

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.

November 2018

Give Thanks to God

Pastor Ken Storm
Tapiola, Michigan

Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ...

Ephesians 5:20

THE APOSTLE PAUL REMINDS US that heartfelt thanks to God by mortal man is to be offered for His goodness and mercy which endures forever. So often we petition our loving Heavenly Father for things which, at the moment, seem so very important to us. Some of our prayers God answers almost immediately, others He may answer after a time, while some requests seem to go unanswered. Because of our impatient nature we would desire prompt answers to all of our prayers but we cannot dictate to God when or how He chooses to respond. Upon the authority of God's Word we find that He indeed hears all the earnest prayers of His righteous children, however in His infinite love and wisdom and in His own time, He chooses to grant to us those things which benefit our undying souls. Thanks should be offered therefore for both the prayers we recognize He has answered and also those which have not yet been answered or have been answered in a different way than we expected. With humbled hearts we must acknowledge that He, alone, is all knowing, almighty, and we do not see the future clearly as He does. Therefore we trust Him because He does all things well. Isn't it wonderful, dear friend, that we have one in whom we can have such confidence and assurance?

Faithful men of old joyfully raised their hands heavenward and offered thanks unto the Lord for His blessings. Oh, that we too would always remember today to thank God from whom all blessings flow. In his epistle James writes, *Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.* (James 1:17) What divine providence we undeserving children receive daily from His generous hand of love.

At this time of year, during the harvest season, many in America observe Thanksgiving Day with feasts and parties but true thanks to God for our manifold blessings is many times lacking. As God's children, let us be reminded once again to offer earnest, heartfelt, prayers of thanks to God not only on this special day, but each and every day.

Above all, dear Brother and Sister in faith, let us consider the greatest gift and blessing; namely the gift of salvation through the merits of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Today, by His grace alone, and through the remission of our sins by the cleansing power of His blood, we are privileged to embrace a lively hope of eternal life in our hearts and await that glorious day when our faith can be changed to sight and hope to attainment. Thanks be to God for the testimony of the Holy Spirit dwelling in our believing hearts as the Apostle Paul writes, *The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.* (Romans 8:16-17) Heaven is our home beloved and in that land that is fairer than day there awaits

us ...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. (1 Peter 1:4-5) Do we have reason to be thankful? I believe we must all say in one accord with the Psalmist David, *Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.* (Psalm 23:6) Let us therefore with joyful hearts serve Him with prayer, praise, and thanksgiving. ~



God Is Good—Psalm 139

Dave Impola
Everett, WA

When we deal with unexpected circumstances, we can still find our hearts rejoicing in the fact that we have a good God that takes care of us. This was the case for me recently as I read Psalm 139.

Psalm 139 (KJV) ¹ O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me.

² Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.

³ Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.

⁴ For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.

⁵ Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.

⁶ Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.

⁷ Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

⁸ If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

⁹ If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; ¹⁰ Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. ¹¹ If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. ¹² Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee. ¹³ For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. ¹⁴ I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvellous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well. ¹⁵ My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth. ¹⁶ Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being imperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. ¹⁷ How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them! ¹⁸ If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee. ¹⁹ Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men. ²⁰ For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain. ²¹ Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? ²² I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies. ²³ Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: ²⁴ And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.



Psalm 92:1-2: It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord, and to sing praises unto thy name, O most High: To shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning, and thy faithfulness every night.

May the peace of God be with you.



Be Strong in the Lord

Pastor Travis Seppala
Greer, South Carolina

Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand.

