

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.

May 2020

The Comfort of the Spirit

Martin Luther

Now, we have often heard that the substance of the Gospel is this: “God has proclaimed to everyone that no man can become just by means of the Law, but rather is thereby condemned. That therefore He has sent down His dear Son to shed His blood and die, since men could not, by their own power and works, cancel their sins and get rid of them.”

But in addition to what is thus preached, something else is needed; for even though I hear the preaching, I do not at once believe. Therefore, God adds His Holy Spirit, who impresses this preaching upon the heart, so that it abides there and lives. It is a faithful saying that Christ has accomplished everything, has removed sin and overcome every enemy, so that through Him we are lords over all things. But the treasure lies yet in one pile; it is not yet distributed nor invested. Consequently, if we are to possess it, the Holy Spirit must come and teach our hearts to believe and say: I, too, am one of those who are to have this treasure. When we feel that God has thus helped us and given the treasure to us, everything goes well, and it cannot be otherwise than that man's heart rejoices in God and lifts itself up, saying Dear Father, if it is Thy will to show toward me such great love and faithfulness, which I cannot fully fathom, then will I also love Thee with all my heart and be joyful, and cheerfully do what pleases Thee. Thus, the heart does not now look at God with evil eyes, does not imagine He will cast us into hell, as it did before the Holy Spirit came, when it felt none of the goodness, love, or faithfulness of God, but only His wrath and disfavor.

Since the Holy Spirit has impressed upon the heart that God is kind and gracious toward it, it believes that God can no more be angry, and grows so happy and so bold that, for God's sake, it performs and suffers everything possible to perform and to suffer.

In this way you are to become acquainted with the Holy Spirit. You may know to what purpose He is given and what His office is, namely, to invest the treasure — Christ and all He has, who is given to us and proclaimed by the Gospel; the Holy Spirit will give Him into your heart so that He may be your own. When He has accomplished this, and when you feel Christ in your heart, you will be constrained to cry: Is this the

idea, that my works are of no avail but the Holy Spirit must perform all? Why then do I punish myself with works and the Law? Thus all human works and laws vanish, yea, even the law of Moses; for such a being is superior to all law. The Holy Spirit teaches man better than all the books; He teaches him to understand the Scriptures better than he can understand from the teaching of any other; and of his own accord he does everything God wills he should, so the Law dare make no demands upon him.

Therefore, we need books only for the purpose of demonstrating that it is written even as the Holy Spirit teaches. We must not confine faith to ourselves, but must let it break forth into action; and to confirm and establish it, we must have the Scriptures. Therefore, be very careful to consider the Holy Spirit in no way a law-maker, but as one who abrogates the Law and frees man, so that no written letter remains, or that it remains only for the sake of preaching.

In all this, however, we ought to exercise sense and wisdom, understanding that a man receiving the Holy Spirit is not at once perfect, insensible to the Law and to sin, pure in all respects. For we do not preach, concerning the Holy Spirit and his office, that He has completed and finished His work, but that He has only begun it and is now constantly engaged in it, and that He is ceaselessly progressing; consequently, you will not find a man who is without sin and without sorrow, full of righteousness and full of joy, and so perfect that he is never needlessly concerned about anything, and who serves everybody freely. The Scriptures indeed tell us that the office of the Holy Spirit is to redeem from sin and fear; but that does not say that this is altogether accomplished.

Therefore, a Christian must at times feel his sin and the fear of death, and be concerned about all else that troubles a sinner. Unbelievers may be sunk so deeply in their sins that they do not feel them; but believers do feel them, yet they possess a helper, the Holy Spirit, who comforts and strengthens them. However, if He had finished and made an end of His office, they would experience none of these fears.

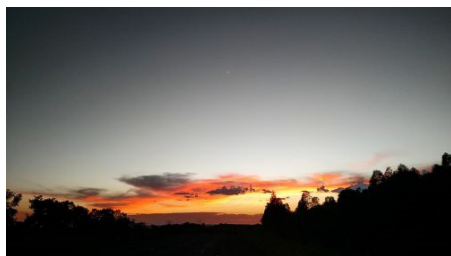
Therefore, I say that we must be wise and take care that we do not boast of the Holy Spirit too confidently and joyously, that we may not become too secure and imagine

that we are perfect in all respects. For a pious Christian still is flesh and blood like other people, but he fights against sin and evil lust and feels what he would rather not feel (Romans 7:15). The unbelievers are indifferent and make no such fight.

