

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 2023

Christ, the Solid Rock

Walt Matson
Amboy, Washington

Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.

Matthew 11:28

DOES THE HUSTLE AND BUSTLE of life leave you weary... or perhaps with age your hustle and bustle has left you? Does it seem there are not enough hours in the day... or perhaps too many? Does confusion and chaos in life and all around consume and leave you feeling fearful, depressed, empty, hopeless, and/or ready to give up?

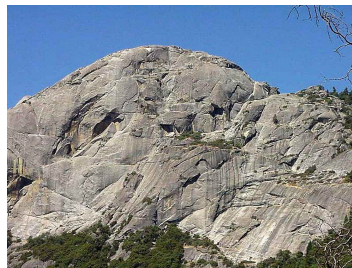
The below passage, although written almost 200 years ago, is a fitting description of the chaotic time in which we live, where much of society seems to lack principle and purpose and appears to have divorced from God to rather embrace self and evil. For a believer, it should come as no surprise however, that the rejection of God/Salvation brings one full circle, back to *Genesis 1:2 - And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep...* In other words: confusion and chaos.

When the faith that once united a man with God and raised him to God's level begins to fail, something terrible happens. The soul, impelled by its own gravity, falls incessantly and without end, carrying with it a certain intelligence detached from its principle, and which clutches at all that crosses its path as it falls, now with a sad restlessness, now with a joy resembling the laughter of a madman... In the shadowy abyss whither he plunges he carries with him his inexorable nature, and from world to world the echoes of the universe repeat the heart-rending pliants of this creature who, having departed from the place that the Almighty organizer in His vast plan has allotted to him, and henceforward incapable of anchoring himself, drifts without rest amidst the whole of creation like a battered vessel tossed hither and thither by the waves on a deserted ocean. -Hugues Lamennais

Though weary and buffeted on every side, turn your eyes to Jesus and be of good cheer. The Anchor holds fast and cannot be loosened, the destiny is sure!

Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath: That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us: Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. (Hebrews 6:17-20)

In hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began... (Titus 1:2)



My hope is built on nothing less,
Than Jesus' blood and righteousness;
I dare not trust the sweetest frame,
But wholly lean on Jesus' name.
When darkness veils His lovely face,
I rest on His unchanging grace;
In every high and stormy gale,
My anchor holds within the veil.
His oath, His covenant, His blood,
Support me in the whelming flood;
When all around my soul gives way,
He then is all my hope and stay.
When He shall come with trumpet sound,
O may I then in Him be found!
Dressed in His righteousness alone,
Faultless to stand before the throne!

Refrain: On Christ, the solid Rock, I stand; All other ground is sinking sand, All other ground is sinking sand. Amen. (Edward Mote)

These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)

Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. (John 6:68)

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7)

Onward!

A traveler in Christ.

Put on Christ, the Armor of Light

Martin Luther

But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ...

Romans 13:14a

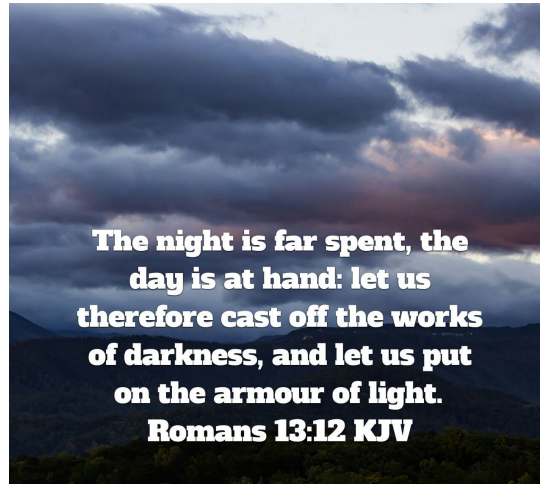
IN THIS ADMONITION to put on Christ, Paul briefly prescribes all the armor of light. Christ is “put on” in two ways. First, we may clothe ourselves with His virtues. This is effected through the faith that relies on the fact of Christ having in His death accomplished all for us. For not our righteousness, but the righteousness of Christ, reconciled us to God and redeemed us from sin. This manner of putting on Christ is treated of in the doctrine concerning faith; it gives Christ to us as a gift and a pledge. *Galatians 3:27: For as many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ.*”