Ephesians 6:10-13

THERE'S ONLY ONE REASON YOU PUT ON ARMOR, and that's to do battle, when there's an enemy at the door, when it's time to fight. That's when you put it on. When you're putting yourself in harm's way, that's when you wear armor. That's when you have these things on. When God is telling us to arm ourselves, He's telling us that we are to understand that there is a battle going on. There is! We have enemies in this world. We are surrounded by enemies, much as they were in the book of Joshua, much as the Jewish people were when they entered into the Promised Land. Nothing has really changed... If God is warning you to put armor on, He's telling to do it because there are enemies at your door. There are forces who are constantly trying to attack you. He says, "Put on God's armor." Don't put on your armor. The reason we need God's armor is because the enemies that we face in our lives are not flesh and blood. We need to remember this. It's so important for us to remember... just prior to this he's instructing parents and children, husbands and wives, masters and slaves how to act toward one another. He's talking about relationships, about existing with other human beings in this world. The next thing he tells us, just a few short words later, is that your enemies in this world are not flesh and blood. The problem is that all too often we think they are. We treat our spouse like they're our enemy. We treat our children, or our mothers and fathers like they're the problem. When these relationships go bad, we think it's because the person is the problem, the person is my enemy. But what we read is something entirely different. What we war against in this life—whether it's in our marriages, in our families, in our day to day lives—is something far more insidious. We're dealing against powers, and principalities, rulers of darkness that rule in this world. We read that there is spiritual wickedness in high places. This is what's going on. And all too often this is what we miss.

Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. ~

Through Death to Life

Martin Luther

WRITING TO THE CORINTHIANS, Paul says (1 Cor. 10:2) that the Israelites *were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea*. If you regard only the outward circumstance and the words, even Pharaoh was baptized, but he perished with his men, while Israel passed through safe and unharmed. Noah and his sons were saved in this baptism of the flood, while all the rest of the world, being outside of the ark, perished thereby. Such a way of speaking is appropriate and forcible. “Baptism” and “death” are interchangeable in Scripture. Paul says (Rom. 6:3): “All we who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death,” and Jesus says, *I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how am I straitened till it be accomplished!* (Luke 12:50) And to His disciples He said, *Ye shall ... be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with.* (Matt. 20:23)

In this sense the Red Sea was a baptism indeed. It represented to Pharaoh death and God’s anger. Yet though Israel was baptized with the same baptism, they passed through it unharmed. So the flood is truly death and the wrath of God, and yet, the faithful are saved in the midst of the flood. Death engulfs and swallows all mankind; for, the wrath of God smites both the good and the bad, the pious and the wicked, without distinction. The flood was sent upon Noah the same as upon the rest of the world. The Red Sea that engulfed Pharaoh was the same as that through which Israel passed unharmed. But in both cases the believers are saved while the wicked perish. That is the point of difference. The ark was Noah’s salvation, and it was but an expression of the promise and Word of God. In these he had life, but the wicked, who believed not the Word, were left to perish.

This is the difference which the Holy Spirit desired to bring out, so that the righteous, warned by this example, might believe and hope for salvation through the mercy of God in the very midst of death. They consider baptism as bound together with the promise of life, as Noah did the ark. Therefore, though the wise man and the fool must suffer the same death—for Peter and Paul die, not otherwise than Nero and other wicked persons die—yet the righteous believe that in death they will be saved unto eternal life. And this hope is not vain, for they have Christ, who receives their souls, and will, on the last day, raise up also the bodies of his believers unto eternal life.

This class of allegory is of great service, and tends to comfort the heart when you consider the contrast in the ultimate outcome. The testimony of the material eye would seem to confirm the statement of Solomon (Eccl. 2:16) that the wise man dieth as the fool, that the righteous man dieth as though he were not the beloved of God. But the eyes of the soul must view this point of difference, that Israel enters into the Red Sea and is saved, while Pharaoh, pressing upon the heels of Israel, is overwhelmed by the waves and perishes. It is the same death, then, which takes away the righteous and the wicked, and almost always the end of the former is ignominious, while that of the latter is attended by elements of splendor and power; but in the eyes of God, while the death of sinners is deplorable, that of his saints is precious, for it is consecrated by Christ, through whom it becomes the beginning of eternal life.

As the flood and the Red Sea were instruments to save Noah and Israel from death, so to us, death is but the instrument to give us life, if we remain in faith. When the children of Israel were in utmost peril, the sea parted and rose on the right side and the left, like an iron wall, so Israel passed through without danger. Why? In order that death might serve life. Divine power overcomes the assaults of Satan. Thus it was in Paradise. Satan purposed to slay all mankind by his venom. But what happens? By reason of the truly happy guilt of our first parents, as the Church sings, it comes to pass that the Son of God became incarnate to free us from evil.