It makes no difference that we feel evil lusts if we only battle against them. Therefore, the Christian must not judge according to his feelings, believing because of them that he is lost, but he must labor all his life with the remaining sin of which he is conscious and must permit the Holy Spirit to work, groaning without ceasing, to be rid of sin. Such groaning never ceases in believers, but is more profound that can be uttered, as St. Paul declares to the Romans 8:26. But there is a precious listener, the Holy Spirit Himself, who deeply feels our longing and also comforts our consciences.

The two must always be mingled, in our feelings — the Holy Spirit and our sin and imperfection. Our case must be like that of a sick man who is in the hands of the physician;

presently he will be better. Therefore let no one think: Such a one possesses the Holy Spirit, consequently he must be altogether strong, without infirmities, and do only precious works. No, not yet. The Gospel is not a proclamation for everybody. It is a proclamation exceedingly gracious, but a coarse, hard heart may hear it without receiving any good; rather are such made more audacious and careless, imagining they need not war against the flesh, because they do not feel their sin and misery. The Holy Spirit is given to none except to those who are in sorrow and fear; in them it produces good fruit. This gift is so precious and worthy that God does not cast it before dogs. Though the unrepentant discover it themselves, hearing it preached, they devour it and know not what they devour. The hearts which receive it with profit are such as feel their evil lust but are unable to escape from it. There must be struggling if the Holy Spirit is to abide in the heart, and let no one dare think it will be otherwise. ~



At Eventide

Christian Observer

Submitted by Linda Wirkkala; Castle Rock, Washington

...at evening time it shall be light. (Zechariah 14:7)

I LOVE TO CONNECT OUR word “serene” with the Latin word evening, as well as with its own mother-word “serenus”—clear, or bright.

Often, after a windy, stormy day, there comes at evening a clear, bright stillness, so that at evening time there is serenity as well as light. So often in life’s evening there comes a lull, a time of peaceful waiting “between the

lights,” the burden-weighted heat of the day behind, the radiance of eternity before. Perhaps the day has been in truth “life’s little day,” swiftly ebbing to its close; perhaps the worn, tired pilgrim has lived even beyond the measure of three score years and ten. In either case it is in truth the evening.

The dear face reflects “eternity’s wonderful beauty,” the sweet, serene spirit is freshened by dew from the heavenly Hermon, the fragrance of evening flowers fills the air, the songs of birds come in tender, satisfied cadences, and even the clouds which remain are enriched and made radiant by rays from the Sun of Righteousness.

We whose evening is not yet, are entranced with the exquisite blending of the warm human affection with the celestial flame kindled from the sacred altar. With hushed souls we minister and are ministered unto, until, too soon, the twilight time is past, and the evening and the morning have become the eternal day. ~

**Abide with me: fast falls the eventide;
The darkness deepens; Lord, with me abide.
When other helpers fail and comforts flee,
Help of the helpless, O abide with me.**

**Swift to its close ebbs out life’s little day;
Earth’s joys grow dim, its glories pass away.
Change and decay in all around I see.
O Thou who changest not, abide with me.**

**I need Thy presence every passing hour.
What but Thy grace can foil the tempter’s power?
Who like Thyself my guide and strength can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, O abide with me.**

**I fear no foe with Thee at hand to bless,
Ills have no weight, and tears no bitterness.
Where is death’s sting? Where, grave, thy victory?
I triumph still, if Thou abide with me.**

**Hold Thou Thy cross before my closing eyes.
Shine through the gloom and point me to the skies.
Heaven’s morning breaks and earth’s vain shadows flee;
in life, in death, O Lord, abide with me.**

(Henry Francis Lyte)

The Faith of Jonathan

Charles Korhonen
Tapiola, Michigan

And Jonathan said to the young man that bare his armour, Come, and let us go over unto the garrison of these uncircumcised: it may be that the LORD will work for us: for there is no restraint to the LORD to save by many or by few.

