

# 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 2024

## The Transfiguration

Paul Kretzmann

### The Miracle of the Transfiguration

Six days, or after a six-day interval from the day when Jesus gave His disciples and the people the solemn lesson regarding true discipleship, He added another item of preparation for some of those in His immediate neighborhood. He did not take all of His disciples with Him on this excursion, but only Peter, James, and John; as on other occasions, these three men were His intimates, His most trusted pupils (Mark 5:37; 14:33). He took them aside, away from the rest, and led them up into a high mountain where they were all alone, with no one to interfere with their work or any other intention. Whether this mountain or hill was Mount Hermon in the Lebanon Range (9,200 feet high), or Mount Tabor, in the neighborhood of Nazareth, in Galilee (1,000 feet high), cannot be determined definitely from the text. The latter mountain is favored by many commentators because it was mentioned at a very early date. But the claim that the fortress with its soldiers on this mountain would have interfered with the revelation is now generally allowed. But the whole question is not a matter of faith. It is best that people do not know for sure, lest the superstition and idolatry of so-called holy places extend beyond all bounds. Mount Hermon was near Caesarea-Philippi, but Mount Tabor could easily have been reached in a six-day journey.

On this high mountain which Jesus had selected for this demonstration, He was changed, transformed, transfigured before the three disciples; His common, mortal body was changed to a spiritual, immortal body, the spirituality transfused the ordinary body, as one commentator puts it. Not only His body was thus transfigured, but even His garments partook of this peculiar change. They became shining or glittering, charged with light, and so snowy white that no cleaner or dyer on earth would have been able to produce such absolute whiteness. The entire appearance of Christ was one of indescribable splendor, much more so even than that of Moses, after he had spoken with God (2 Cor 3:7).



Ex 34:29-35). And while the disciples were gazing at their Master in wonder and amazement, there appeared unto them, so that they could see and recognize them, Elijah and Moses, who then had a conversation with Christ concerning

His glorification, which was here typified. Moses, the great teacher of the Law and prophet of Jehovah, and Elijah, the prophet that had been so zealous for the honor of Israel's God, were fitting representatives of the Old Covenant. Moreover, Moses had died and been buried by the hand of God, who alone knew where his grave was situated, and Elijah had been taken up into heaven without death by the Lord. They were intimates of God from of old.

### The Revelation of God

The effect of this singular experience was such as to put the disciples into a state of ecstasy; they were almost intoxicated with the glory of the singular appearance. They were incidentally in a condition of half-sleep, overcome by the brightness of their transfigured Master. It was while in this state that Peter made the suggestion to Jesus. He was filled with joy as on the great Festival of Tabernacles, when all Israel lived in huts made of branches of trees during the eight days of celebration. If the feeling of elation was to continue as he felt it now, Peter was ready to stay here indefinitely. So he offers to build three tabernacles: one for Jesus, one for Moses, one for Elijah. His idea seems to have been that they might live together in glory, just as Moses did on the mountain of the Lord in the wilderness. Such is the effect which a mere peep, a single glance, into the glory beyond the grave will have on the believers; how much more glorious will the reality be, when Christ Himself will be visible to all believers in eternal transfiguration, and not only Moses and Elijah, but all the thousands of God's elect will be with Him, converse with Him, and praise Him, world without end! Peter evidently thought that Moses and Elijah had come to stay; that was the explanation he made to himself, and that explains his suggestion. His impulsive nature prompted him to say something, and, as in other cases, his first thought,

