

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.

June 2019

A Gracious Father

Pastor Orval Wirkkala
Kingston, Minnesota

A MAN AND HIS SON HAD become separated. After some time the father realized that he needed to let his son know that he wanted to reconcile with him and to reunite. So he put an advertisement in the paper which read: John, my son, meet me at 4th and Vine at 8:00 a.m. on Saturday morning.

When the father arrived a little late on Saturday morning, he found 37 boys/men standing on the corner of 4th and Vine, looking for their father...

As Jesus journeyed toward Jerusalem where He would lay down His life to redeem all humankind and to renew us into the image of God, He encountered more opposition in His calling and in His invitation for all to come to His table of salvation.

Today's lesson (Luke 15) is set up immediately by the first two sentences in the 15th chapter of Luke's gospel. The outcasts were approaching Jesus to hear Him, while the ruling religious officials were talking against Jesus and His way of doing ministry. He was allowing sinners and publicans to come to Him and, worse than that, He was eating with them, a practice which was contrary to the rules and practices of the kingdom that was presided over by the Pharisees and scribes.

Jesus came to seek and to save those who were lost and these three stories all address lostness: the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost boys. In the first two parables the emphasis is on the diligence of the Seeker and of the joy that is experienced when the lost are found, the lost sheep and the lost coin. The last parable of the two lost boys focuses on the lostness of the boys and on the seeking and gracious heart of our Father.

The verse which best reflects the heart of our Father is Luke 15:20. The younger boy, who had wanted his inheritance and was given it by his father, went and wasted it selfishly.

He went into a downward spiral in which he lost his money, his friends and self-respect. Coming to himself, he remembered his father's house.

Luke 15: 20 And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.



The Return of the Prodigal Son Rembrandt
Courtesy of Wikipedia

The father was seeking his son's return, and he was watching for him. When he saw him, compassion rose up in him so that against all cultural taboos he ran through the town to meet his son, whose leaving home had become known by the town and community. It is quite certain that the son may not have made it through the town alive if his father would not have run to the outside of the town to meet him. Instead of the expectation of the culture in that the son would be rejected upon his coming back, the Father received him with joy.

Another key point in this parable is the mindset of the son who wanted to return to his father's house, and of how he initially had the thought that he must somehow pay for what he had done in shaming his father's name and reputation. Consider these verses: *And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my*

father's have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and will say unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and before thee, And am no more worthy to be called thy son: make me as one of thy hired servants. And he arose, and came to his father. But when he was yet a great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. And the son said unto him, Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight, and am no more worthy to be called thy son. But the father said to his servants, Bring forth the best robe, and put it on him; and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet: And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it; and let us

eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. (Luke 15:17-24)

We note that the Father did not allow the repentant son to even say the words “Treat me as one of your hired servants,” but rather received His returning son by ordering the best robe to be put on him, a ring on his finger, and shoes on his feet, the marks of sonship, not of a servant.

God doesn’t have a problem with our weakness to fall into sin; what He has a problem with is our refusal to come to the light in order to receive His Absolution through the Word and to be received back into full communion and fellowship with Him. We do not have to earn our way back, but rather we may come boldly to His throne of grace to find help in time of need.

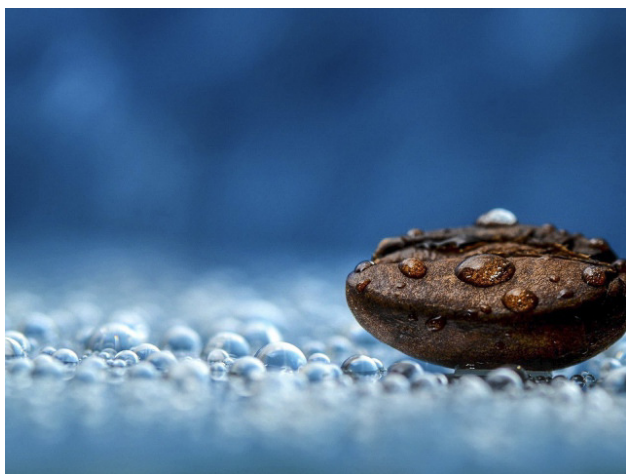
We heard of the lost sheep, the lost coin, and the lost boys. May the Spirit of God which always points us to the

seeking and waiting heart of our Father through Jesus Christ draw us toward the Father’s house. There we will find Him waiting with open arms to receive us back to Himself, and there will be a great celebration of joy in the heart of the Seeker, in our individual heart, in the hearts of the community of believers, and in the realms of heaven with the angels and our Father.