1 Samuel 14:6

SAUL AND JONATHAN and about 600 lightly armed Israelite soldiers were about to be attacked by a Philistine army composed of 30,000 chariots, 6,000 horsemen and an innumerable host of heavily armed soldiers. Much of the Israelite population had fled the country seeking refuge in Gad and Gilead on the other side of the Jordan River, while others hid themselves in caves, and in thickets, and in rocks, and in high places, and in pits. (1 Samuel 13:6) Those that remained trembled at the great odds that they faced.

Saul was waiting for the prophet Samuel to sacrifice unto the Lord. However, when seven days had come and gone and Samuel did not show up as he had promised, Saul became anxious. Though he was not a priest, Saul made the sacrificial offerings that Samuel would have made had he been there. God was testing Saul to determine if he would trust Him or rely on his own strength.

There are times in every Christian's life where faith is tested. In your Old Testament reading you will recall Abraham's great test when God asked him to sacrifice Isaac. Obediently, Abraham prepared to carry out this request when God suddenly stopped him from plunging the knife into Isaac and said, ... *now I know that thou fearest God.* (Genesis 22:12) In the case at hand, Samuel brought the bad news to Saul that he had failed the test, usurping a priest's authority by conducting the sacrifice, *And Samuel said to Saul, Thou hast done foolishly: thou hast not kept the commandment of the LORD thy God, which he commanded thee.* (1 Samuel 13:13)

Jonathan, on the other hand, was willing to trust his life to the Lord, as our text shows. Although Jonathan faced seemingly insurmountable odds, he let God determine the final outcome. Jonathan's plan was to walk right up to a Philistine outpost and let them decide what they were going to do with him and his armor bearer. If they come out to us, then we will stand still, however, if they ask us to come to them then we will know that God is with us, was Jonathan's thinking. As it turned out the Philistines somewhat

bemusedly invited them into their midst. Jonathan and his companion quickly killed twenty soldiers which caused such a panic that in the ensuing confusion the whole Philistine army started to kill one another, *And Saul and all the people that were with him assembled themselves, and they came to the battle: and, behold, every man's sword was against his fellow, and there was a very great discomfiture.* (1 Samuel 14:20) Even those Israelites which earlier had joined the Philistines to avoid any



persecution recognized the hand of God in all this and changed their allegiance back to Saul. With very few people, *the LORD saved Israel that day* (1 Samuel 14:23), as Jonathan had prayed. We learn three important lessons from all this that can be applied to present times. First, there are always those who will quickly disregard the principles of God and join the majority in spiritual conflicts—compromise is their guiding light. Those who joined the Philistines, later to realign with Saul, are an example of this type of person. Second, there are those who will run away or who will

shrink into the background when conflict comes, leaving others to contend with the adversary. They, too, show little esteem for God when they will not take a stand. Those who left the country or hid themselves highlights this kind of person. Finally, those that remain seem to have two choices: either take spiritual matters into their own hands, as did Saul, or do as Jonathan and seek God's guidance in moving forward, despite the odds. Prayerfully, one can always find God's guidance in the Bible.

Perhaps you are being tested this very moment. You may feel that there is no hope, the odds are too great, and your strength is too small. Rather than give in or hide or run away or trust in yourself, it is always best to turn to the Lord and let Him decide the outcome. Our faith must equal that of Jonathan's. Jesus said, ... *Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.* (Mark 8:34) This gives us no viable alternative other than to trust in Him. Because He has already paid for your sins, Jesus freely offers forgiveness through His believers on earth. May God grant you the grace to believe the proclamation that your sins are forgiven in the name and shed blood of Jesus.

God's peace.



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 4:3-6)

WE MUST HAVE THE LIGHT of the Word and cling to it until the Last Day. Then we shall no longer need the Word, just as artificial light is extinguished when the day dawns... He bids us fix our eyes in keenness of mind on the Word alone, on Baptism, on the Lord's Supper, and on absolution, and to regard everything else as darkness. I do not understand, or care about, what is done in this world by the sons of this age; for they crucify me. I cannot escape or draw away that horrible mask which hides the face of God, but I must stay in darkness and an exceedingly dark mist until the new light shines forth.

Martin Luther

Does Jesus Care?

