

# 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.**

January 2024

## Thy Light Is Come

Pastor Chuck Bylkas  
South Range, Michigan

*Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee. The multitude of camels shall cover thee, the dromedaries of Midian and Ephah; all they from Sheba shall come: they shall bring gold and incense; and they shall shew forth the praises of the Lord.*

Isaiah 60:1-6

**T**HE SEASON OF EPIPHANY in the church year focuses on the manifestation of Jesus Christ to the whole world. The very word “epiphany” means “manifestation” or “appearing.” For this reason, the season of Epiphany is often referred to as the Season of Light. Epiphany begins with the visitation of the wise men, in which

God leads the wise men to the Christ-Child by way of ancient prophecies and a miraculous star. Because these wise men were from the east, tradition suggests that they were Gentiles (people who were not Jewish by birth). This event highlights the fact that God did not send His Son for the people of Israel alone, but for all people.

On the first Sunday after the Epiphany, the church traditionally celebrates the Baptism of Our Lord. At the

baptism of Jesus, all three persons of the Godhead are evident. Jesus, of course, who is baptized; the Holy Spirit, who descends upon Jesus as a dove; and the Father who speaks from heaven: **“This is My Beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.”** On subsequent Sundays during the season of Epiphany, the appointed readings emphasize how God makes His Son known to the world through His miracles and through His teaching and preaching. Epiphany comes to a dramatic conclusion with the festival of the Transfiguration. On this Sunday, the church observes the remarkable manifestation of Jesus on the mountaintop, where Peter, James and John are given a glimpse of Jesus’ divine glory, which is greater than any other biblical figure, including Moses or Elijah. Once again, God the Father audibly speaks from heaven declaring Jesus to be His beloved Son. Jesus is the Christ, the Anointed One, the central figure in all of

human history and the One to whom we should listen and follow.

We as Christians, follow the One who lived, suffered, bled, died and rose again for us. God has not only called us to follow the Light of the world, He also uses us to bring light to a fallen humanity; to make Jesus known to a world that needs His Epiphany.

*Yours in Christ.*



***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...***

**2 Peter 1:19**

# Baptism of Our Lord

Pastor Dennis Hannu  
Wolf Lake, Minnesota

All four gospels record the baptism of Jesus by John the Baptist which indicates to us that something extraordinary happened on that day at the Jordan River. John the Baptist, being the forerunner of Christ, is taken aback by the absurdity of Jesus being baptized by him as we see in Matthew's gospel. *Matthew 3:13-17: Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he suffered him. And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.*

If John was appalled at the idea of Jesus coming to his baptism, the question we need to consider is why did He? Why would the spotless Lamb of God allow Himself to be baptized by John? After all, John's baptism was for sinners as is shown by the reaction of the people coming to his baptism. *Matthew 3:5-6: Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.* In fact, the gospel writer Mark says that John preached the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. John even calls some of those that came to his baptism a brood of snakes indicating their need of repentance. Clearly John the Baptist's baptism was for a fallen race of people who were in need of repentance and the forgiveness of their sins.

So why did Jesus enter into John's baptism? The crowds flocking to John's baptism were being baptized for the forgiveness of their sins as they acknowledge their sinfulness, but when Jesus arrives at the baptism, John recognized that



this man does not need this baptism. John's baptism was for the purpose of preparing the people for the coming of the kingdom of God and now the King has arrived at the Jordan to be baptized. John tried to stop Jesus from being baptized but Jesus says to him; "Allow it to be so now, for in this way it is proper to fulfill all righteousness." Jesus enters into John's baptism in order to join Himself unto the fallen race: He is counted as a sinner and will receive the judgment of God as a sinner and in this way will fulfill all righteousness. Paul writes of this in *2 Corinthians 5:21: For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

Jesus is baptized for us; the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world identifies Himself with us in order to save

us. The Perfect Human enters into the fallen human race in order to restore it. It was necessary that the fallen race be brought to its death and in Jesus this took place when He died on the cross, He never sinned but was counted as a sinner because our sins were laid on Him and He took the punishment for them by shedding His blood and ultimately dying. When Jesus rose from the dead, the human

race rose with Him (see Romans 6), the work of righteousness was completed, the great exchange mentioned earlier was completed and now we have eternal life.