May the Holy Spirit do His work in breaking down the walls of our hearts so that we will not be held back by things of the past or even things of the present, but instead that we will respond with joy when we hear our Father ask to meet us so that He may shower upon us His love for us, His grace toward us and His joy in us. He came down to us so that we might be made like Him and in being made like Him we want to show others the heart of God. Lord, open these things to us by your Spirit anew today! ~

Grandpa’s Reflections: Living Water

Bruce Sannes
Frazee, Minnesota



Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and Who it is that asks you for a drink, you would have asked Him, and He would have given you Living Water.” (John 4:10 paraphrase)

“Look, Grandpa,” she said, holding out the beautiful rock fresh from the water of the lake. “Feel how smooth it is.” The rock was just like most of the rocks on the lake shore, worn smooth and with no sharp corners.

“Why are all the rocks nice and smooth?” she asked. “The rocks in our driveway are sharp! They hurt my feet.”

“It’s the water,” Grandpa replied. “All the things that live in the water get touched and moved by the water. Fish and bugs and rocks and weeds all get surrounded and feel the gentle touch and push of the water.”

Grandpa held out his hand and granddaughter put the smooth pebble into it. “I think living in the water is like how we live in our world with Jesus. The Bible says that Jesus is the Living Water. God is all around us just like the water. He fills every little crack of the world up with His presence, just like the water fills the lake. It goes into every corner and gently touches every part of us. God is everywhere, gently touching us and moving us and rubbing us until we become just the way He wants us to be.” Grandpa rubbed his thumb along the top of the small rock, feeling how smooth it was. “The water gently pushed this rock against the other rocks, sand and weeds until all the sharp edges were worn away and they have become what God wanted them to be.

“I especially like to think of the fish in the river. When the fish swim the way the water is going, they have an easy time of it. They don’t get tired and I think they are full of joy because they are going where the water wants to take them.” Grandpa handed the rock back to her. “You see, that’s the way with Jesus, the Living Water, too. If we just stay with the way the Living Water wants us to go, we will be happy and full of life and have the joy of knowing that we are doing and being what God has planned for us. Jesus said that He is the Way and the Living Water.”

Grandpa dipped his hand into the water. “Put your hand in, too,” he said.

She dipped her hand under the water beside his. “Can you feel the water all around your hand? That’s the way God is—all around us like the water, gently trying to move us to become what He created us to be.”

Love,
Grandpa

The woman saith unto him, Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with, and the well is deep: from whence then hast thou that living water? Art thou greater than our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle? Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life.

John 4:11-14

What God Hath Joined Together

Pastor Elmer Yliniemi
Frazee, Minnesota

Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder.

MATTHEW 19:6
ARRIAGE WAS GOD'S IDEA. When a Christian man and woman are united in marriage according to God's Word, it is a happy occasion. When a couple is married, we look forward to celebrating their joy with them.

It is interesting to note that when God created all things, after His creative work, He declares "It is good" four times. Then we come to *Genesis 2:18* and He says, *It is not good that the man should be alone... He continues by saying, I will make him an help meet for him. ...And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. (Genesis 2:22)* God brought the woman to the man! Once we are married, if we keep in mind that God prepared and brought that mate to us, it will help us overcome the differences and difficulties we all face over the years.