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

[Editor's Note: Dear Children,

A very sad thing has happened in Gwen's life. Not too long ago, her daughter-in-law Rosa and granddaughter Juniper were in a terrible car accident and were taken from this earth to heaven. Juniper's brother Elliot and sister Iona were badly hurt in the accident, too, but God is healing them from their injuries. Gwen wrote this story in September 2017, and let's pray it will bring Gwen some comfort today. Please keep Gwen and her family in your prayers.]

Dear Children,

Hello and God's peace to each of you. I do hope you are having a good day. If not, maybe the subject matter of this page will be helpful. I want to write about Jesus caring for us.

God's Word is the best source and start to a good day. There will be times when it does not seem to lift us up, but we must remember that the problem is not with the Word but with our attitude and our heart. This is something Jesus cares about, too.

DOES JESUS CARE?

I CAN WELL IMAGINE THAT everyone has asked this question when going through a difficult time. This is something that we are prone to do when we take our eyes off of Jesus for a moment and focus on ourselves. But this is something Jesus is not unfamiliar with and cares about.

Our Lord has always cared for us.

- *Jeremiah 31:3: The Lord hath appeared of old unto me, saying, Yea, I have loved thee with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness have I drawn thee.*

We have always been deeply loved by God and His Son Jesus. To not love is something Jesus cannot do.

We are encouraged many times in the Word to bring all of our cares to Jesus. He never wants us to keep hard things to ourselves, but to pour our hearts out to Him.

- *1 Peter 5:7: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you.*
- *Psalms 55:22: Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain (to strengthen or support physically or mentally) thee: he shall never suffer (allow) the righteous to be moved.*
- *Isaiah 41:10: Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will help thee; yea, I will uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness.*

Dear one, when you are up against a difficult time or there is something pressing that you need to do, or someone has hurt you in any way and you are not sure what to do, take it to God in prayer. Here more verses that let you know again that Jesus cares:

- *Psalms 46:1: God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.*
- *Matthew 11:28-30: Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.*

We need things for this life, like food, clothes, shelter, jobs, friends and family, etc. These are blessings from our Lord. You can know with all your heart that Jesus knows what you have need of and will gladly supply it all.

- *Philippians 4:19: But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

Jesus cares about us when we are sad, happy, worried, fearful, tempted, unsure, etc. We know from the Bible that nothing is hidden from Him that He does not know it.

- *Hebrews 4:15: For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities (physical or mental weaknesses); but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.*

Jesus wants us to come to Him with confidence and with courage.

- *Hebrews 4:16: Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.*

Most importantly, as Christians, and because Jesus loves us with such a deep love, He would desire that we speak of Him wherever we go and not be ashamed to do so.

- *Romans 10:9-10: That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*



In closing I want you to know that Jesus cares SO much for you. Right at this moment I want to encourage you to take to God in prayer, whatever it is that might be concerning to you. Keep His name on your lips and in your heart. He will carry you all the way.

I also want to encourage you to pick up your Bible and randomly open it and read verses. Do this even a few times in a row, and you are sure to find words of care and love from our Lord Jesus Christ.

**Does Jesus care? Oh yes, He cares.
No one cares like He does.**

God's peace.

Treasure

Mike Kulla
Yacolt, Washington

SUPPOSE I TOLD YOU THAT I have a big pirate's treasure chest full of gold coins worth a couple of million dollars. This big chest is buried somewhere, but I won't tell you where it is buried. If I told you I would share the treasure with you if you can find it, you would think, "Big deal! Why should I waste time looking for it?" If I hinted at where it might be buried, you might spend some time looking for it or thinking about where it could be. But if I told you exactly where the treasure was buried, you'd be running out the door to get it right now. We have a better treasure than gold can buy. Jesus is our Treasure!

Jesus was buried for three days in a tomb, but He is different than a chest of gold. We didn't have to go and find Him; He finds us. He raised Himself from the dead and came out of the tomb. If Jesus hadn't arisen from the dead, His death wouldn't have done us any good. But He DID rise, and He LIVES. 2 Corinthians 4:7 says that we have this Treasure in earthen vessels. In us! We have Jesus in us!

Are we going to hide this treasure we have within us and not share it with anyone? No! One of our Sunday School songs says, "This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine." Don't hide your light under a bushel.