which he voiced almost mechanically, was not the one that fitted the situation, though it is not to his discredit. He knew not what to say in this instance, for they were literally frightened out of their wits. And the end of the miracle was not yet. It happened, Mark writes, in order to direct the attention to the important incidents, first, that a cloud overshadowed them, a bright and shining cloud enfolded them; and secondly, that a voice came out of the cloud, for God the Father was present in the cloud, His great glory was inside; it was the cloud of the New Testament covenant (2 Pet 1:17). The message of admonition which came out of the cloud was: This is My beloved Son; hear Him, render to Him full obedience. That was a sign from heaven such as had never before been witnessed by human eyes. That was such a powerful testimony for the person and work of Christ that the disciples were compelled to admit its emphasis and accept its import. God distinctly calls attention to the Word of Jesus, demanding for it the close and careful attention of all men, and the obedience which is justly accorded to God's Word only. Only he that accepts Jesus as the Son of God, begotten of the Father from eternity, beloved of God even in His state of humiliation, and he that thereupon is obedient to the Word of the Gospel, and puts his full trust in that alone, will be received by God into sonship. But to him the full glory of heaven will be revealed, in a measure even here in the Gospel of salvation, whose content is Jesus, and afterward with the full burst of beauty and radiance, from the throne of the Lamb. "This appearance shows that the present life is nothing in comparison with the future one, which will most surely come upon us that are, in Christ, dead to the world. And we owe it to God that we thank Him with great praise that He has condescended in His great goodness to reveal this to us, and that by this beautiful, open, and powerful revelation He intended to make us sure of the hope of eternal life." (Martin Luther)

### The End of the Transfiguration

Just as quickly as the miraculous appearance had begun, it also ended. The disciples, still half dazed, felt that the pall was lifted, and, looking about them, saw no one but Jesus

alone with them. Moses and Elijah had been returned to the place of eternal happiness in the same wonderful manner as they had been brought down to the mountain. Jesus, their Master, now was with them again in His usual form and dress, with no evidence of the glory which had just shone through Him. His reassuring words and touch brought them back fully to their senses. While they were then descending from the mountain together, He gave them the earnest charge to transmit the account of what they had seen to no one until after the resurrection of the Son of Man. The people had an altogether wrong idea as to the work and mission of the Messiah, and the news of this miraculous appearance would only have strengthened this false conception. But at that time, when His death would have removed and disproved all wrong beliefs and hopes in an earthly Messiah, with an earthly kingdom, and especially after He would have risen from the dead, then this revelation should be part of their preaching, they should not hesitate about proclaiming the full truth about the transfiguration. The three disciples accepted this charge in the proper spirit of meekness and obedience; they kept their secret until the time that Jesus had indicated, even from the other disciples. In the mean time, however, they discussed the question among themselves, how that was to be understood concerning the rising from the dead. Not that they did not know that there would be a resurrection of the dead on the last day. This doctrine was known and believed by all the Jews, the only ones dissenting being the sect of the Sadducees. The difficulty for them lay in this, both when He should arise from the dead, as some manuscripts have it, and how this would be done. Christ's one announcement concerning His Passion, death, and resurrection had not yet entered into their heart and understanding. What express and particular resurrection of the dead the Lord was referring to for Himself was a mystery to them. Thus earnest Christians will find many points in Scriptures and in the sayings of Jesus that are a mystery to them; they do not understand in what sense they are to be understood and applied in individual instances; but careful searching of the Word will open the eyes, under the guidance of the Spirit.

Desire of every nation, Light of the Gentiles, Thou!  
 In fervent adoration Before Thy throne we bow;  
 Our hearts and tongues adore Thee, Blest Dayspring from the skies.  
 Like incense sweet before Thee, Permit our songs to rise.

Arise and shine in splendor, Thou bright and morning Star!  
 The Gentiles come to render Their gifts from realms afar.  
 The word by prophets spoken In truth is now fulfilled.  
 And yearning hearts, once broken, With sweetest hope are filled.

Our Life and Resurrection, Lord Jesus Christ, Thou art;  
 O shed Thy light's reflection To earth's remotest part;  
 Let Gentile tongues confess Thee, Rejoicing in Thy light,  
 The ransomed thousands bless Thee, Thou hast dispelled the night.

