but contribute to our shame in the sight of God. If

there were in ourselves anything worthy of honor and glory, vainly would the divine honor and glory rise upon us. Since the latter are called for, clearly there is in us nothing but what is productive of our shame. Paul says on this point (Romans 3:23), “All have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God.” In other words, “Men may, it is true, have their own nature and their self-righteousness, and from these derive temporal honor, praise and glory before their fellows, as if not sinners. But before God they are sinful, destitute of divine glory and unable to boast possession of Him and His blessings.”

Now, no one can be saved unless he have within himself the glory of God and be able to comfort himself solely with God and His blessings, and to glory in these. “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.” Jeremiah 9:24, and 2 Corinthians 10:17. Such is the rising of divine glory. So the Gospel condemns all our efforts and exalts only the goodness and the grace of God—in other words, God Himself. It permits us to console ourselves only with Him and to glory in no other. As Psalm 144:15 has it, “Happy is the people whose God is Jehovah.” ~



# A Sound Mind

Pastor Jay Weidner  
Laurium, Michigan

*For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.*

2 Timothy 1:7

**W**E ARE CURRENTLY INVOLVED IN a struggle of epic proportions. It's not a struggle that comes from outside of the church but within. The struggle hasn't been forced upon us by the incursion of an enemy but rather has arisen slowly, building steadily until it has become epidemic. This struggle is the increasing number of particularly the older people within our churches diagnosed with dementia with its varying causes.

As many of you know, Pastor Rod Johnson has written a book on the subject of he and his wife Dolly having to deal with her Alzheimer's and subsequent dementia. It is appropriately titled: *Coming to Grips with Alzheimer's: Finding Meaning in All Stages of Life!* His work honestly details their personal struggle with the downward slope into dementia in hopes of helping others to be better able to anticipate the inevitable progression of the disease. Such works are vitally necessary as the number of cases has been increasing alarmingly and more and more people have had to learn to adjust their lives dramatically.

My own departed mother at the end of her life was plagued with hallucinations, which caused her many moments of unrest and fear towards the end of her earthly sojourn. On at least two occasions, my sister called me from Pennsylvania to pray with my mother, to strengthen her faith and to assure her that her sins were forgiven in the name and blood of Jesus. It was hard to think that my mother, who was always a stalwart of the

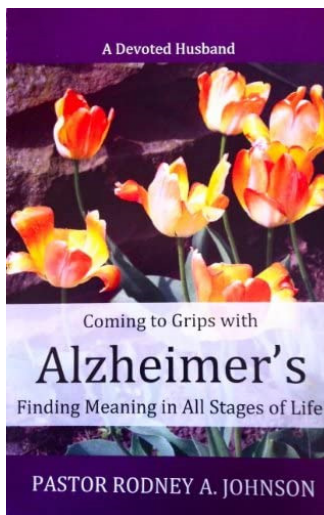
faith, was being caused by her own failing mind to question if God would really save her. Indeed, it was a joy to be able to tell her that for Jesus' sake, God not only would save her but already had, and she would soon go to be with Him. Yet it was difficult to think of someone whom I loved so dearly in terrible fear because she had lost the sense of that reality.

It's therefore necessary for us to take the steps necessary to minister to our elders as they decline, so that the failure of their earthly mind doesn't rob them of the peace of knowing that their spirits have been fully renewed by the finished

work of Jesus Christ. This will require greater vigilance and dedication on our parts as we minister not only to them, but also to their loved ones who are often placed in the very difficult circumstance of not knowing where to turn to find help. For this reason we are putting together a database of information together here at the seminary to make information accessible to people in need of help on this issue and many others that continue to cause difficulties. We are asking that you would make available reliable resources in your local areas that you may have found to be an aid when facing any such dilemma that we could provide info for and possibly link to through our database. Also we are asking for your

continued support as we seek to strengthen the ministries of our local congregations as they seek to minister to God's beloved people.

God's peace.



## Lift Up the Voice

Hans Lampinen  
Snohomish, Washington

*Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion. Break forth into joy, sing together, ye waste places of Jerusalem: for the LORD hath comforted his people, he hath redeemed Jerusalem.*

Isaiah 52:8-9

Our children are blessed to have many cousins. A few of these loved ones live near, which is a blessing, but the ones on their mom's side of the family live a great distance away and are seen only once or twice a year. Despite that distance, there is a kinship that defies time and space. I truly believe it is a union the Holy Spirit provides, that unites their hearts more than just in a familial manner. I believe it to be that they see eye to eye in matters of importance. We wish many times that the distance between them was not so great, but we trust that God knows where each of us should be.