I ask couples why they are getting married. Almost all respond by saying they love each other. What is love? We often have a very secular and romantic idea of love that is based on feelings. Couples having difficulties often say, "We just don't love each other anymore." What does the Bible say about love? John writes, *Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. (1 John 4:7-9)*

Since God is love and we are created to live in a relationship with God, a marriage without God is at risk of failure. We cannot truly love another person or God until we come to know Christ as our Savior. Jesus tells us: *he that hath seen me hath seen the Father. (John 14:9)*

The divorce rate is going up continually. This is due to the fact that we are rapidly becoming a godless society. Conflict is as old as history! Conflict is caused by our sin nature looking out for "my rights" and selfish goals. Since God is love, it is difficult to make any relationship survive without the power of God.

Therefore, it is very important that we know spiritually the person we plan to marry and that we are in agreement about spiritual matters. Many couples feel that once they get married they will work out their differences. This is not wise, for usually spiritual differences will become even greater when we face the trials of life and the romantic feelings no longer control us.

If we see love as an irresistible feeling or emotion over which we have no control, we can justify sinful behavior which goes against the Word of God. True love is responsible. Our behavior has consequences. The Word of God tells us that

whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. (Galatians 6:7) Apostle Paul warns the Corinthians saying, *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? (2 Corinthians 6:14)*

What is alarming is that even many who claim to be Christians do not view living together before marriage as a sin and many see marriage as a temporary commitment. Jesus very clearly tells the Pharisees what God's original conditions for marriage are: *Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female, And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. (Matthew 19:4-6)* He is saying that marriage is a union of one man and one woman. It is not a union of two men or two women as some would like to

believe. Also there must be the leaving of father and mother. The parent-child bond must be broken, but this does not mean cutting contact with or rejecting the parents. They may still give counsel, but you are no longer emotionally or physically dependent on them. If this leaving does not take place, it can hinder the bond of marriage. After leaving, cleaving or attaching yourself to each other takes place. It signifies a

permanent relationship until you are parted by death. What God has joined together, man must not separate.

Paul calls the marriage relationship a "great mystery." *This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband. (Ephesians 5:32-33)* From this relationship we see that the real joy in marriage should be from giving, not getting, which goes against our selfish nature. For Christ gave and gave until He died to redeem His bride, the church. Love is not always a good feeling, but it is forgiving one another in the blood of Jesus that allows love to flourish and grow.

Luther comments on the unique quality of marital love. "The love toward one's spouse... seeks nothing but the person of the spouse. It says: I do not desire what is yours; I desire neither silver nor gold, nor this nor that; I desire you yourself; I want you entirely or not at all." Marriage was to be a reflection of Christ's relationship to the church.

Marriage vows are not to be taken lightly. Bonhoeffer said, "It is not your love that sustains marriage but the marriage that sustains love."

God has made it possible for us to have feelings, but we cannot trust our feelings. Feelings change, *but the word of our God shall stand for ever. (Isaiah 40:8)*

This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you. (John 15:12) ~



HUMAN BEINGS CAN BE SAVED from the ancient wound of the serpent in no other way than by believing in Him who, when He was raised up from the earth on the tree of martyrdom in the likeness of sinful flesh, drew all things to Himself and gave life to the dead.

St. Irenaeus

The Good Shepherd

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children, sheep of the Lord's pasture,

Hello to each of you. I'm sure you're wondering why I addressed you as I did. I want to draw your attention to our Father God and Jesus His Son, the Good Shepherd of the sheep. Let's look in St. John 10.

THE EASTER SEASON HAS JUST passed when we focused on Jesus who died on the cross for us, and then He arose again. We want to stay focused on this great thing Jesus did for us, His sheep.

Why did Jesus come to earth as a baby? He came to grow up and be fully God and fully man, to feel our infirmities, our joys, our hurts, and every thing we feel. He came to show His love for mankind, to teach us about His Father God. Ultimately, He came to die so that we might live. Jesus said, *I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.* (John 10:11)

So let's talk about sheep. I have read about sheep, and even farmers have had to admit that they are dumb animals. Now don't get me wrong... I'm not saying that you, me, or people in general are dumb, as in not smart. This meaning is more like a lack in making good choices in our thoughts and actions.

Sheep know their shepherd; they know his voice. Jesus says His sheep hear His voice and when He calls each one by name, they follow Him. Sheep are followers. The shepherd does not chase from behind but walks ahead of the sheep and they follow. Sheep will not follow a stranger (John 10:5).