Anna B. Hoppe

*For thus saith the Lord of hosts; Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, **and the desire of all nations shall come:** and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.*

Haggai 2:6-9



# The Epiphany of Our Lord

Pastor Dennis Hannu  
Wolf Lake, Minnesota

**W**HAT IS THE EPIPHANY of Our Lord? Epiphany is a term that simply means a **manifestation, appearance, or revelation of a deity**. The Epiphany of Our Lord is the appearance or revelation of Jesus the Christ. During this season in the church year, we examine Scripture texts that do exactly that. They reveal unto us Jesus Christ who is the Incarnate Deity—God in flesh. Starting from the Epiphany of Our Lord (January 6) through the Transfiguration of Our Lord (February 11), the readings are ordered in such a way as to manifest or reveal Jesus through His teachings and/or the miracles He performed. He is shown in His humanity and also in His divinity, True Man and True God. Epiphany begins with the wise men or the magi following the star to Bethlehem and worshipping the child Jesus. The Baptism of Our Lord is the first Sunday after the Epiphany and the season ends on Transfiguration Sunday, the last Sunday in Epiphany where Jesus is literally revealed to Peter, James, and John in all of His majesty and splendor.

There are many wonderful Scripture passages to examine for this time of year, but for the sake of this article we will look at the Matthew passage for the beginning of the Epiphany season. *Matthew 2:1-12: Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, 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 had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.*



The revelation of Jesus as King of the Jews to these wise men is astounding especially as we consider who these men were. They were men from east of Jerusalem, members of the religious hierarchy of ancient Persia and Media (modern day Iran). They were scholars and practitioners of astrology; they studied the stars (astronomy), were government officials, and were interpreters of dreams. It was because of this they were called wise men.

We may wonder how they came to know of the Jewish Messiah. It is believed that they came into contact with the Jewish religion and the Hebrew Scriptures due to the Babylonian captivity of the Jews. The Persians and Medes then captured Babylon and allowed the Jews to return to Jerusalem, but some continued to live in the Persian Empire. Daniel was also a well-known man in Babylon and among the Medes. He prophesied of the coming Messiah in his book, *Daniel 7:13-14: I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.* Although this may explain to some degree why the wise men had knowledge of the Messiah, king of the Jews, it still does not explain how they knew to connect the star to the birth of Jesus Christ, king of the Jews. This is what makes this an epiphany. The wise men saw the new and strange star and recognized it as a sign of the birth of a king and it was revealed to them that this was indeed the King of kings, the King of the Jews. Since God revealed to the wise men in a

dream not to report the whereabouts of the child to Herod, it is possible that He revealed to them in a dream to follow the star. We may never know how they knew to follow the star, but this much we do know: God placed the star in the night sky and led them to the child and when they saw Him they were extremely happy, and they fell down worshipping Him.

This then is the Epiphany: this child is the Messiah, the King, not just of the Jews, but also of the Gentile Magi. He is the King of the world and His kingdom is forever and will not be destroyed. May the revelation of our Lord bring you great joy this new year and let us fall down and worship Him because of His Epiphany.

*God's peace.*

*... He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods.*

*Daniel 3:17-18*

**T**HERE IS SOMETHING VERY FINE about the confidence expressed by these three young Hebrews. It was not necessary for God to deliver them from the furnace, if it were not His will. They could trust Him anyway. If He did not quench the flame, He would give grace to endure; and they knew that in another world all would be appraised at its true value. It is a great lesson we all need to learn.

*H. A. Ironside*

# Seek the Lord's Will Diligently

Gwen Wilson  
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children, across the land and here at home,  
How I pray this finds you well and that all is well with your soul.

We say we are living in strange times, but to God the times are just what He knew they would be. Yes, there is much depravity all around us and my focus today would be that of living by faith and serving our LORD and living in His will. I want to share some verses concerning His will.

*Hebrews 11:6: But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.*

**T**HE LAST THREE WORDS OF that verse simply speak of diligence in seeking the Lord. That is not speaking of an "I'll get around to it when I'm ready" attitude. No, it's not serving ourselves but earnestly looking to Jesus.

Diligence—Wikipedia: In Christianity; as one of seven virtues describes diligence as thoughtfulness, completeness, and persistence of an action, particularly in matters of faith.

Serving the Lord is serious business, but we cannot do it of ourselves. We can in no way earn or work our way to living out God's will or come to Him. We must pray and seek Him. Ask God to show you the way. He is ever ready and willing to do that.