Some of our nieces and nephews made a CD of themselves singing the Hymns and Songs of Zion for my father-in-law. We managed to obtain a copy and have enjoyed listening to those young familiar voices together sing praises to their Heavenly Father. Many nights while one of our children is doing dishes, this CD is playing and they are singing along with their cousins. I marvel that even though they live almost two thousand miles apart, their voices can unite in that praise and thankfulness that the Lord has comforted them and redeemed them.

I pray that this might always be so. That the young in our midst are encouraged to keep their eyes on the Redeemer, the Holy one of Israel. And to know that while they are singing His praise, He is also rejoicing over them with singing as recorded in the third chapter of Zephaniah. *The LORD thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing. (verse 17)*

Praise God for His unspeakable mercies to us in Christ! ~

# Wise Men from the East

Gwen Wilson  
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children,

Hello to all of you, and I hope this day finds you well. It's the beginning of a New Year. My prayer is that Jesus will be your all in all as you are given each day to serve Him. You read about Jesus' birth. Now going ahead about two years we reflect on what happened. I just can't forget to ponder the wise men.

**N**OW WHEN JESUS WAS BORN, Herod was the ungodly king who was ruling over Israel. He liked being king, and he didn't want anyone else to take his place.

Wise men far away in another country had been shown a special star, and God's Spirit told them it meant the King of the Jews had been born. God's Spirit was present in the wise men's hearts and they had a great desire to follow the star and find this Baby. I think that is such an incredible act of faith.

These wise men traveled for several months before reaching Jerusalem, and their purpose was solely to worship this Babe. This was all God's doing. The Bible does not say how they traveled, but I like to think that they possibly rode on camels. Camels were a common way to travel in the desert places because they have hooves that don't sink into the sand, and can go several days without a lot of food or water.

When the wise men reached Jerusalem they went to King Herod saying, *Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.*

*When Herod the king heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. (Matthew 2:2-3)*

Why was Herod so troubled? He's thinking that this Baby will take the people's mind off of him as king. He was very worried that he would lose his throne. He thinks of a plan so that this doesn't happen. The Bible tells us that Herod gathered all the chief priest and scribes (writers) together and asked them where Jesus was born. They told him, "Bethlehem of Judea."

Herod called the wise men to him and asked *them* when they had seen the star. He wanted to know how old this "baby king" was. He sent them on their way and told them that when they found the Baby, to come back and tell him so he could worship Him, also. Herod had no plan for worship but was plotting to kill this Baby. This showed the darkness in his heart. The Bible speaks of this darkness. *But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! (Matthew 6:23)*

The wise men left Herod's palace and as they stepped outside, there was the star overhead. It led and they followed, and it took them right to Jesus. The star stopped right over Joseph and Mary's home, and they rejoiced with very much joy. Jesus was not in the manger any

more, for He was several months old. The Bible says, *And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshiped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. (Matthew 2:10)*

I just marvel at the holiness of the baby Jesus. The wise men bowed to worship Him. To me that is so beautiful.

God warned the wise men not to go back to Herod but to return to their country by another road. I can just imagine all the wonderful conversations the wise men had over the sheer WONDER of what they had witnessed. Even how the Spirit prompted them to make the journey, and at the end of it they found everything they were looking for and more! Can you just imagine how they felt if they ever learned of Herod having the babies killed? They certainly knew to listen to God's warning not to go back to tell Herod anything.

But when the wise men did not return, this made Herod VERY angry. He decided to have all children two years old and younger, put to death. Jesus would've been about this age. Isn't that awful? This is what happened and there was much sadness. The Old Testament prophet spoke of this. *Thus saith the Lord; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not (no more). (Jeremiah 31:15)*

Did Jesus die? No, God was protecting Him. Jesus was safe in Egypt where an angel of God had told Joseph to go. Jesus did end up living in Nazareth, as the prophets had said he would (Matthew 2:23). He was about three years old when they came there. The Christmas story has a happy beginning, and some terrible sadness, too, but also a happy ending. This is a story that is living in our hearts every day and has no end. Jesus is never ending and will be near each of you children all the days of your life. Jesus greatest gift to us is His life that He gave so willingly on the cross, so that we would be saved from our sins and one day live with Him forever.

I pray that Jesus will be with you through this new year, and that you will keep Him as your best friend.