There are many ways to let our lights shine so people can see this Treasure we have. The Bible says that even a child is known by his actions. For example, how do we treat others? Are we respectful to our parents and teachers? Are we kind to people who others are making fun of? Can people see God's love in us by how we act? Are we willing to stand up for the truth and what is right, even if it's not popular or even if we may suffer persecution for it? Are we honest and moral? The list could go on and on.

But sometimes we need to talk about Jesus our Treasure. Sometimes we need to tell people about Him. When Jesus was born in Bethlehem and the shepherds went to see Him, they left and spread the word that had been told them concerning this Child Jesus.



Even young people can share what you know about Jesus. Don't think that you are too young, or that you don't know enough to tell people about your Jesus. What did the Lord say to the prophet Jeremiah when he said, "I'm only a child; I don't know how to speak"? He said, *Say not, I am a child: for*

thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee, saith the LORD. (Jeremiah 1:7-8)

Jesus will be with you, just like He was with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in the fiery furnace. Jesus promises He will be with you!

I have a friend, a work acquaintance whom I've known for about 20 years. I've never talked to him about Jesus. Maybe I've mentioned that I will be going to church over the weekend or something like that,

but I've never really talked to him about Jesus. One day a young man—a child—was with me when I went to this work friend's house. While I was there, the keys got locked in my truck. While I was trying to break into my truck and then putting my friend's tools away, he was visiting with the youth who was with me. As I walked around the corner of the truck, I could hear this youngster asking my friend if he believed in God. That really convicted me because I had never spoken to him about the Lord. The really great part is that recently this friend told me that he is going to church. Praise the Lord! I'm not saying it is because this youth talked to him that he is attending church. That doesn't matter. He was talking to my friend from a heart of love and concern that this man would know the Lord. God does the work in peoples' hearts. God may have been working in many ways on my friend. We just plant the seeds.

Be bold to speak, even if it feels awkward. The Spirit will let you know when you should say something and give you the words to say. I want to encourage you to share with others about this Treasure that we have, so that they know exactly who He is. ~

A General Confession.

ALMIGHTY and most merciful Father, we have erred, and strayed from Thy ways like lost sheep. We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts. We have offended against Thy holy laws. We have left undone those things which we ought to have done, and we have done those things which we ought not to have done, and there is no health in us. But Thou, O Lord, have mercy upon us, miserable offenders. Spare Thou those, O God, who confess their faults. Restore Thou those who are penitent, according to Thy promises declared unto mankind in Christ Jesus our Lord. And grant, O most merciful Father, for His sake, that we may hereafter live a godly, righteous, and sober life, to the glory of Thy holy name. Amen.

The Declaration of Absolution, or Remission of Sins.

ALMIGHTY God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he may turn from his wickedness and live, hath given power, and commandment, to His ministers, to declare and pronounce to His people, being penitent, the absolution and remission of their sins. He pardoneth and absolveth all those who truly repent, and unfeignedly believe His holy Gospel.

Wherefore let us beseech Him to grant us true repentance, and His Holy Spirit, that those things may please Him which we do at this present, and that the rest of our life hereafter may be pure and holy, so that at the last we may come to His eternal joy, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Book of Common Prayer, 1928

The Sure Word of Prophecy

Pastor Ron Holmgren
Hockinson, Washington

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

2 Peter 1:19-21

WE HAVE A MORE SURE Word of prophecy. I think the meaning of the text here is simply that the Scriptures are more certain than our eyes. Peter speaks of being an eyewitness, and I don't want to minimize that at all, because that is included in this sure Word of prophecy. But we don't have that. How many of you were at the Mount of Transfiguration? We have a sure Word, a sound, solid, never-changing Word, and He tells us that we would do well to pay attention to it. We have a more sure Word of prophecy, whereunto you do well that you take heed.

The world is filled with books; it has been for millennia. There are libraries of various sizes, from the little one here in our town, to the great libraries of universities and other places around the world. There are books, and books, and books, but there is one Book. The very word "Bible" simply means "book." Yet we call this the Bible, singular. Take heed of this sure of prophecy.