*Psalm 25:4-6, 8-10: Shew me thy ways, O Lord; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day. Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses; for they have been ever of old.*

*Good and upright is the Lord: therefore will he teach sinners in the way. The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way. All the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.*

Dear one, the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth. What a loving God we have.

**Mercy** is compassion or forgiveness shown to an individual when the forgiver could mete out punishment, but doesn't.

**Truth** is being true, honest, genuinely sincere.

That is our Lord and He desires that His children serve Him with their whole heart, soul and mind.

God created us to have a relationship with Him. He is our Father who loves us so much and so desires to have us for His own, just as earthly fathers love their children.

Many earthly fathers have been discouraged and concerned for their children when disobedience or waywardness is an issue. When this is the case, do know this, that our heavenly Father sees the whole picture and is concerned, too.

Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to Me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven but **only** the one who does **the will** of My Father who is in heaven (Matthew 7:21)." This verse is speaking of obedience, which is God's will as to how we should live. Jesus said, "For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath given me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. **And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life:** and I will raise him up at the last day (John 6:38-40)."

We can not know all of God's will for us, but He is very willing to show it to us. There will be things that happen in our lives that certainly don't look like the will of God, but who can know the mind of God? Jesus is always leading,

always listening, always loving, always mediating with our Father God for us.

*Deuteronomy 7:9,11 Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and **keep his commandments** to a thousand generations... Thou shalt therefore **keep the commandments, and the statutes, and the judgments, which I command thee this day, to do them.***

Whatever God has ordained, whatever He has set in order is for our peace, joy, and happiness in this life and hereafter, forever.

I encourage you all to press on, seek Jesus and pray to be kept in the faith. Believe God and Jesus for what they say and teach. No one loves you more. I leave you in His care in this new year.

*God's peace.*



Though darker, rougher, grows the way, And cares press harder day by day,  
And nothing satisfies;  
The promise sure before me lies Of that blest place beyond the skies  
Where Jesus waits for me.  
With sight too dim to visualize The scene, though spread before my eyes,  
I know it will be fair;  
Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, The things that are for us prepared,  
But Jesus will be there.

Robert R. Pentecost

# The Bread of Heaven

Martin Luther

*No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me. Not that any man hath seen the Father, save he which is of God, he hath seen the Father. Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life. Your fathers did eat manna in the wilderness, and are dead. This is the bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die. I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world.*

John 6:44-51

**T**HE LIVING BREAD, of which the Lord here speaks, is Christ Himself, of whom we partake. If in our hearts we lay hold of only a morsel of this bread, we shall have forever enough and can never be separated from God. The partaking of this bread is nothing but faith in Christ our Lord, that He is, as Paul says in 1 Cor. 1:30, “made unto us wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.” He who eats of this food lives forever. Therefore, the Lord says, immediately following this Gospel lesson, where the Jews strove among themselves about this discourse of His: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, ye have not life in yourselves. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day.* (John 6: 53-54)

The bread from heaven the fathers ate in the wilderness, as Christ says here, was powerless to keep them from dying; but this bread makes immortal. If we believe on Christ, death cannot harm us; yea, it is no longer death. The Lord utters the same truth in another passage when He says to the Jews: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death.* (John 8:51) Here he speaks definitely of the Word of faith, and of the Gospel.

But one may say, as did the Jews, who took offense at these words of the Lord: The saints, nevertheless, died, and Abraham and the prophets likewise died. We reply to this: The death of Christians is only a sleep, as the Scriptures everywhere call it. A Christian neither tastes nor sees death; that is, he is never conscious of any death; for this Savior, Christ Jesus, in whom he believes, has destroyed death so that he no longer needs to taste it and pay its penalty. Death is to the Christians only a transition of life, yea, a door to life: as Christ says in *John 5:24: Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.*

Therefore, a Christian life is a life of bliss and joy. Christ's yoke is easy and sweet; the reason it seems to us galling and heavy is that the Father has not yet drawn us. and so we have no pleasure in it, neither does this Gospel lesson minister

comfort to us. If we, however, rightly appropriated the words of Christ, they would be of much greater comfort to us. By faith we partake of this bread that has come down from heaven, Christ the Lord, when we believe on Him as our Savior and Redeemer.