Secondly, Christ being our example and pattern, whom we are to follow and copy, clothing ourselves in the virtuous garment of His walk, Paul fittingly says we should “put on” Christ. As expressed in *1 Corinthians 15:49: As we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.* And again, *Ephesians 4:22-24: That ye put away, as concerning your former manner of life, the old man, that waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit; and that ye be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and put on the new man, that after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth.*

Now, in Christ we behold only the true armor of light. No gormandizing or drunkenness is here; nothing but fasting, moderation, and restraint of the flesh, incident to labor, exertion, preaching, praying and doing good to mankind. No indolence, apathy or unchastity exists, but true discipline, purity, vigilance, early rising. The fields are couch for him who has neither house, chamber nor bed. With him is no wrath, strife or envying; rather utter goodness, love, mercy, patience. Paul presents Christ the example in a few words where he says, *Colossians 3:12-15: Put on therefore, as God’s elect, holy and beloved, a heart of compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, longsuffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving each other, if any man have a complaint against any, even as the Lord forgave you, so also do ye: and above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness, and let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to the which also ye were called in one body; and be ye thankful.* Again, in *Philippians 2:5-8*, after commanding his flock to love and serve one another, he presents as an example the same Christ who became servant unto us. He says: *Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man.*

Now, the armor of light is, briefly, the good works opposed to gluttony, drunkenness, licentiousness; to indolence, strife and envying; such as fasting, watchfulness, prayer, labor, chastity, modesty, temperance, goodness, endurance of hunger and thirst, of cold and heat. Not to employ my own words, let us hear Paul’s enumeration of good works in *Galatians 5:22-23: The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy,*

peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, meekness, self-control. But he makes a still more comprehensive count in *2 Corinthians 6:1-10: We entreat also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain (for he saith, At an acceptable time I hearkened unto thee, and in a day of salvation did I succor thee: behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation) [in other words, For now is salvation nearer to us than when we first believed, and now is the time to awake out of sleep]: giving no occasion of stumbling in anything, that our ministration be not blamed; but in everything commending ourselves, as ministers of God, in much patience, in*



afflictions, in necessities, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in watchings, in fastings; in pureness, in knowledge, in longsuffering, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in love unfeigned, in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left, by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; as deceivers, and yet true; as unknown, and yet well known; as dying, and behold, we live; as chastened, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things. What a rich stream of eloquence flows from Paul’s lips! He makes plain enough in what consists the armor of light on the left hand and on the right. To practice these good works is truly putting on Jesus Christ.

It is a very beautiful feature in this passage that it presents the very highest example, the Lord Himself, when it says, “Put ye on the Lord.” Here is a strong incentive. For the individual who can see his master fasting, laboring, watching, enduring hunger and fatigue, while he himself feasts, idles, sleeps, and lives in luxury, must be a scoundrel. What master could tolerate such conduct in a servant? Or what servant would dare attempt such things? We can but blush with shame when we behold our unlikeness to Christ.

Who can influence to action him who refuses to be warmed and aroused by the example of Christ Himself? What is to be accomplished by the rustling of leaves and the sound of words when the thunder-clap of Christ’s example fails to move us? Paul was particular to add the word “Lord,” saying, *Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ.* As if to say: “Ye servants, think not yourselves great and exalted. Look upon your Lord, who, though under no obligation, denied himself.” ~

Lie not one to another, seeing that ye have put off the old man with his deeds; And have put on the new man, which is renewed in knowledge after the image of him that created him: Where there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, Barbarian, Scythian, bond nor free: but Christ is all, and in all.

Colossians 3:9-11

Proclamation of the Spirit

Pastor Nicholas Kandoll
New York Mills, Minnesota

And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God. And they were all amazed, and were in doubt, saying one to another, What meaneth this? Others mocking said, These men are full of new wine. But Peter, standing up with the eleven, lifted up his voice, and said unto them, Ye men of Judaea, and all ye that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old

men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and notable day of the Lord come: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved.