When Jesus is baptized, the Holy Spirit descends like a dove and comes upon Him and the voice of God is heard saying: "This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased." God is well pleased in His Son and because of His work, He is well pleased with us as we are found in Christ. It was indeed an extraordinary thing that took place that day at the Jordan River as God the Son enters into a sinner's baptism in order to save sinners.

*God's peace.*

***The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; To appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that he might be glorified.***

**Isaiah 61:1-3**

**T**HE GOD WHO EXISTS IS the God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the God who so loved the world that He sent His Son, not to judge the world, but to save it. He is the God who "anointed" the Lord Jesus Christ to bind up the brokenhearted, and to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound, and to comfort all that mourn. Please notice that "all." Not a few select ones only, but all. Every captive of sin, every prisoner in infirmity, every mourning heart throughout the whole world must be included in this "all." It would not be "all" if there should be a single one left out, no matter how insignificant, or unworthy, or even how feeble-minded that one might be. I have always been thankful that the feeble-minded are especially mentioned by Paul in his exhortations to the Thessalonian Christians, when he is urging them to comfort one another. In effect he says, Do not scold the feeble-minded, but comfort them. The very ones who need comfort most are the ones that our God, who is like a mother, wants to comfort—not the strong-minded ones, but the feeble-minded.



Hannah Whithall Smith

# Out of Egypt

Pastor Nicholas Kandoll  
New York Mills, Minnesota

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. And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him. When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt: And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.

Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently inquired of the wise men.

Matthew 2:1-16

ONE OF MY FAVORITE PARTS of the account of the wise men is the fulfillment of the prophecy “Out of Egypt have I called my son”. This is a prophecy from Hosea 11. It’s almost confusing. When you go back and read Hosea 11 you find that the Lord is rebuking the children of Israel. When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt. As they called them, so they went from them: they sacrificed unto Baalim, and burned incense to graven images. (Hosea 11:1-2)

In my mind this shows us two things.

1.) If we were searching for authenticity in the Scriptures this speaks to it. No one in their right mind would read Hosea 11 and think, “Oh, this is a prophecy of the Messiah.” It is only when Matthew writes his gospel that this truth is revealed.

2.) Jesus rights our wrongs. When we take a step back and look at the broader picture of who Jesus is and what He came to do, we see something very profound. When Jesus steps into history He takes the place of Adam. He takes our place, too. He takes the place of the children of Israel. This is what Matthew is telling us by showing us the fulfillment of Hosea’s prophecy.

When the children of Israel were under the bondage of the Egyptians, God called them out of Egypt. He promised them a land flowing with milk and honey, but time and time again they chose the wrong path. They bowed down to false gods. Jesus is far different. When God called Him out of Egypt, He lived a perfect life. He steps into their place, our place too, and fulfills the law for us. He defeats the temptation of Satan in the wilderness for us. Over and over again He succeeds where we fail. This new year we can be thankful that Jesus has stepped into our place and given us His righteousness.

God’s peace.



Make a joyful noise unto God, all ye lands: Sing forth the honour of his name: make his praise glorious. Say unto God, How terrible art thou in thy works! through the greatness of thy power shall thine enemies submit themselves unto thee. All the earth shall worship thee, and shall sing unto thee; they shall sing to thy name. Selah.

Psalm 66:1-4

FOR THAT IS THE TRUE HONOR of His name, to look to it and call upon it for all consolation (Psalm 66:2; 105:1). Then—we have heard in the First Commandment—the heart by faith give God the honor due Him first. Afterward, the lips give Him honor by confession. This is also a blessed and useful habit and very effective against the devil. He is ever around us and lies in wait to bring us into sin and shame, disaster and trouble (2 Timothy 2:26). But he hates to hear God’s name and cannot remain long where it is spoken and called upon from the heart. Indeed, many terrible and shocking disasters would fall upon us if God did not preserve us by our calling upon His name. I have tried it myself. I learned by experience that often sudden great suffering was immediately averted and removed by calling on God. To confuse the devil, I say, we should always have this holy name in our mouth, so that the devil may not be able to injure us as he wishes.

The Large Catechism

# Wise Men Seek Jesus, But Many Don't

Gwen Wilson  
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children across the land,

Hello to all of you. Another New Year is here. We call the one that has begun another year of grace. We never know what the year will bring, but we who cling to Jesus can trust in His strength and pray to Him when we are feeling challenged. He always goes before us and knows the way.