In this light I now remind you that these words are not to be misconstrued and made to refer to the Sacrament of the Altar; whoever so interprets them does violence to this Gospel text. There is not a letter in it that refers to the Lord's Supper. Why should Christ here have in mind that Sacrament when it was not yet instituted? The whole chapter from which this Gospel is taken speaks of nothing but the spiritual food, namely, faith. When the people followed the Lord merely hoping again to eat and drink, as the Lord Himself charges them with doing, He took the figure from the temporal food they sought, and speaks throughout the entire chapter of a spiritual food. He says: “The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life.” Thereby He shows that He feeds them with the object of inducing them to believe on Him, and that as they partook of the temporal food, so should they also partake of the spiritual. On this subject we will say more at some other time.

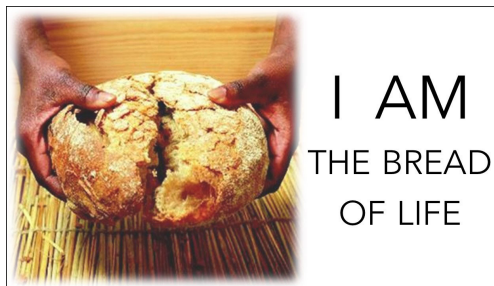
Now let us here notice that the Lord approaches us so lovingly and graciously, and offers us Himself—His flesh and blood—in such gentle words that it should in all reason move the heart to believe on Him; to believe that this bread, His flesh and blood, born of the Virgin Mary, was given because He had to pay the penalty of death and suffer in our stead the torments of hell, and, besides, to

suffer the guilt of sins He never committed, as if they were His own. This He did willingly and received us as brethren and sisters. If we believe this we do the will of the heavenly Father, which is nothing else than that we believe on the Son. Christ says, just before our text: *And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day.* (John 6:40)

It is now evident that whoever has faith in this bread of heaven—in Christ, in this flesh and blood, of which He here speaks that it is given to him and that it is his—he also accepts it as his own, and has already done the will of God and eaten of this heavenly manna; as Augustine says: What do you prepare for your mouth? Only believe, and you have already eaten.

The whole New Testament treats of this spiritual supper, and especially does John here. The Sacrament of the Altar is a testament and confirmation of this true supper, with which we should strengthen our faith and be assured that this body and this blood, which we receive in the Sacrament has rescued us from sin and death, the devil, hell and all misery. Concerning this I have spoken and written more on other occasions.

What is the proof by which one may know that this heavenly bread is his and that he is invited to such a spiritual





supper? He needs only to look at his own heart. If he finds it so disposed that it is softened and cheered by God's promises and is firm in the conviction that it may appropriate this bread of life, then he may be assured that he is one of the invited; for as one believes, even so is it done unto him. From that moment on, he loves his neighbor and helps him as his brother; he rescues him, gives to him, loans to him and does nothing for him but that which he would desire his neighbor to do for himself. All this is attributable to the fact that Christ's kindness to him has leavened his heart with sweetness and love, so that he has pleasure and joy in serving his neighbor; yea, he is even in misery if he has no one to whom to show kindness. Besides all this, he is gently and humbly disposed toward everybody; he does not highly esteem the transient pomps of the world; he accepts everyone as he is, speaks evil of no one, interprets all things for the best where

he sees things are not going right. When his neighbors are lacking in faith, in love, in life, then he prays for them, and he is heartily sorry when anyone gives offense to God or to his neighbor. To sum up all, with him the root and sap are good, for he is grafted into a rich and fruitful vine, in Christ; therefore, such fruits must come forth.