Acts 2:1-21

THIS TEXT IS THE APPOINTED one for the day of Pentecost. Pentecost was a feast of thanksgiving for the first fruits of the harvest. It later became associated with the giving of the law on Mount Sinai. For us it has become a celebration of the work of the Spirit. No longer is God's Spirit limited to a select few but He is a gift given to all Christians.

Speaking in tongues is a kind of undoing of the separation that happened at the Tower of Babel. God confused the languages as a result of the people's attempt to build a tower to heaven. Now on Pentecost after the finished work of Christ He pours out His Spirit. The disciples preach the Gospel, and it is heard by everyone in their own language.

The purpose of the Holy Spirit is to lead us into truth. To reveal God's Word to us, it never leads us anywhere else. This is demonstrated by Peter's own sermon. He preaches God's Word to the people and many repent. This is how the Spirit operates; by the preaching of Law and Gospel, God reveals to us our sin, our need for a Savior, and the forgiveness of sins that we all have through the blood of Christ. May we be filled with that same Spirit to proclaim those very things to a world that desperately needs to hear it.

God's peace.



When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost.

John 19:30

GOOD FRIDAY, THE MOST BLESSED day in gospel history, is when Jesus gave His life and shed His precious blood for the life and salvation of the world. Scripture testifies that He Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree. He was despised and rejected of men.

He was condemned for our sins to death on the cross. We see Him risen up upon that sacred cross, suspended upon the nails of our sin. Yet, in such agony and languishing, He cries, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." He thirsts for our souls, but is given vinegar mixed with gall. But is not this the very moment and matter why He came? Yes, to lay down His life for us all. His life is ebbing away; soon the sun can show its light again, and the new day can dawn with the rays of the sun of grace. He lifts up His voice and cries, "It is finished," and He yields up the ghost.

Oh Beloved, what glorious words. What a gospel, proclaiming a finished redemption which has satisfied all the righteous demands of the Father. But what now do we see? A soldier with a spear approaches the Saviour and thrusts it into His side, which pierces into His very heart, and blood and water gush out. This is the fountain of cleansing which is opened for sin and for uncleanness. This is the wellspring of life. This is the scarlet nectar which will give life to our engrafted branch. This is the eternal river of the waters of life which flows so freely into which we can be plunged and lose all our guilty stains. It is so vast that it has no measure, so deep that you can never sound the depth, so wide that no galley with oars, neither gallant ship can cross. It is waters to swim in. It is the garments of salvation. It is the robe of righteousness. It is the crimson ink which inscribes our name into the book of life. It is Jesus, our Sacrifice sufficient! Ah, dear Jesus, Thou art taken down from the cross and laid in a tomb. But Thou art the Victor. The grave cannot hold you, death has lost its power, Thou wilt come forth in victory on Easter morning to proclaim this gospel to the world. We wait for Thee to burst the prison bars. Come, dear Jesus, and reveal to us the mystery of Thy redemption to each of our hearts!

Paul Coponen; Chassell, Michigan

Submitted by Ralph and Barbara Somero; New Ipswich, New Hampshire

Our Father

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children, young and old,

Hello to one and all. I do hope this finds you well. I must say all is well here and we are currently enjoying some very warm spring weather. It has been a very cool spring. It's surprising how hard it is to adjust to heat. Some of you may live where it is always warm. In the Pacific Northwest, we have four seasons, each with its own temperatures.

For today's page, let's look at the Lord's Prayer in the Bible in *Matthew 6:9-13*.

Jesus instructs the people, but this is for us, too. **Vs. 9** *After this manner therefore pray ye:*

Our Father which art in heaven,

Sitting up in heaven, with Jesus His Son at His right hand IS God. He is Jesus' Father and our Father, too. God the Father has always lived in heaven.

Hallowed be thy name.

Jesus revered His Father God and gave glory and praise to His name. We are to do this also. God's name is SO holy, and we should pray to never use it unwisely in swearing as so many do.

Thy kingdom come.

God graciously gives us faith to believe in Jesus and we can take no credit. *Romans 14:17* says: *For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost.*

Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

We pray for the Father's perfect will to be done in our life. We desire to have penitent hearts as we serve our Father and to believe in His Son Jesus.

Give us this day our daily bread.