*God's peace.*



*Adoration of the Magi*  
Bartolomé Esteban Murillo  
Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

# Saint or Sinner?

Pastor Jason Salmi  
Vancouver, Washington

**I**N SAINT JOHN'S GOSPEL, we find John the Baptist pointing to Jesus and saying, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29) In a powerful psalm of praise, King David exalts in the greatness of God's mercy towards us: *As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. (Psalm 103:12)* In these and in many other places, the holy Scriptures make it clear that Christians are saved because God has taken away our sin, having removed it from us. You, dear Saint, belong to that great multitude which no one can number, that John saw in his Revelation. Through faith in Jesus, you are one of those who, "have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." (Revelation 7:14b).

But it doesn't always feel like that's true, does it? After all, we look at what the Bible says about our sin being totally and completely removed from us and by faith we say, "Amen!" And then we look within ourselves and we still see sin. We still must admit that we miss the mark in thought, word and deed. We continue to find ourselves guilty of sins of commission, as well as those of omission. As a matter of fact, we look into the same Scriptures in which we found such comfort in the proclamation that our sins are removed, and find that John (yes, the same John who wrote the Gospel above) also tells us, *If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (1 John 1:8)*

So then which is it? Have our sins been removed, or are we forced to admit that we are still sinners? And the answer is, "Both." The testimony of God's Word is that you, Dear Believer, are simultaneously a saint and a sinner. And that

may at first seem hard to reconcile, but it's exactly true. The Apostle Paul gives us a graphic illustration of how this looks as he wrestles with this tension; believing that he is saved, he nevertheless also sees his own present sinfulness: *I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. 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 which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin. (Romans 7:21-25)*



In trying to understand how it can be true that we are both a saint and a sinner at the same time, it's helpful to consider it according to perspective. As we know, changing the place from which we view something can either conceal or reveal things which are there. When considering your own sinfulness, that is viewing yourself according to the way that you live your life. And from that perspective, all of your failures are clearly visible. But God sees you

in a different way. He sees you, who have been united with Christ through Baptism (Romans 6:3-5), only through His Son! When God the Father looks at you, He does not see you based on your own righteousness (or lack thereof), but according to Jesus' righteousness.

Dear Saints, praise God for His Word and the salvation and comfort that comes through it. And when you want to see how you stand before God, do not look at yourself, but look to Jesus and what He has done for you. "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!" ~

## Lord, Forgive My Sin 14 March—Evening

*...the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin.*

**1 John 1:7**

**L**ORD JESUS, I ASK OF YOU forgiveness for all my sins. Your blood is the blood of reconciliation through which I become cleansed from all sin. Allow Your blood, Your suffering, Your bonds and sorrow, Your cross and Your death to always remain within my conception. With it may I rise, with it may I fall asleep.

Nothing defiled shall enter into the New Jerusalem; therefore allow me, in time, to consider the matter of my cleansing. I exert myself in heartfelt remorse over my sins, but it cannot cleanse me. Your blood, alone, must do it. It is the blood of Jesus, the innocent Lamb, the blood of my High Priest, which reconciles me with God. It is not simply the blood of man, but the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, Who is both God and man in one inseparable Person. Therefore, it makes me clean from all sin.

So, therefore, make me clean on the inside that all sinful lusts in my heart would be blotted out. Make me also clean on the outside that my mouth will speak no shameful word, that I would flee all sinful fellowship, and that You would remain continually before my eyes when I am attracted to sin so that I would hate and leave not only the coarsest but even the smallest sin allowed by the world. Now I lay hold of Your blood in faith. Cleanse me throughout and allow that in death I would be found justified thereby. Amen.

*Johannes Stark; Tr. from Stark's Andachten Kirchentellinsfurth Edition, 1876; Tr. by Ed Haikio  
Submitted by Ralph and Barbara Somero; New Ipswich, New Hampshire*



# Who Touched Me?

Pastor Nicholas Kandoll  
New York Mills, Minnesota

*And when Jesus was passed over again by ship unto the other side, much people gathered unto him: and he was nigh unto the sea. And, behold, there cometh one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name; and when he saw him, he fell at his feet, And besought him greatly, saying, My little daughter lieth at the point of death: I pray thee, come and lay thy hands on her, that she may be healed; and she shall live. And Jesus went with him; and much people followed him, and thronged him. And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood twelve years, And had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was nothing bettered, but rather grew worse, When she had heard of Jesus, came in the press behind, and touched his garment. For she said, If I may touch but his clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. And Jesus, immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him, turned him about in the press, and said, Who touched my clothes? And his disciples said unto him, Thou seest the multitude thronging thee, and sayest thou, Who touched me? And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth. And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague. While he yet spake, there came from the ruler of the synagogue's house certain which said, Thy daughter is dead: why troublest thou the Master any further? As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, he saith unto the ruler of the synagogue, Be not afraid, only believe. And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James. And he cometh to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and seeth the tumult, and them that wept and wailed greatly. And when he was come in, he saith unto them, Why make ye this ado, and weep? the damsel is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. But when he had put them all out, he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel, and them that were with him, and entereth in where the damsel was lying. And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi; which is, being interpreted, Damsel, I say unto thee, arise. And straightway the damsel arose, and walked; for she was of the age of twelve years. And they were astonished with a great astonishment. And he charged them straitly that no man should know it; and commanded that something should be given her to eat.*