But if one has not faith and is not taught of God—if he never eats of this bread from heaven—he surely never brings forth these fruits. For where such fruits are not produced, there is certainly no true faith. St. Peter teaches us in 2 Peter 1:10 that we should make our calling unto salvation sure by good works; there he is really speaking of the works of love, of serving one's neighbor and treating him as one's own flesh and blood. This is sufficient on this Gospel. Let us pray for God's grace. ~



## Our Reasonable Service

Pastor Chuck Bylkas  
South Range, Michigan

*I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service. And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.*

**Romans 12:1-2**

**A**S WE JOURNEY THROUGH THE season of Epiphany, we hear Jesus speak quite often about the importance and nature of discipleship. The Apostle Paul addresses this subject as well, in his letter to the Romans.

But what does it mean to follow Jesus? Quite simply, the key to understanding discipleship is sacrifice. The amazing thing is that the Apostle Paul calls presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice our “reasonable service”! This certainly doesn't sound reasonable to me. My natural mind says that reasonable service means giving up a great deal of my life for God, but certainly not all of it. Jesus says otherwise.

**And when he had called the people unto him with his disciples also, he said unto them, Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it. For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?**

**Mark 8:34-36**

My sinful flesh tells me that what Christ asks me to do is impossible. The cost is too great. The answer is not in focusing on my sacrifice, but on that of another. Paul encourages us that our sacrifice is not only possible, but reasonable because of “...the mercies of God...” The key to understanding discipleship is not found in my sacrifice, but in the sacrifice of Christ Himself. The German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer summarizes it beautifully in his book *The Cost of Discipleship*:

Costly grace is the gospel which must be sought again and again and again, the gift which must be asked for, the door at which a man must knock. Such grace is costly because it calls us to follow, and it is grace because it calls us to follow Jesus Christ. It is costly because it costs a man his life, and it is grace because it gives a man the only true life. It is costly because it condemns sin, and grace because it justifies the sinner. Above all, it is costly because it cost God the life of his Son: 'Ye were bought at a price', and what has cost God much cannot be cheap for us. Above all, it is grace because God did not reckon his Son too dear a price to pay for our life, but delivered him up for us. Costly grace is the Incarnation of God.

We follow Jesus Christ, not in order to receive mercy from God, but because we have already received mercy from God. We forgive, because we are forgiven. We love because we are loved. By faith, we offer our meager sacrifice, because God has offered the greatest sacrifice at Calvary's cross to purchase our salvation. May God grant us grace to joyfully follow in the footsteps of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

*Yours in Christ.*

# Inclining Ears

Lois Matson  
Yacolt, Washington

**T**HE PSALMISTS AND THE PROPHETS use a poetic turn of phrase when calling out to the Lord God to hear their prayers. They often say, “Incline Your ear, O Lord.”

Can you picture this beautiful imagery? We are calling out to God in prayer for His help, and He is pictured as leaning in close to hear our muffled sighs.

David uses this language in many of the Psalms. In Psalm 17:6-7 (ESV), he says: **I call upon you, for you will answer me, O God; incline your ear to me; hear my words.** Wondrously show your steadfast love, O Savior of those who seek refuge from their adversaries at your right hand.

Psalm 102:1-2 states: **Hear my prayer, O Lord, and let my cry come unto thee.** Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; **incline thine ear unto me: in the day when I call answer me speedily.**

In Psalm 31:1-2, David prays: *In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness.* **Bow down thine ear to me** (ESV: *Incline your ear to me*); **deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me.**

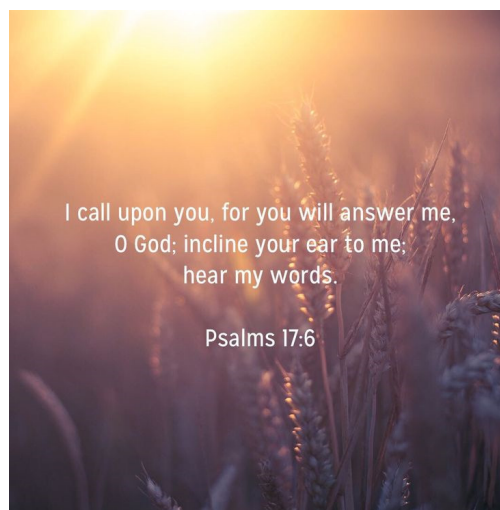
Psalm 71:1-3: *In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust: let me never be put to confusion. Deliver me in thy righteousness, and cause me to escape: incline thine ear unto me, and save me.* Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort: thou hast given commandment to save me; for thou art my rock and my fortress.