This almost sounds a little too demanding, but God wants us to ask Him to provide what we need for that day. He already knows what we need, but He desires of us to still ask. He will answer according to His will.

When you stop to think of this, when we wake in the morning and are given another day, we will just be needing provisions for that day. We won't be needing tomorrow's daily bread.

And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.

We are all sinners and we ask God to forgive us for our sins. Jesus' death on the cross fully paid our debt that we owed. We have been shown such deep love through that forgiveness, and we are to have that same heart of forgiveness to those who have sinned against us.

And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:

We know that God tempts no one; but if it was His will, He could to allow you to be tempted by the devil. We have read how it was God's will for His Son Jesus to be tempted by the devil in the wilderness. God was not trying to hurt Him.

It is God's desire to keep us from evil. When we are tempted to do wrong, it is of our doing and not keeping our focus on what God's will would be for us. The devil is very sneaky and he has ways of getting us to take our eyes off of Jesus. The Bible tells us to flee, to "run away" from sin.

For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

This last line sums up everything that God is, what He deserves – glory, and how long – for ever! Amen means "So be it" or "It shall be so." God doesn't waver but stands by what He says.



I pray that this prayer is written on your hearts. I have found it so precious even with our children at a young age, that they can recite the whole Lord's Prayer. Even now I hear our grandchildren and other young children saying it by heart. It's a rather long prayer; but because it is so perfect in all the things Jesus taught us to ask for, it's clear in our minds, those are things we need.

If you feel you don't know what to say in a prayer, the Lord's Prayer is all you need. It is very complete. Jesus taught this prayer to His disciples as He knew they would need a perfect prayer to help them on their way as they continued to spread the gospel after Jesus went back to heaven.

I'm so thankful for this prayer. I thank Jesus for teaching it and that we can have it today.

I will leave you with the verse of the day (today as I write):

One thing I have desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple. Psalm 27:4

I want to wish all the fathers a happy, blessed Father's Day!

God's peace.

The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.

Psalm 103:8-14

Clothed with Salvation and Robed in Righteousness

Pastor Dennis Hammu
Wolf Lake, Minnesota

HAVE YOU EVER NOTICED HOW you feel when you purchase new clothes and wear them for the first time? It is as if you are a new person and you enjoy how the clothes look on you and perhaps the comments people make as they observe your new outfit. Perhaps you find yourself wearing your new clothes more than the older clothes hanging in your closet even if the older ones are in good shape yet. The new ones just seem to have a greater appeal to you, and you find yourself drawn to them every time you are looking for something to wear. In a small way your new clothes bring you some happiness.

Have you ever thought about our new clothes that God has given us in Christ? The prophet Isaiah 61:10-11: *I will greatly rejoice in the LORD, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord GOD will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.* We are clothed by our God with the garments of salvation, and this clothing never goes out of style. It is greater than any name brand you can find in the stores of this world. This clothing is so beautiful that we never grow tired of how it looks on us. This clothing never has to be washed or ironed as it is perfect in every way. This clothing is not available for purchasing and no amount of money can buy it anyway because it is free, given to us by our gracious Heavenly



Father, who prepared it for us by the work of His Son. This clothing not only covers us with salvation but also gives us the righteousness of God. We are robed in righteousness, which means that this clothing gives us all that we need to be right in the eyes of our God.

When our God sees us dressed in this clothing, we are acceptable unto Him, and the really cool thing is that He Himself is the One who puts the clothing on us. He makes us beautiful by the finished work of Jesus Christ. We often have the wrong perspective of ourselves or at least we focus our attention on the old clothing that we have in this flesh, clothing that wears out and constantly needs cleaning. Our focus instead should be on this new clothing that we have received from God Himself. He has adorned us in the garments of salvation and robes us in His righteousness. This is accomplished through the "Great Exchange." 2 Corinthians 5:21: *For he hath made him (Jesus) to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.*

We need to be mindful of who we are because of and through Christ. He is the One who has redeemed us with His own blood. He took upon Himself our old clothing that was saturated with sin and corruption and took it to His cross, removing its curse and condemnation from us and granting unto us the new clothing of the righteousness of God. This wedding garment of our God carries with it the passport that guarantees a safe passage across the border of death into eternity. This clothing brings me the greatest joy because I recognize that it is clothing given to me by God Himself and so I am joyful in my God. May God be praised for His tremendous love for us! Enjoy your new clothing in Christ!!