Sheep don't have good sense in eating. They will eat almost nonstop and then have problems as they can't digest all that food. If they kneel down to eat with a belly that's too full, they most often cannot stand up.

Sheep do not like fast moving water. The 23rd Psalm says: *He leadeth me beside the still waters.* Sheep have thick absorbent wool. If they get into too much water, their wool sucks up the water and they cannot get themselves out because of the weight. If the shepherd isn't near to help, they can drown.

If a sheep falls on its back, it is much like a turtle that cannot get back over onto its feet. Once again, if the shepherd is not there to help, the sheep can die.

Sheep need their shepherd to keep them safe from predators. Often sheep farmers have dogs to help. Sheep cannot defend themselves and can be easy prey.

Sheep can have a problem with flies gathering on their eyes, and the shepherd must keep a special ointment around the eyes to give the sheep rest from the annoying flies.

I could write more about the needs of sheep but this gives you an idea of their nature. Now let's see how we compare.

Sheep without a shepherd—or sheep with a lazy, not so good shepherd—will have many problems and will die. We, like sheep, NEED a shepherd, and our Shepherd is Jesus.



Good Shepherd Bernhard Plockhorst
Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

When we don't follow Jesus and listen to His voice, we are capable of following a bad deceitful voice that will cause us to sin. Jesus is ever ready to hear us when we pray for help.

When sheep overeat, that is like a picture of us getting too comfortable with the things the world has to offer that are not good. We can get so caught up having a good time that we forget to keep our minds on Jesus, and Satan the enemy will do his best to make you forget and not follow the Good Shepherd. We NEED Jesus. That ointment around the sheep's eyes is a picture of Jesus keeping our eyes focused, clear and on the straight path following Him. Without Jesus, we would not have a clear idea of what our way in life should be. Jesus is the ointment on our eyes to keep our eyes on Him and keep the annoying devil away. That devil will always be trying to bother us to see if he can weaken us. We must hold tight to our Good Shepherd Jesus.

I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief (devil) cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. (John 10:9-10)

Jesus loves His sheep. When we hear His voice it will bring us comfort, forgiveness that brings that unspeakable peace in our hearts.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck (take) them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck (take) them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one. (John 10:27-30)

Oh, we have such a Good Shepherd! My prayer is that we who believe in Him would praise Him more with our whole hearts and minds. One day we will GET to live with Him in a forever paradise in heaven above. If one could imagine a sign over the main gate, it could read: *Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.* (Revelation 22:14)

God's peace.

Bon Voyage

Helmi Kivisto
June 1965 CM, excerpt

AT THIS TIME OF YEAR we remember in a special way all of you young people who are graduating from high school and are beginning a whole new phase of your life.

You have perhaps heard our life on earth spoken of as a sea upon which each of us is sailing toward some destination. Let us consider how this analogy might apply to your situation as you are about to leave the relatively quiet waters near the harbor (your home) and launch out, as it were, into the deeper and more turbulent waters of the high seas.

When a voyage is planned, there is always a definite destination or goal. Even though a voyage may be only a short sight-seeing cruise, it must be decided how far one should venture in the time available and which places one should see. On the “sea of life” also, in both a spiritual and natural sense, you need to have a destination or goal. If you do not know where you are going, you will drift aimlessly.

The most important consideration, of course, is your spiritual destination. Do you know where you are going? Jesus Christ, the greatest Teacher this world has ever known, and more than that, the Savior of the world, said, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness...” The person who has come into the kingdom of God through Christ, who is the door, is on his way to heaven.

The Christian has a glorious destination, and his spirit longs for that true home. His feet, however, are still upon this earth and he knows that he is to live his allotted time here, as God wills. With the means which God provides—his reason, his senses, and all the members of his body—he makes a life here and enjoys the manifold gifts with which the Creator has richly endowed His creation.

When Jesus said, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness,” He also promised, “And all these things shall be added unto you,” namely the things needful for the temporal life. Because we are to use His gifts wisely, for His glory and for the welfare of our neighbor, thought needs to be given to one’s goal in this temporal life. What is God’s will for me concerning an occupation, education, marriage, and the other things that are a part of life here?