**Mark 5:21-43**

**T**HIS WAS A DAY OF CRISIS. Put yourself in the shoes of Jairus. His little girl is sick and dying. He's rushing to find the one person who can help. He finally finds Him, and on the way to save his daughter, Jesus decides to stop and look for someone who touched Him while they were walking down a crowded street. Imagine the feelings that must have gone through Jairus' head as the scene unfolds. Jesus stops and suddenly a woman falls down at His feet and Jesus is talking to her. Jesus doesn't seem to have any sense of

urgency. If that's not enough, while Jesus is talking to this strange woman, news comes that shatters his world. "Your daughter is dead..."

Just as the walls are closing in, Jesus speaks in the midst of Jairus' despair and says, "Do not fear, only believe..." So Jairus follows Jesus, and his daughter, at the command of Christ, rises from the dead.

Imagine being the woman who had the issue of blood. This illness made her ritually unclean; she was unable to be in fellowship in the synagogue. She had spent twelve years dealing with disease. She spent all she had trying to be cured, but only grew worse. She has heard and believed the things said about Jesus and knows that if she can just touch His clothing she will be healed. Jesus asks who touched him in order to have a conversation with this woman.

We would do well to pay attention to His next words. In Greek the word that is used for whole is not a medical term—it's not your faith has healed you. Rather, this is a word that you would use to describe someone who was rescued from a burning building. Jesus is saying your faith has saved you! Not only is her illness healed, but her sins are forgiven and she is saved.

This is what faith in Christ does. It saves. In both of these situations Jesus takes a crisis and makes peace. A miraculous physical healing, and saving faith! A little girl who was dead rises.

This is what our Lord does, and this is good for us. For we too are in a crisis. We have sin in our hearts, we

break God's laws, we live in a world full of sin and evil, and we desperately need Jesus. Not only that but many of us are dealing with situations that we have no clue how to get through. Cancer, the death of a loved one, a life changing diagnosis, financial debt, the list goes on and on.

Dear friends, in whatever situation you find yourself, Jesus is there for you. His words to Jairus ring true: "Do not fear, only believe." No matter what happens to you, by faith you are saved. No matter the suffering and struggles you have in this life, Jesus is here. Even if the crisis takes your life, He is your life and has prepared a place for you to live in eternity.

In this life His Word and Sacraments accomplish for us what was done for Jairus and the woman. They bring healing! They bring life and salvation. They bring Jesus. These gifts are given freely by grace. Cling to them and so cling to Jesus.

*God's peace.*



*Woman with an Issue of Blood*  
James Tissot

# Eyewitnesses of His Majesty

Lois Matson  
Yacolt, Washington

**W**E REMEMBER THE TRANSFIGURATION of Jesus in February. The gospel writers Matthew, Mark and Luke all record this event, and the disciples Peter, James and John witnessed it, up close and personal.

The Greek word for “transfigure” is *metamorphoo*, which means “to change into a wholly different form or appearance.” This word is related to our English word “metamorphosis.”

*And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into a high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light. And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him. Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only. And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead. (Matthew 17:1-9)*

*And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into a high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. (Mark 9:2-4)*

*And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, he took Peter and John and James, and went up into a mountain to pray. And as he prayed, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment was white and glistening. And, behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elias: Who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he should accomplish at Jerusalem. (Luke 9:28-31)*

For most of the thirty-odd years that Jesus walked this earth, His divine appearance was masked. When the Christ was born, His mother Mary and earthly father Joseph saw a human baby. At twelve years old in the temple, the doctors of

theology saw an ordinary descendant of Abraham, one who was keen to listen and learn. To the eyes of His disciples, Jesus appeared to be an average Jewish man. No halo. No shining glory. Nothing extraordinary. Even when Jesus did miracles, His appearance was ordinary.