Psalm 86:1-7: **Bow down thine ear, O Lord, hear me:** (ESV: *Incline your ear, O Lord, and answer me*): *for I am poor and needy. Preserve my soul; for I am holy: O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee. Be merciful unto me, O Lord: for I cry unto thee daily. Rejoice the soul of thy servant: for unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee. Give ear, O Lord, unto my prayer; and attend to the voice of my supplications. In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me.*

Daniel uses this language as well in *Daniel 9:18-19*: **O my God, incline thine ear, and hear; open thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by thy name: for we do not present our supplications before thee for our righteousnesses, but for thy great mercies. O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God: for thy city and thy people are called by thy name.**

We are instructed to incline our ears, as well. The Prophet Isaiah uses this language, telling the people of God that they are to incline their ears to hear the Word of the Lord: *Isaiah 55:1-3: Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David.*

In the book of Jeremiah, the Lord accuses the people of not inclining their ears to hear His Word. *Jeremiah 35:12-15: Then came the word of the Lord unto Jeremiah, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel; Go and tell the men of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, Will ye not receive instruction to hearken to my words? saith the Lord. The words of Jonadab the son of Rechab, that he commanded his sons not to drink wine, are performed; for unto this day they drink none, but obey their father's commandment: notwithstanding I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking; but ye hearkened not unto me. I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers: but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me.*



The Lord inclines His ear to us; He hears our prayers, and He cares for us in our suffering. And we incline our ears to Him. We hear the word of the Lord, leaning in close to hear the voice of the Good Shepherd, as He calls us by name, as He leads us to green pastures and beside still waters. ~

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## Our Interceding Savior

Octavius Winslow

*And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.*

*Hebrews 12:24*

**T**HE SUBJECT LIFTS US TO the very porch, and within the porch of heaven. And what is the great truth which it presents to our view there?—the prevalency of the life-blood of Jesus within the veil. The moment the ransomed and released soul enters glory, the first object that arrests its attention and fixes its eye is—the interceding Savior. Faith, anticipating the glorious spectacle, sees Him now pleading the blood on behalf of each member of His Church upon earth.

*By His own blood He entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.*

*Hebrews 9:12*

*For Christ has not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are figure of the true: but into heaven itself, Now to appear in the presence of God for us.*

*Hebrews 9:24*

There is blood in Heaven! the blood of the incarnate God! And because it pleads and prays, argues and intercedes, the voice of every sin is hushed, every accusation of Satan is met, every daily transgression is forgiven, every temptation of the adversary is repelled, every evil is averted, every want is supplied, and the present sanctification and the final glorification of the saints are secured.

*Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*

*Romans 8:33-34*

Draw near, you Joshuas, accused by Satan! Approach, you Peters, whose faith is sifted! Come, you tried and disconsolate! The mediatorial Angel, the pleading Advocate, the Interceding High Priest, is passed into the heavens, and appears before the throne for you.

If the principle of the new life in your soul has decayed, if your grace has declined, if you have left your first love, there is vitality in the interceding blood of Jesus, and it prays for your revival. If sin condemns, and danger threatens, and temptation assails, and affliction wounds, there is living power in the pleading blood of Immanuel, and it procures pardon, protection, and comfort. ~

*Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained a good report. Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.*

*Hebrews 11:1-3*

*Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.*

*Hebrews 12:1-2*

**F**AITH IS A GIFT THAT God would impart to the whole human race. It is an assurance and conviction that is beyond our abilities and strength. We battle a three-fold enemy, described by Luther as the devil, the world and our own flesh. A formidable enemy, yet the Lord Jesus Christ has defeated the devil. He sends the message of the Gospel to the entire world, and supplies faith to all that will look to Him, who is described as the “author and finisher” of our faith. He is the founder and perfecter of faith.

Pastor Stan Lampinen  
Seattle, Washington