God's peace.

The Garments of Salvation

Isaiah 61:10-11, with commentary: *I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, the Inspiration and Source of all true spiritual joy; my soul shall be joyful in my God, on account of the deliverance which the believers have experienced; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, with the righteousness of the Messiah imputed by faith; He hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, so that the believer's sinfulness is no longer visible before the eyes of the holy God, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, winding his turban after the manner of priests, to give expression to his joy, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels. Thus the Church, and every member of the Church, is adorned with the beauty of the righteousness of the Lord.*

For as the earth bringeth forth her bud, causing the seed to sprout and come up, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth, in accordance with the laws of nature fixed by God, so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations, so that all men must acknowledge these virtues as existing in the midst of the Church. The God who causes the laws of nature to control the round of the seasons also makes the word of His mercy to come true, so that His salvation is fulfilled.



Jewish Wedding

Paul Kretzmann

Fan the Flame

Pastor Jason Salmi
Vancouver, Washington

IN HIS LETTER TO A young pastor named Timothy, Paul wrote, and I paraphrase: "Remember to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands... (2 Timothy 1:6).

I really like this image that Paul uses of fanning a flame. It's such a relatable picture, because anyone who's either lit a fire or helped to keep one going knows exactly what this means. When the flames are small, you either blow on them gently, or use something to push air into the fire. And, as the flame slowly grows, you can fan it more vigorously as the fire grows ever bigger and hotter.

But before we talk about what Paul means when he speaks of fanning into flame, "the gift of God, which is in you," let's pause and think about that gift. Just before this, Paul had spoken of serving God, "as did [his] forefathers." Then he mentions how Timothy's faith, *dwelt first in thy grandmother Lois and thy mother Eunice*. And these are not just unimportant details. We know that God desires that all people would be saved (2 Peter 3:9). He sent His Son into the world to save us from our sins. And the Gospel is the message of this salvation which people may believe and be saved. Yet how does this message of salvation reach people? Well, God spoke directly to some people. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses all heard God's message of salvation first-hand. But for most people, the Gospel, which produces faith in those who believe it, is passed along from one person to another.



This is why the fire image that Paul uses is so perfect. One person has faith, and can pass it along to another person. All of us can relate to that, since all of us have come to faith in exactly this way. We heard that we needed to be saved, and that Jesus is our Savior. Our salvation is entirely God's work to the point that He even had to be the one to give us faith to believe.

So then, faith has been kindled in you like a flame... now what? Fan the flame! Put yourself continually and regularly where God's people are. Seek to read and hear His

Word and receive the Sacraments through which your faith is built up and strengthened. And you will see that the gift of God, which is faith, is the gift that multiplies and manifests in many different ways. All Christians are given gifts by God so that they are able to glorify Him by being active and vital parts of the Body of Christ. For Timothy, one of the gifts that he'd been given by God was to serve as a pastor. In 1 Corinthians 12 Paul speaks at length about the various gifts that God gives to us. Go and read that chapter, which can help you to see ways in which God has gifted you in order for you to glorify Him.

Dear Saints, fan the flame. Believe what God's Word says about you: you are forgiven, you are loved, you are a child of God. And look to His Word, and the way that He's uniquely made and equipped you, to see how you can be a blessing to others. ~

The Blesséd Trinity

Holy, holy, holy, Lord
God of Hosts, eternal King,
By the heavens and earth adored!
Angels and archangels sing,
Chanting everlastingly
To the blesséd Trinity.

Since by Thee were all things made,
And in Thee do all things live,
Be to Thee all honor paid;
Praise to Thee let all things give;
Singing everlastingly
To the blesséd Trinity.

Cherubim and seraphim
Veil their faces with their wings;
Eyes of angels are too dim
To behold the King of kings,
While they sing eternally
To the blesséd Trinity.

Hallelujah! Lord, to Thee
Father, Son and Holy Ghost,
Godhead one, and Persons three,
Join we with the heavenly host,
Singing everlastingly
To the blesséd Trinity.