But that all changed for Peter, James, and John. On a given day, Jesus led them up a high mountain, away from the others, and was transfigured before them. Suddenly His face shone like the sun, and His clothing became as white as light. The human appearance of Jesus was dazzling, as His divine glory was, for a brief moment, revealed to human eyes. His ordinary flesh displayed divine attributes.

Moses and Elijah appeared, talking with Jesus about His coming death at Jerusalem. Moses and Elijah, who had recently been in the presence of God, also shone with glory, although I'm sure it was nothing in comparison with the glory of the Christ!



*Transfiguration*  
Alexandr Ivanov

We might think we'd like to witness the glory of God, but these eyewitnesses were not overjoyed at the appearance of Jesus. We might desire to hear the audible voice of God, but Peter, James and John fell on their faces with fear upon hearing the Father speak from heaven.

Decades after the Transfiguration, Peter mentions it in his second epistle, and he still seems to retain the awe that brought him to his knees at the sight (and sound) of the Divine Glory.

*For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount.*

*We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. (2 Peter 1:16-21)*

Peter says we have the prophetic word, which is sure and certain, and to which we should pay close attention. Pick up and read the prophetic Word! ~

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## The Transfiguration of Christ

Paul Kretzmann

*And after six days, Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John, his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them; and His face did shine as the sun, and His raiment was white as the light.*

*Matthew 17:1-2*

**M**EMORABLE, IMPORTANT DAYS WERE THOSE which Matthew fixes so carefully in the order of events, six days after the first specific announcement of Christ's passion; a turning-point in the ministry of Jesus. That Luke mentions eight days, chapter 9, 28, offers no difficulty.

"That Luke says Jesus had taken those three apostles with Him after about eight days, but Matthew and Mark, that it happened after six days, that is not opposed to each other. For Matthew and Mark reckon the days that lie between, but Luke takes the last day as well, upon which Christ preached before these six days, as also the first day after the six days, on which the transfiguration took place, in addition." (Martin Luther)

For Matthew it was the exact recollection of a strictly historical incident. While all the disciples undoubtedly went with Christ to the foot of the mountain, — which various commentators have guessed to be either Mount Hermon, in the Anti-Lebanon range, just north of the boundary of Palestine, or Mount Panius, near Caesarea Philippi, or Mount Tabor, near Nazareth, — only the three men that were His favored disciples, Peter, James, and John, were taken along to the top of the mountain. They were probably those upon whose understanding and sympathy He could rely. They were to become the witnesses of His glory before the whole world (2 Peter 1:16-18).

A most peculiar, miraculous phenomenon: While Jesus was praying, He was transfigured, transformed, before them, His physical body being transfused and glorified with spirituality, a foretaste of His future glorification. Not only did His face shine like the sun itself, with a luster not of this earth, but His raiment became as white-glistening as snow, as the essence of light itself, beyond the power of any fuller on earth to give them such pure spotlessness. All this was visible to them as they gazed in stupefied wonder. His divine glory, which He always bore in Himself, but which was usually hidden or manifested only occasionally in word and miracle, here transfused and shone through His outward form and person: an unsurpassed revelation of His glory before their eyes. It was an incontestable proof of the fact that He was truly the Son of God; it was visible evidence of His entering through suffering and death into His glory.

"Therefore this appearance of Christ intends to show in deed and truth what Peter above, chapter 16, 16, has confessed: Jesus, the man born of the Virgin Mary, is Christ, the Son of the living God (Christ, however, signifies a king and priest, that is, a Lord over all things; and also a Mediator between God and men). Because He was destined to be preached through the whole world as such, for that reason He is shown to the three apostles as such, who should testify to what they had seen and heard." (Martin Luther) ~

### Luther's Notes on the Transfiguration

**V**ERY MUCH IS contained in this history.

*First*, The resurrection of the dead and the future glory and brightness of *our* bodies are shown. For this was something very remarkable, that Christ was transfigured while yet in the mortal body, which was subject to suffering. What then shall it be, when mortality shall have been swallowed up, and nothing shall remain but immortality and glory?

*Secondly*, There is added the appearance of Moses and Elias, who prove by their appearing that they had never really died, and that there is yet another life, besides the earthly life, from which they were transferred.

*Thirdly*, This appearance teaches us also that we should despise death, and look upon it merely as an emigration or a sleep. In short, this appearance proves that this life is nothing at all in comparison with the future life.

*Fourthly*, This appearance proves that sin is overcome. For it necessarily follows as an incontrovertible conclusion, that, where death is overcome, there sin is also overcome.

Martin Luther