He tells us that we would do well have to pay attention to it, that we would do so as if we see a lamp burning in a very dark place. Light, to reveal. Light, that the psalmist writes so beautifully about in the 119th Psalm. This Word, this Bible, the Word of prophecy, the sure Word of God, is a lamp to our feet, a light to our pathway. Without it we walk in darkness. Period. No truth, no direction, no hope, no answers. You're on your own. Take heed of this beautiful Word, this Light *that shines in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the daystar arise in your hearts.* He's coming. Then the brightness of His glory we will see as eye witnesses one day.

But the truth of the matter is, as Paul says in the second letter he wrote to the people in Corinth, that we walk by faith and not by sight, here and now, and nothing in our lives is to be ruled by our judgment, our decisions. Now I will try to do this carefully, as I appreciate the Confessions of our church, speaking of even the will, he talks about things heavenly and things here on this earth. I make decisions every day. You make decisions every day. You use your judgment to the best

you can, for things below here. But when it comes to the eternal truths, let us not rely upon our judgment. We must judge everything according to the Word of God, according to this beautiful, sure Word of prophecy that never fails us. We shouldn't rely on our senses, our feelings, our judgment. Unfortunately, when we do so, we find the opposite of what is good taking place in our lives.



When this Word tells us that our sins are forgiven, we believe it. When my judgment and my senses and my feelings come to me, I can't believe it. I've got a whole list of reasons that are set against that

beautiful message of the Gospel. It's a long list, and I add to it every day. I cannot rely on anything that I feel, my senses, my reason. It doesn't make sense, and I stumble around in the darkness of that. Then I come to the sure Word of prophecy that says, "Your sins are forgiven." It never changes. It never varies, based upon a historic event that Peter was an eyewitness of, spoke of, wrote about, the prophets of old, the sure Word of prophecy that he had in his possession, the Old Testament also spoke of it, Isaiah and the rest of them, looking forward to the cross, where the debt of my sin, that long list, was blotted out, where your debt of sin, that long list that you have, is blotted out—it cannot be read; it cannot be deciphered anymore—where your sins have been removed from you as far as the east is from the west.

Where else are you going to go to find this kind of message and hope? Where else are you going to go, but to this sure Word of prophecy, that based upon the suffering and death of the One who was transfigured, who was holy and righteous, who God was pleased with by His own testimony? He removed it from us, and we believe it.

And so when we face trials and sorrows in this life, where do we turn? Where do we go? We have the promises of God that He will work all things together for good to them that love Him. That's not a conditional statement. It's just a straightforward statement. He will work all things together for good, and so we find strength and comfort here as we walk in this dark world, following the direction of this Light, no longer based upon our reason but guided by God's promise. ~

But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming. (1 Corinthians 15:20-23)

CHRIST RESURRECTED FROM THE DEAD has become the firstfruits, the promise of a harvest yet to come. This harvest that was promised came on the Day of Pentecost. Within this Feast of Pentecost there was another firstfruits, another harvest which is yet to come. The ingathering of that harvest which will be until the Lord returns, as the Spirit continues to do its work: to call, gather, enlighten and sanctify the whole Christian Church on earth, and keep it in union with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. The Day of Pentecost was a historical event, but we are in a Pentecost season, as the Spirit continues to go out and accomplish that which it has been sent to do, namely, to draw people unto Jesus Christ, as the Spirit testifies of Jesus, of His work, of His great love for us... We are in a Pentecost season.

Pastor Phil Wilson; Hockinson, Washington

Living in Exile

Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion. We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof. For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land? If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

Psalms 137:1-6

THIS PSALM IS RECOUNTING AN EVENT during the children of Israel's exile to Babylon. For their unfaithfulness to the one true God, for their continual idolatry, after warning upon warning from the mouth of the Lord through His holy prophets, the city of Jerusalem was destroyed, and the children of Israel were dragged off as captives to Babylon in a series of deportations over several years. Fifty years after the destruction of the Temple, these exiles, or more probably their children and grandchildren, began to return to Jerusalem with Ezra and Nehemiah.

In the years spent away from their homeland, God's people wept when they remembered Zion, the holy city of Jerusalem. The Temple had signified the presence of God among them, and they were far from the Temple and far from God's presence. They had plenty of time to repent, to mourn their unfaithfulness to the Lord who had always been faithful to them. They hung their harps on the willow trees, unable to sing for sorrow.