If you give your heart to God, through faith in His Son Jesus Christ, it follows that your body also is to be given to Him, as a living sacrifice. When you do this, you do not cease to be an individual and become a kind of robot which God manipulates as He wills. You retain your individuality, your reason, your will, and your body, but the Spirit of God, who comes to dwell in you, sanctifies and enlightens you and guides you to make the right choices and decisions, if you let Him. Dear young friend, seek the will of God in all things. Your life will be blessed; it will have direction and purpose.

After the destination is determined, careful preparations must be made for the voyage in order to assure a safe arrival at that destination. Is the ship seaworthy? Will it withstand the pounding of the waves and the buffeting of the gales? Your individual life is sometimes likened to a ship, or we may speak of our “ship of faith.” No one in his right mind would



try to cross the mighty Atlantic in a row-boat. Many, however, are attempting to cross the sea of life in ships that are not seaworthy. Are you putting your faith in yourself or in some other human? Perhaps you are trusting in your youthful energies and enthusiasm, or even in education—none of which are to be belittled but in which you cannot put your whole trust. Only if your faith is from God and is centered in Christ and His redemptive work will your “ship of faith” prove seaworthy. Then you have

made a good start in your preparations for your voyage.

These preparations call, too, for a study of the course which the ship is to take. What would you think of a ship’s crew who sailed out into the ocean, steered their ship in what they believed to be the right direction, and sailed day after day, hoping to reach their destination, but would never consult their chart and compass? You would rightfully consider them mentally deranged.

Are you about to do the same with your life? The voyage you make on the sea of life is a one-way journey. If you want to reach the right destination be sure that you have a chart and compass. Charts (or maps), which guide the traveler to his destination, are prepared by those who have gone that way before and have marked the course.

If you are going to go God’s way, you may avail yourself of a chart and compass that never fails. I like to think of His Word, the Bible, as the chart. It is complete. In it the way to heaven is clearly revealed. This chart tells you not only how to launch your ship and begin your voyage successfully, but also how to make sure of reaching your destination safely. It warns you of treacherous shoals, of “pirates” who will try to rob you, of storms that can quickly arise, and it instructs you how to cope with these and many other perils. There are stories of travelers who have gone before you and have reached their goal; their experiences are recorded for your instruction and inspiration. There are even songs for you to sing as you travel!

The chart and compass are used together, and we might liken the Holy Spirit to a compass, for the Spirit works in and through the Word, calling, enlightening, teaching and sanctifying. The Bible says that the Spirit of God will lead into all truth. He is the spiritual compass that shows the direction in which you are traveling.

Every ship that carries passengers or cargo also needs an expert and completely trustworthy pilot or captain. A shipping company will not entrust a costly ship into the hands of a man who cannot prove himself qualified to pilot a ship. Would you then entrust your precious life to anyone but Him who has given you life and is concerned with preserving it and causing it to bear abundant fruit for His glory and for the blessing of others? Jesus said, *Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit... (John 15:16)*

Have you sometimes wondered if God, who is so far above us in wisdom and majesty and purity, really understands your human problems? “Does He really know



what I'm up against?" you ask. The Bible has an answer. God came down to earth in the person of Jesus Christ. *And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us. (John 1:14) He made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men. (Philippians 2:7) For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:15-16)*

Both the human and divine natures of Jesus are graphically portrayed in the account of His calming a storm (Mark 4:35-41). This Jesus, who experienced the frailties of us humans but who also has power over the sea and wind, is your Pilot, the Captain of your ship. When great storms arise, remember that He is present, though unseen. At the right time He will rebuke the wind and say to the sea, "Peace, be still."

Do you wonder why your parents sometimes shed tears when their child leaves home? Your parents experience mixed emotions at that moment. They share your eager and joyful anticipation of this new venture and pretend not to notice that you are a bit frightened, too. But they do not

always succeed in hiding the pangs of heart and their anxiety about your future. They know that you will encounter many obstacles and experience many heartaches. However, they cannot and would not hold on to you and shield you from the world.