This allegory, then, beautifully teaches, strengthens and consoles us, enabling us to fear neither death nor sin, but to despise all perils, giving thanks to God that He has so called and dealt with us that even death, the universal destroyer, is compelled to be a servant of life, just as the flood, an occasion of destruction to the rest of the world, was one of salvation for Noah; and the Red Sea, when Pharaoh met his doom, served to save the children of Israel.

What has been here expressed, finds application to the subject of temptation in general, so that we learn to despise dangers and be hopeful even where no hope seems to remain. When death or any other danger is imminent, we should rise to meet it, saying: Behold, here is my Red Sea; here is my flood, my baptism and my death. Here my life—as the philosopher said of the sea-farers—is removed from death barely by a hand’s breadth. But fear not; this danger is as a handful of water opposed to the flood of grace which is mine through the Word. Therefore death will not destroy me, but will lift me and bear me to life. Death is so utterly incapable of destroying the Christian, that it constitutes the very escape from death. For bodily death ushers in the emancipation of the spirit and the resurrection of the flesh. Thus, Noah in the flood was not borne by the earth, nor by trees, nor by mountains, but by the very flood which destroyed the total remainder of the human race.

Well may the prophets often extol those wonderful works of God—the passage through the Red Sea, the exodus from Egypt, and the like. For the sea, which by its nature can only devour and destroy, is forced to part and rise and protect the Israelites, lest they be overwhelmed by its tides. That which in its very nature is wrath, becomes grace to the believer; that which in reality is death, becomes life. Therefore, whatever calamity comes—and this life has it in infinite measure—to threaten our property and our lives, it will all become salvation and joy if we only are in the ark; that is, if by faith we lay hold of the promise made in Christ. Then even death, by which we are removed, must be turned into life, and the hell, which swallows us, into a way to heaven.

Therefore Peter says (1 Pet. 3:21) that we are saved by the water in baptism, which was prefigured by the flood. The water which streams about us, or the plunge into it, is death, and yet from this death or plunge, life results by virtue of the ark of safety—the Word of promise to which we cling. The inspired Scriptures set forth this allegory, which is not only free from weaknesses but of service in every way, and worthy of our careful attention, since it offers wonderful consolation even in the utmost perils. ~

Thank You, God, for Everything

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children,

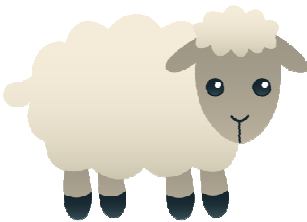
Hello to each of you. I really hope you are well.

It is that time of year in many places where the weather is changing from nice and warm to cool, and in a month or so it will be just cold. As the summer months come to an end, so does the end of many plants. The leafy trees in many parts of North America turn to beautiful colors and then the leaves fall to the ground. This is a big sign that another season is done and the earth has made a full circle around the sun.

As the season turns cool the children start getting colds and other sicknesses. Some of our grandchildren have already gotten a bad cough that is going around. Going back to school can be the beginning of illness as so many children come together and the chances to get sick are so much higher.

God watches over all and He will take care of you, too.

I was wondering what to write about and I just want to think of things we can be thankful for. There are too MANY even for this paper, but you can even think of some more that I did not put down.



Thank You, God, for being who You are,
For creating this world, the sun, moon and stars,
And giving us plants and trees for food,
For making a man and a woman and calling ALL good,
Though sin had caused the earth to be cursed
And by the sweat of his brow man had to work.
He from Eden had to go, the Garden guarded by a flame.
Your love for mankind was still just the same.
We thank You, God, that You mean what You say,
And when You say what You mean, that we would obey.
We thank You, God, for leading all men
From the beginning of the Bible and will, to life's end.
Thank You for Jesus, Your only Son You gave
Who died so selflessly, our lives to save.
Thank You for forgiving us our many sins
And giving us help in temptations of this world that we live in.
Thank You, God, for twelve disciples who believed when they heard,
As faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word.
Thank You for hearing each prayer and sigh
And answering them just as You see fit on high.
For Christian friends and family that want to serve You,
For good neighbors and leaders, too.
Thank You for all the needs for each day
As we go about our way.
You ARE our God, we are Your sheep.
Protect us in the day and when we sleep.
Help us to never forget to give thanks
To You our God who is our strength.