It was in the days of Herod,  
The reigning Judean king,  
That the baby Jesus was born,  
And the heavenly hosts did sing.  
Two years had passed in Bethlehem  
And Jesus was still so small;  
His family was living in a home  
Although He was born in a stall.  
There came wise men from the east,  
From a country afar.  
These men were astronomers;  
They had seen a new star.

This star was nothing ordinary,  
But held something great.  
They studied it and shared their thoughts,  
And knew they must not wait.  
They packed their things, gathered guides,  
With camels laden down  
They started on their journey—  
The star leading without a sound.  
On it went before them  
For days and months on end;  
When the wise men reached Judea  
They went to the king of Jerusalem.  
They asked King Herod,  
“Where’s the newborn King?  
We have seen His star in the east  
And are come to worship Him.”  
The chief priests and elders said,  
“From Juda a Governor shall come.”

The wise men then took leave  
And as they turned to go,  
King Herod who was troubled, said,  
“Bring me word, that I may worship so.”  
Outside Herod’s palace, lo,  
The star that was leading them.  
It stayed the path and yet led the way  
Until it came to stop over little Bethlehem.  
It stopped right over Jesus’ home.  
They rejoiced with exceeding great joy.



When Joseph opened up the door,  
They saw but a little boy.  
On seeing Jesus, they bow the knee  
And worship Him with awe.  
They know in their hearts,  
He is a gift from God.  
They made the journey, nigh two years long,  
With kingly gifts in store  
The brought out their treasures for the child—  
Gold, frankincense and myrrh.  
The wise men were warned by God,  
Not to to return to Herod  
But go back to your country another way  
For the king is full of hatred.  
Jesus was just a toddler,  
And Herod sought to take His life.  
But we know that God kept Him safe  
Even though other families suffered strife.  
His family fled from Bethlehem,  
Up to Egypt in the north  
And it was while they lived here  
That Herod slew all the baby boys.  
When Herod died, an angel came  
To Joseph in a dream,  
Telling him it was now safe to go to Israel—  
Herod is not supreme.  
So Joseph took Mary and little Jesus  
And began his long journey south;  
They arrived In Judea, but Joseph  
Wasn't sure of Herod's son;  
Archelaus was his name  
And like his father he had become.  
God saw Joseph's fear and warned him  
In a dream that he  
Was to go find a safe place  
In the parts of Galilee.  
He came and dwelt in Nazareth,  
The proper place it seemed;  
As the Bible says in St. Matthew 2:23:  
He shall be called a Nazarene.

The wise men came and returned to their country. It was long long journey, but oh, the joy the filled their hearts. I can just imagine what an amazing time they had sharing the memories of that journey.

When they returned home they would have shared the news of the Christ child, the Messiah, the King whom they went to find and did find. They would have told of the gifts they gave Him, and how amazed the listeners would have been to hear that He was only two years old.

I see faith at play here, and even today we need to have faith to believe in God, His Son and the Holy Spirit. If you believe in this Trinity, praise God and thank Him for that faith.

One day Jesus will return for all His children. I pray that we His children will stand firm to the end.

I pray that this coming year will be blessed by God and that Jesus will become even dearer to each of you. He loves you so much. More than you can ever imagine. How great is that?

**Happy New Year!**

*God's peace.*

# Faith Liberates from the Law

Martin Luther

**F**AITH LIBERATES US from the Law. Not a physical liberation, effected by separating us from the Law, by removing us forever from its jurisdiction: but freedom in the sense that we satisfy the demands of the Law; we satisfy it by knowing and possessing the Holy Spirit, who brings us to love the Law. The Law did not desire works. Works could not appease it. It desired love. Only our love could satisfy it. Without love it would not release us—would not be remunerated. Destitute of love, we must, even with all our works, remain its debtors and our consciences know no peace. The Law continually chastises us as sinners and transgressors, and threatens us with death and hell, until Christ comes and bestows His Spirit and His love, through the faith preached in the Gospel.

Then we are freed from the Law. No longer it demands, no longer chastises, but lets the conscience rest. No more it terrifies with death and hell. It has become our kind friend and companion.

The tutor's release of the pupil does not mean the death or departure of the tutor, but spiritually, that the child has been changed, and can do what the father wished the tutor to teach him. Likewise the Law releases us, not by its passing, not by being abrogated, but spiritually; and because a change has been effected in us and we have the experience God designed us to have through the Law.