You are to live your own life, and that is why your parents, your teachers, your friends, and all of us who care about both your spiritual and temporal welfare want you to be prepared to live your life in such a way that you will be blessed in time and in eternity. Remember, be sure of your destination, make your ship secure, consult your chart and compass, and do not leave your Pilot behind!

Bon voyage, dear young friends! When you reach the harbor of heaven, there will be an innumerable company of victorious travelers, the saints of God, on the shore, waving a welcome to you and rejoicing that you, too, have arrived home safely.

As you sail toward your destination, let this be your theme song:

*Jesus, Savior, pilot me Over life's tempestuous sea;
Unknown waves before me roll,
Hiding rock and treacherous shoal.
Chart and compass came from Thee; Jesus, Savior, pilot me.
(Edward Hopper)*

In Loving Memory of Carl Niemitalo

Donna Weisser
Battle Ground, Washington

Dear Dad, you have been such a blessing to me
Going back to my youth, to my first memory.
The security and peace of my formative years,
To reflect on it now tends to stir a few tears.
When life was so simple, so joyful and bright
With a father like you who brought us up right.
You disciplined fair, you checked our behavior;
You nurtured us well in the word of our Saviour.
In that little white church with the blue roof above
You preached with the spirit of Jesus' great love.
You've expounded upon the gospel of truth
These words I have held in my heart from my youth.
Though I've fallen and strayed, and failed, miserably so,
That seed was so planted, I couldn't let go.
In these last days when various spirits are spinning,
I "keep that which I have learned from the beginning."
The gift of enlightenment God gave to you,
Discernment of spirits, steadfast and true.
I know that you feel you're just His weak servant
In need of a heartfelt love that is fervent.
I'm grateful to God that He gave us this treasure
In poor earthen vessels, we rejoice beyond measure.
I have such respect for you, Dad, I must say
You've earned it, no doubt, in your kind, quiet way.

I wrote this for my Dad for Father's Day a few years ago, and read it at his funeral.

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

2 Timothy 4:7-8





Bad, Bad, Bad, Bad Girl

Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington

A WOMAN WITH A BAD REPUTATION. A man who makes bad choices. Do you know someone like this? Maybe her family isn't exactly the most put together. Maybe he has a

drug habit. Maybe he hangs with a bad crowd. Maybe she's had a few too many boyfriends.

The woman at the well in Samaria (please read John 4:1-42) wasn't a lily-white lady. She had had FIVE husbands, and the man she was living with now wasn't even her husband. Maybe she was afraid and desperate, so she was willing to live with a man who wouldn't marry her. At least (she may have thought) she wasn't living on the streets.

The women of the village probably knew this woman's past. They may have whispered about her with their friends. They may have avoided her company. They may have walked to the well in the cool early-morning or late-evening air making snarky comments as they chatted. They may have made the poor woman's life so miserable that she chose to walk alone to the well at noon, in the heat of the day, carrying a heavy water jar, rather than endure their company.

The men of the village probably knew this woman's past. They may have made crude jokes about who would be husband #6. They may have tried to be too friendly, since obviously she was a woman who would "put out." They may have kept their wives or girlfriends or sisters from associating with her.

We don't know her past, other than what the Scripture says about her, but it doesn't paint a pretty picture.

Jesus knew every intimate detail of this poor woman's past. He didn't avoid her problems. He went right to the heart of the trouble, and that trouble was sin. Not sin-with-a-little-s (five husbands, living with a man) but SIN-with-all-caps (sinful nature). And He didn't condemn her for it! Jesus knew she was a sinner and He didn't avoid meeting her at the well; in fact, He went out of His way to be there at noon when she arrived alone to fill her water jar.

Jesus told her He gives the Living Water, the water that will quench thirst forever. Of course, the lady asked for some of this wonderful water. She'd never have to lug a water jug out to this well again!

Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband and come here."

When she confessed that she didn't have a husband, Jesus told her of her past husbands and her current living arrangements.