~ GW ~



Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands. Serve the Lord with gladness: come before his presence with singing. Know ye that the Lord he is God: it is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise: be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the Lord is good; his mercy is everlasting; and his truth endureth to all generations. (Psalm 100)

God's peace.

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Corrie Karlsen, ALC Calendar Committee

The Rainbow Covenant

Beth Staudinger
Leslieville, Alberta, Canada

IN THINKING OF THE RAINBOW, a beautiful symbol of God's covenant with man to not destroy the world again with a flood, there is another color in the rainbow, other than the color of the blue of the flood waters. This is the color of fire, with which God in His Word promises to destroy the world, when wickedness, or when "...the transgressors are come to the full..." (Daniel 8:23).

This beautiful symbol of the rainbow is being used by a certain segment of our society, who, unknowingly, may be bringing to pass the coming of the fire part of the rainbow with their lifestyle. As believers, we can believe that *...when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh.* (Luke 21:28)

As it was in the days of Noe, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of man. They did eat, they drank, they married wives, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, and the flood came, and destroyed them all. Likewise also as it was in the days of Lot; they did eat, they drank, they bought, they sold, they planted, they builded; But the same day that Lot went out of Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from heaven, and destroyed them all. Even thus shall it be in the day when the Son of man is revealed. (Luke 17:26-30)

He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. (Revelation 22:20)

Martin Luther writes about the rainbow:

65. Therefore, I believe that the rainbow was a new creation, not seen in the world before that time. It was established to remind the world of the bygone wrath, traces of which are still seen in the rainbow, and to give assurance of the mercy of God. It is a record, or picture in which both the bygone wrath and the present mercy are revealed.

66. There is also a difference of opinion as to the colors of the rainbow. Some say there are four colors: the fiery, the bright yellow, the green and the color of water, or blue. But I think there are only two, those of fire and water. The fiery color is above, unless the rainbow is seen reversed; then, as in a mirror, that which is above is seen below. Where the hues of fire and water meet, or blend, yellow results.

67. The colors have been thus arranged by God for a definite purpose. The blue should be a reminder of bygone wrath; the fiery color, a picture to us of the future judgment. While the interior or blue portion is restricted, the outer and fiery color is without bounds. Thus, the first world perished by the flood, but an end was set to God's wrath. A remnant was preserved and a second world arose, but bounds are set to it. When God shall destroy the world by fire, this bodily life will never be restored. The wicked will suffer the everlasting punishment of death in the fire, while the saints will be raised up unto a new and everlasting life, which, though in the body, shall not be of the body, but of the spirit.

68. Let this sign teach us to fear God and to trust in him. So may we escape the punishment of fire, even as we have escaped the punishment of the flood. It will be more practical to think of these things than to consider those philosophical arguments concerning the material cause."

Genesis IX, Rainbow Covenant. Lenker, Volume 3, Page 286



Landscape with the Sacrifice of Noah, Joseph Anton Koch
Courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?

Matthew 7:7-11

THE LORD'S PRAYER EMBRACES in its tremendous span the greatest things and the smallest things. This vaulting arch springs all the way from the prayer for the coming of the kingdom, and thus the total transformation of all things and every power-relationship, to prayer for our daily ration of bread.

Great things, small things, spiritual things and material things, inward things and outward things—there is nothing that is not included in this prayer. It can be said by a child, praying for bread and butter, and it can also be uttered in that agonizing zone between "annihilation and survival" in which men fervently yearn for the coming of the kingdom which will resolve the hopelessly tangled skein of this world's conditions.

The Lord's Prayer is really a total prayer. And its seven petitions are like the rainbow colors of the spectrum into which light divides when it is refracted in a prism. *The whole light of life is captured in this rainbow of seven petitions.* Nobody can ever say that it sends him away empty-handed or that it does not take into account his need. It can be spoken at the cradle and the grave. It can rise from the altars of great cathedrals and from the dark hovels of those who "eat their bread with tears." It can be prayed at weddings and on the gallows. And the fact is that it *has* been prayed in all these places. All seven of the colors of our life are contained in it, and so never is there a time when we are left alone.

Helmut Thielicke

The Fountain of Life

Juho Kortesoja

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

In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.