Hence I have called the figure of the pupil and tutor a beautiful and striking illustration whereby we may rightly understand the Law, and the work of grace in ourselves. The first office of the Law, that of shutting us up and producing outward piety, is so well established, so emphasized by all teachers and books, and besides so closely approaches human nature, that it is difficult for us to recognize its second office, of magnifying inward sin. I may well liken the two offices to a pair of scales, one empty and the other full.

So the Law, when producing external piety, increases inward sin. It imposes as much sin inwardly, by arousing hatred and rebellion, as it corrects externally by works; and much more. According to Paul (Romans 7:13), through the Law sin becomes exceeding sinful, sinful beyond measure. And the experience of every man must lead him so to confess. "For ye are all sons of God, through faith, in Christ Jesus."

He who is under the Law, and works unwillingly, is a servant. But whosoever has faith and cheerfully works, is a child; for he has received the Spirit of God, through Christ. Now, the apostle names Christ, referring to the faith that believes and abides in Jesus Christ. No other faith is effective, no other faith is the right faith, let one believe in God as he will...

It being impossible for us to purchase forgiveness, God ordained in our stead One who took upon Himself all our deserved punishment and fulfilled the Law for us, thus averting from us God's judgment and appeasing His wrath. So it is true that grace is given us gratuitously—without cost to ourselves—and yet the gift to us cost another much, and was obtained with a priceless, an infinite, treasure—the Son of God Himself. It is supremely essential, therefore, to possess Him who has accomplished the purchase for us. Nor is it possible to obtain grace otherwise than through Him.

Note, from the time of Adam to Abraham's day, no one was saved except through faith in the woman's seed, who should bruise the serpent's head. And after Abraham no one was saved except through faith in his seed. And now no one can be saved otherwise than through faith in the seed of Abraham now come. Oh, you are not sufficient of yourself to come to God; you may not attempt to come without this Mediator—through yourself and of your own energy, as the Jews, the Turks and the Papists teach you may. Who will reconcile you with God in the first place? Christ says (John 14:6), "No one cometh unto the Father, but by me."

In the time of the famine the Egyptians desired to make their complaints to Pharaoh, the king himself, but he referred them to Joseph, saying (Genesis 41:55): "Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do." Similarly, God hears, and aids to salvation, no one of us; we must all come to Christ, who is made Lord over all things, and with whom is the throne of grace.

He has obtained salvation for us. Consequently it is in vain to seek it elsewhere. Yes, if we were devoid of sin, as was Adam before the fall, we would have no need of Christ; we might come before God in our own merits. But in the time of famine—since the fall—we must have a Joseph, one who is without sin and who yet will receive us needy sinners when we come to Him in earnest. ~

*Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.*

*Psalm 1:1-3*

**I**T HELPS TO BE OCCUPIED with God's Word, to speak it, and meditate on it, just as the first Psalm declares people blessed who meditate on God's Law day and night (Psalm 1:2). Certainly you will not release a stronger incense or other repellant against the devil than to be engaged by God's commandments and words, and speak, sing, or think them (Colossians 3:16). For this is indeed the true "holy water" and "holy sign" from which the devil runs and by which he may be driven away (James 4:7)... For he cannot hear or endure God's Word. God's Word is not like some other silly babbling... But as St. Paul says in Romans 1:16, it is "the power of God." Yes indeed, it is the power of God that gives the devil burning pain and strengthens, comforts, and helps us beyond measure.

*The Large Catechism*

# The Pharisee and the Publican

Paul Kretzmann

**And he spake this parable unto certain which trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others: Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.**

Luke 18:9-12

## The Pharisee

During the last journey of Jesus, representatives of the Pharisees were present almost continually. It is probable that some of these had given some evidence of their imagined superiority again, or there were other that had their way of thinking and acting. They trusted in themselves that they were righteous; they firmly believed themselves to be perfect; they felt only the deepest contempt for the others whom they supposed to be in a class far beneath them, below the consideration of all decent people. They were representatives of the self-righteous, self-sufficient people, with both inherent and carefully educated Pharisaic tendencies. The parable of Jesus was intended to open the eyes of this pitifully blind class.