Jesus addressed her sin. And He forgave her for it. He told her that He was the Messiah, the Anointed One of God. He loved her, though she was a sinner. He didn't excuse her sin. He loved her in spite of it.

Today, Jesus loves sinners. Bad girls, girls with a past. Bad boys, boys who have made bad choices. Jesus loves them and He died for them, just as He died for you. You may never have done really bad things, but your sin is just as awful in God's eyes as those terrible things. Jesus loves sinners, and He asks you to do the same.

Tell people about Jesus, the Messiah, the Living Water Who quenches thirst forever. Don't excuse sin, but love sinners in spite of it. Witness of the great grace and love of God to sinners and let people know that there is hope and life and forgiveness in Jesus, that there is freedom from slavery to sin and death.

Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law. For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law.

Romans 13:8-10

If you are a young person, please talk to your parents before you befriend any person who is doing drugs, or living in sexual sin, or living a sinful lifestyle. It's a situation that must be entered carefully and with prayer, and ONLY with your parents' involvement and approval. PLEASE, be careful! Satan will try to tempt you to join, rather than drawing the other person out of sin. Always, always, be accountable to someone you trust: a parent, a pastor, someone who will help keep you from falling into sin.

If you have a bad reputation, or if you are living a sinful lifestyle, PLEASE talk to a Christian about it. God's grace and Jesus' blood covers every sin that you have committed. There is hope and there is new life in Jesus. The Gospel is FOR YOU. Believe it. The Living Water will wash you white and pure, and you will live at peace with God. He loves you, more than you can ever know. His heart is for you. His desire is for you. His blood is for you. Turn from sin and live.

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Christ Is Our Peace

Pastor Dennis Hannu
Wolf Lake, Minnesota

Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands; That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world: But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh. For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

Ephesians 2:11-22

WE HAVE IN OUR CHURCH the tradition of greeting one another with the words “God’s Peace.” Whenever we see someone we haven’t seen in some time we will extend our hand and greet them with “God’s Peace.” We often think nothing of it but simply carry out the tradition mindlessly.

When the disciples of Jesus encountered Him for the first time after His resurrection, He said: “Peace be unto you.” In other words, everything is now fulfilled and salvation has been accomplished, your sins are forgiven, you have been reconciled to your God. God is at peace with us through the work of His Son. There is no greater message than the message of peace brought to us through the proclamation of the Gospel.

Paul writes of this in the above passage where he says that Christ is our peace. We who are for the most part Gentile people, because of our origin of birth, have now been included in the family of God. There is no longer any distinction between people as Paul writes in *Galatians 3:28*: *There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus.* We are joined to the one new human being who has brought us this peace. In this way we now identify ourselves, as those who are at peace with God because of the suffering, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus. Paul writes in Romans that we have been baptized into Jesus Christ which includes His death and His resurrection. Christ is the new man who now has placed His identity on us, calling us His own and so making peace a reality for us. This peace belongs to both the Jewish person and the non-Jewish person. The shedding of the blood of Christ Jesus satisfied the demands of the Law and removed its condemnation. This is why we have peace because there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. We have been reconciled to God by the cross which means that we are no longer His enemies but now are part of His household. We are the temple of God. He makes His dwelling place with men. We are no more estranged from our God but rather have been restored to a right standing with Him. We have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

When we greet with “God’s Peace” we are essentially saying that God is at peace with you. It is as if we are proclaiming the Gospel in two words. It is like Paul says in *2 Corinthians 5:19-21*: *To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. 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.*

To have the peace of God is to have the most glorious gift. This peace has been given to us freely and now we proclaim it to others. We preach peace to them as the representatives of Christ. God is at peace with you, dear brother or sister, so be at peace: “Your sins are forgiven in the name and shed blood of Christ.” We are the messengers of peace because Jesus Christ is our Peace.

God’s Peace.

ONE OF THE MAIN REASONS a child turns to his father is to find help and guidance. When the Lutherans quoted an Early Church father they were not merely staying connected to the past. They were in a fight over pure doctrine. So, as they drew their teaching from Scripture, they also turned to their fathers for help in the arguments with the Roman Church and with the radical protestants.

Rev. Anthony Dodgers