Their captors, maybe to mock them or to show their superiority over these defeated people, demanded that God's children sing the glorious songs of Zion, the psalms they had sung in the Temple. They are in a strange land, dejected and mourning their sin and idolatry, the loss of the presence of God, the loss of their freedom, and they are required to sing **with mirth** the songs of Zion. No wonder their response was, *How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?* Jerusalem was destroyed, the Temple was torn down, their way of life was ended.

But they remember. They remember the holy city, the Temple, the presence of God among them. They remember the songs of Zion.

They vowed to remember.

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

They would rather have lost their ability to play the harp, and the ability to sing, than to have lost the memory of Jerusalem, the memory of their God who had dwelt with them. They needed to remember, in order that they would have courage, strength, and hope. Their hope was in the Lord who made heaven and earth.

The coronavirus pandemic feels almost like exile, like we've been dragged off to a strange land, and we cannot gather to hear the Word, to partake of the Sacrament, to pray, to sing. With the recent nationwide quarantine, churches have been forced to close their doors to real, physical services. Many pastors have turned to online services and devotionals, trying to encourage their flocks during this season of drought of the Word and of fellowship.

But we remember. We remember the songs of Zion. We remember the fellowship of the saints. We have courage and strength and hope. Our hope is in the Lord who made heaven and earth. We know that God is with us, and He preserves us. Jesus has promised to never leave us or forsake us. He is the Word made flesh, who suffered and died once for sinners, and rose to live forevermore. The power of God will keep us through pestilence, grief, and fear. His promises are sure.



Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last

time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

1 Peter 1:3-9

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Words Without Knowledge

Pastor Jay Weidner
Laurium, Michigan

Then the Lord answered Job
out of the whirlwind,
and said, Who is this
that darkeneth counsel by
words without knowledge?

Job 38:1-2

Then the LORD answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said, Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched the line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the corner stone thereof; When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb? When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddlingband for it, And brake up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors, And said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further: and here shall thy proud waves be stayed? Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days; and caused the dayspring to know his place; That it might take hold

of the ends of the earth, that the wicked might be shaken out of it? It is turned as clay to the seal; and they stand as a garment. And from the wicked their light is withholden, and the high arm shall be broken. Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in the search of the depth? Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death? Hast thou perceived the breadth of the earth? declare if thou knowest it all. Where is the way where light dwelleth? and as for darkness, where is the place thereof, That thou shouldest take it to the bound thereof, and that thou shouldest know the paths to the house thereof?

Job 38:1-20

ONLY A GRACIOUS GOD COULD have spoken such kind words. It is one of the greatest temptations known to human beings to try to speak for God, and Job and his friends had just succumbed. They had indeed spoken words without knowledge. Yet God in His infinite mercy responded with fatherly care by refocusing their attention on Him who knows all things because He made them. He confronts Job not with anger, but with correction. He restores Job to his right mind. God alone fixes and determines events; He alone knows a thing from beginning to end.

We often need the lesson of Job because it is too easy in today's world of mindless information to begin to think that we can speak for God. We utter words without knowledge and literally "darken counsel." Still God with a fatherly heart forgives our misspeak and brings us by His Spirit to the right mind of an obedient child. This is one of the reasons there is great comfort in reading Job: to see how our marvelous God and Father gently chastises His children, bringing them to repentance through kindness and renewing their steps on the path He has designed for them. Thanks be to our God and Father for Jesus' sake.

God's peace.

2020 Annual ALC Convention & Meeting Notice

DUE TO THE CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES with the Coronavirus pandemic, the 2020 convention services will not be held this year. Information packages will be sent via email to the congregations later this month with agendas for the 112th Annual Meeting, Foreign Mission meeting and Sunday School meeting. The congregations will be asked to vote on all necessary business by June 15th. The necessary materials and voting information will be emailed to the Secretaries of the Congregations.

The Ashburnham, MA congregation will be hosting the 2021 annual convention and dates are to be determined.

On behalf of the Central Board of the Apostolic Lutheran Church of America,

Gary Bertram, Chairman
David Myllymaki, Secretary

And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.

Romans 5:3-5