### Two men went up into the Temple to pray.

The third, sixth, and ninth hours of the day were observed by the Jews as the hours of prayer (Daniel 6:10). If possible, they went up into the Temple for that special prayer, or turned toward the Temple in making it. The chief places of prayer were the halls, or porches, or the inner courts, where there was little or no distraction or disturbance. The first of these two men was a Pharisee, a member of the strictest sect among the Jews. He stood, he made it his object to be as prominent and conspicuous as possible, for he felt his self-importance and intended to convey to others this same impression.

He prayed to himself, literally: his words were more in the nature of congratulation and praise of himself than a communication to God. What he said was the firm conviction of his own heart. He proudly enumerated his supposed virtues, thanking God, incidentally, that he was not like other people. The poor man did not know, in the arrogance of his pride, that he might do whatever he chose, "yea, if he sweat blood and had himself burned with fire, it would still before God an abomination and the greatest of sins." (Luther)

The Pharisee boasted that he had done no harm to others; he was no extortioner, no robber that openly took his neighbor's property; he was no unjust person, he paid his debts and gave to every man his due; he was no adulterer, he had never openly lived in sins of the flesh; he was not on a level with the publican, whose many transgressions were proverbial.

But he also had positive virtues; he observed all the ordinances of religion, both those commanded by God and those enjoined by the elders. Only one day in the year had been set aside by God as a day of fasting for the entire people, the great Day of Atonement. But the Pharisees of the stricter

kind added voluntary fasts on Mondays and Thursdays; the latter, because on that day Moses was said to have ascended on Mount Sinai; the former, because they believed he had come down on that day from the mountain. This Pharisee was also very strict about giving tithes, the tenth part of all that he possessed, down to the smallest vegetable in the garden (Matthew 23:23).

The Pharisee is a type of all self-righteous people of all times, of every person that has pleasure and delight in himself, in his own wonderful being and doing, that boasts before God of his civic honesty and blameless reputation, of some outward, glittering virtues, and despises others.

**And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted.**

Luke 18:13-14

## The Publican

The publican had nothing of the arrogance and self-assertiveness of the Pharisee. He stood at a great distance, probably in the shadow of a pillar, where he would be as inconspicuous as possible. He is acutely conscious of his unworthiness. He does not even dare to lift up his eyes toward the sanctuary as to the visible shrine of God's presence among His people. He can only, in piercing grief because of his sin, beat upon his breast. His prayer is one shuddering sigh: God, be merciful to me, the sinner! In his eyes there is only one sinner worth mentioning, only one whose sins he can see; and that is himself.

(Compare 1 Timothy 1:15). He knows of no merit, no worthiness, on his part; he has nothing to boast of. It is only shame, boundless, overwhelming shame, that he feels. And he asks only for mercy, nothing but God's grace.

The publican is a type of the repentant sinner, that knows and acknowledges his sin, that feels its guilt in heart and conscience, that confesses his guilt over against God, but also turns to the Lord as to his merciful, gracious God, accepts and appropriates the grace of God, the pardon which is assured to all sinners in Jesus, the Savior.

The judgment of Christ in the case is clear and comprehensive. With emphasis He declares that this man, the publican, went down into his house justified, pardoned rather than the other, the Pharisee. He received the atonement of Jesus in faith in the Messiah. *(continued on back cover)*



# The Life Is in the Blood

Lois Matson  
Yacolt, Washington

In the Old Testament, there is a passage that might make us a bit uncomfortable in *Leviticus 17:10-14*, regarding the drinking of blood: *And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eateth any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eateth blood, and will cut him off from among his people. For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul. Therefore I said unto the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourneth among you eat blood. And whatsoever man there be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, which hunteth and catcheth any beast or fowl that may be eaten; he shall even pour out the blood thereof, and cover it with dust. For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eateth it shall be cut off.*

Faithful Jewish people followed this command for centuries, so we can understand why those who listened to Jesus were very uncomfortable when He said, “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink His blood, you have no life in you.”

In *John 6:51-58*, Jesus stated: *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. The Jews therefore strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me. This is that bread which came down from heaven: not as your fathers did eat manna, and are dead: he that eateth of this bread shall live for ever. After hearing this teaching of the Lord, many of the disciples said, “This is a hard saying! Who can hear it?” and many turned back and stopped following Him.*

And I wonder if the disciples who sat with Jesus when He instituted the Lord’s Supper harkened back to the earlier teaching of their Master when He said: “Take, eat; this is My body! Drink of it, all of you; this is My blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.”