Christopher Wordsworth, 1862



And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

Matthew 28:18-20

Into This Black Hole

Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington

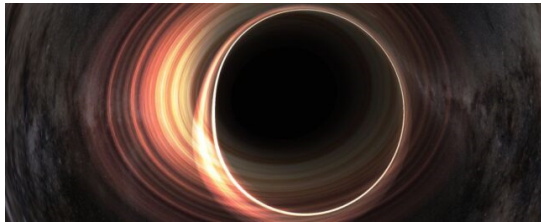
JESUS EXISTED BEFORE THE beginning, from eternity past. He was the Word spoken at creation, by which everything came into being.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. (John 1:1-5)

In the beginning, God spoke natural light into existence when He said, "Let there be light." Before natural light was created, there was only darkness, and how great was that darkness!

A black hole is a very great darkness, reflecting no light. Nothing can escape a black hole, and it grows by absorbing mass from its surroundings. Wikipedia gives this definition: "A black hole is a region of spacetime where gravity is so strong that nothing, including light or other electromagnetic waves, has enough energy to escape its event horizon."

After the fall into sin, this creation could be compared to a black hole. Nothing escapes the consequence of the fall, and the gravity of sin causes corruption and wickedness to continually increase.



*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. **That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world.** He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth. (John 1:6-14)*

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reprov'd. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God. (John 3:16-21)

Into this black hole came Jesus, the Light of the world! At the proper time, the true and eternal Light of the world became flesh and lived among us. He was incarnate in the womb of the virgin Mary, was born and lived here with His creation. At the proper time, in obedience to the Father, He laid down His life and died on a cross.

The Light flickered out, and the darkness thought that it had won. Now the black hole expected to expand, absorbing more and more of humanity into its clutches.

But on the third day, the Light of the world rose from death. His heart beat again, blood pumping through His veins. Breath returned to lungs that had been still. The Light shines in the darkness!

*Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, **I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life. (John 8:12)***

*But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, **lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.** For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. **For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:6)***

God has shined the Light of the world into our hearts through our ears, as faith comes by hearing. The glorious gospel of Christ, Who is the image of God—in Him there is no darkness at all—has shined into us and brought us the light of life, eternal life!

As Christ Jesus the Lord is preached, the darkness must recede, the black hole must shrink. Jesus the Light shines in the darkness, and the darkness cannot overcome it. Shine, Jesus, shine! ~

Christian Monthly Vol. LXXIX—No. 6

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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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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No Worries

Pastor Chuck Bylkas
South Range, Michigan



Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

Philippians 4:4-9

IN TIMES OF DIFFICULTY, we may find ourselves anxious about many things. In fact we often defend ourselves, claiming that it is only natural to worry. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus Christ calls us away from such worry and exhorts us to trust in God: *Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?... But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. (Matthew 6:25, 33)*

The Apostle Paul echoes the same thought in His letter to the Philippians. The first thing Paul tells us to do is to *Rejoice in the Lord, always...* Instead of worrying, Paul encourages to give thanks to God for all He has done for us, especially giving us life and salvation through His Son, Jesus Christ. Secondly, Paul tells us to pray. *...but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.* Paul teaches us that God will not necessarily give us everything we ask for, but He does promise to give us peace. *And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.* Finally, Paul instructs us to think on the things that are above. Instead of being so concerned about our own troubles, Paul says *...whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.* In other words, we keep our hearts and minds fixed on Christ. In Jesus Christ, we have redemption by His blood. Through Christ's death and Resurrection, we have new life in this world and the sure promise of life everlasting in the world to come.

What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? 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. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:31-39)

Yours in Christ.

A Goodly Heritage

The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.

Psalm 16:5-6

OUR BLESSED LORD MORE THAN walked patiently in all His path below. There was joy set before Him which gladdened His every step. In Christ, God is our God forever. Can we desire more? How rich is this portion! How reviving is our cup! How can we bless His grace enough who has called us to this ennobling state? Angels are ours to guard. Providences are ours to secure our bliss. The God-Man's blood is ours to wash out every sin. A righteousness is prepared to robe us for the courts above. Heaven is promised as our endless home. We have a goodly heritage.

Henry Law