The life is in the blood, according to the word of the Lord in *Leviticus*. We may suppose that we normally drink “blood”, so we may skim over those verses thinking that they don’t apply to us. But did you notice, twice, where the Lord says it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul? Our sins are forgiven by the blood of the Lamb Who shed His blood for our atonement.



And how do we receive Him? We take His flesh into our mouths and drink His blood in the Sacrament of the Altar. Jesus said that His body is true food and His blood is true drink: *For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him. As the living Father hath sent me, and I live by the Father: so he that eateth me, even he shall live by me.*

Just like our natural food is absorbed into our bodies and nourishes every cell, so the flesh and blood of Jesus nourishes our souls. We abide in Him and He abides in us. The body and blood of Jesus are Life-Giving. Our life is in His blood! ~

**Christian Monthly** Vol. LXXX—No. 1

Subscription Rate: 1 Year

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

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

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Yacolt, WA 98675

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

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

**General Disclaimer:** The material in the *Christian Monthly* is reviewed for scriptural soundness and to ensure that it does not conflict with the teachings of the ALCA. Publication does not imply that other material by included authors has been so approved.



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## Facing a New Year

Pastor Jason Salmi  
Vancouver, Washington

It seems like all of us could use some encouragement as we enter into the unknowns of a new year. This is not a new idea, nor is it unique to Christians. It has long been the tradition of many people all around the world to mark the change of their calendar with optimism for what may be in store. However, we are all aware of just what sort of unexpected (possibly unwelcome) changes can come with the passage of a mere twelve months. Vapid and baseless optimism can leave us empty and without hope when it fails. So, while we still want to begin this year with encouragement, let's make sure that it's the kind that is not based on our circumstances. In fact, let's find hope in that which runs totally counter to our circumstances.

In John's Gospel, Jesus proclaimed to His disciples that, far from life being a bed of roses for those who followed Him, they would actually be despised and rejected because of their association with Him. He told them: *If the world hate you, ye know that it hated me before it hated you. If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you. (John 15:18-19)*

This could at first sound like cold comfort to those who'd left everything behind in order to follow Him. Every one of us desires acceptance and peace with the world. Yet what Jesus came to give us is better than that. He did not come just to bring us ease and comfort. Those who follow Him are prone to all of the ills that the rest of the world is... and more: financial hardships, relationship problems, physical ailments, death... exclusion, rejection, persecution.

Then, after He'd made sure that His disciples' eyes were fully open to what each new year might have in store for them, Jesus said something which seems unbelievable on its face: *These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. (John 16:33a)* Nothing about what He'd laid out sounds anything like peace! But there's a little phrase in there that is all too easy to skip over. He said, "that in me you may have peace." Indeed, if you are in Christ, the peace which is yours isn't able to be disturbed by your circumstances. The rest of that verse completes Jesus' declaration: *In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. (John 16:33b)*

Dear Saints who are loved by God, and are His adopted children through Jesus Christ, you may truly face this new year knowing that, whatever it brings, you belong to the One who has overcome the world. May this word of encouragement bring you peace. ~

***For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: That ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God...***

***Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.***

**Romans 15:4-7, 16**

(continued from page 6) He was justified by grace, for Christ's sake, through faith. "There we hear two strange and peculiar sentences, altogether opposed to human wisdom and imagination of reason, terrible in the eyes of all the world, that the great saints are condemned as unrighteous and the poor sinners are accepted and declared to be righteous and holy." (Luther)

All the great saints after the manner of the Pharisees are in actual fact unrighteous; their worship, praying, praise is nothing but hypocrisy and boasting; they are not honest toward God and men, and, what is still worse, they have no prayer to God, ask nothing of God, want nothing of God's love and mercy. And therefore they remain in their sins and are looked upon by God as unjust and treated accordingly. The poor sinners, on the other hand, that acknowledge their sinfulness and desire nothing but mercy, they receive the mercy for which they long. For everyone that exalts himself will be humiliated; but he that humbles himself will be exalted. He that believes himself to be pious and righteous, that exalts himself above all sinfulness and above all sinners, will close the door of mercy before his own face, will bring upon himself damnation. But he that confesses his condition as that of a lost and condemned creature, and puts his sole and only trust in the grace of God, will be accepted by God as His dear child in Jesus the Savior. ~