John 7:37-38

IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN in the 7th chapter and 37th verse Jesus speaks of thirst. Crying aloud, He says, “If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink.” We can repeatedly ask, “Do we have this thirst of which Jesus speaks?” He continues, “He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, from his belly shall flow rivers of living water.” The question arises, “What river flows within us?” Is its source from that fountain that was opened on Good Friday on the middle cross at Golgotha from the wounds of Jesus? Dear fellow traveler, is our journey daily and hourly to that fountain which alone, as crystal clear living water, can refresh our soul? A certain song exhorts, “Then to the spring of life in haste, together let us go, which started even for our sake, on Golgotha to flow.”

From this fountain of which it is also spoken in the book of Revelation, we have the permission, both young and old, to drink. Friend, take heed of the time, that the false fountains of this world would not entice you. Now is the time when the cry is heard, “Here is Christ, here is Christ.” Some say you can only be saved in our group. But notice, friend, those words of Jesus, “He who is athirst, come unto ME.” Only in the wounds of Jesus can be found that fountain where our soul can quench its thirst. Strong waves beat against our weak vessel

of life. If the Lord Jesus is not our Pilot and companion and our source of strength, we will be lost in the darkness of night. We should at all times strive with the Lord Jesus toward that city of which we sing:

The glorious city of the Lord

Shall last eternally.

Thy hand, Oh Lord, upholds it,

And from all harm protects it;

He dwells Himself therein,

Refreshing His own people

From springs of life within.

Once while working in a far off area with fellow workers on a hot day, we became tired and thirsty. I knew of a spring, but it was far away. We began our journey and upon our arrival there, we were able to quench our thirst with the refreshing water. To quench the thirst of our undying spirit, we have as a gift of grace a precious fountain that we can go to without money or without price. No other fountain can be placed in comparison with it. The poisonous fountains of this world lead to everlasting destruction. Of which fountain, friend, do you partake? There is no third choice. Here we have the same possibility as in other portions of the Bible to choose life or death. Blessed is that traveler who chooses the fountain of life. He will receive life—everlasting life.

(Dear Jesus, let my name be ever found in Thy book. Be Thou with me when I stand before Thy throne of judgment. Then with all Thy redeemed, allow me to enjoy Thy blessedness forever in heaven.) ~

The Word of God

NOW, ALL WHO WISH TO BE SAVED ought to hear this preaching [of God's Word]. For the preaching and hearing of God's Word are instruments of the Holy Ghost, by, with, and through which He desires to work efficaciously, and to convert men to God, and to work in them both to will and to do.

This Word man can externally hear and read, even though he is not yet converted to God and regenerate; for in these external things, as said above, man even since the Fall has to a certain extent a free will, so that he can go to church and hear or not hear the sermon.

Through this means, namely, the preaching and hearing of His Word, God works, and breaks our hearts, and draws man, so that through the preaching of the Law he comes to know his sins and God's wrath, and experiences in his heart true terrors, contrition, and sorrow, and through the preaching and consideration of the holy Gospel concerning the gracious forgiveness of sins in Christ a spark of faith is kindled in him, which accepts the forgiveness of sins for Christ's sake, and comforts itself with the promise of the Gospel, and thus the Holy Ghost (who works all this) is sent into the heart, Gal. 4:6.

Now, although both, the planting and watering of the preacher, and the running and willing of the hearer, would be in vain, and no conversion would follow it if the power and efficacy of the Holy Ghost were not added thereto, who enlightens and converts the hearts through the Word preached and heard, so that men believe this Word and assent thereto, still, neither preacher nor hearer is to doubt this grace and efficacy of the Holy Ghost, but should be certain that when the Word of God is preached purely and truly, according to the command and will of God, and men listen attentively and earnestly and meditate upon it, God is certainly present with His grace, and grants, as has been said, what otherwise man can neither accept nor give from his own powers. For concerning the presence, operation, and gifts of the Holy Ghost we should not and cannot always judge *ex sensu* [from feeling], as to how and when they are experienced in the heart; but because they are often covered and occur in great weakness, we should be certain from, and according to, the promise, that the Word of God preached and heard is [truly] an office and work of the Holy Ghost, by which He is certainly efficacious and works in our hearts, 2 Cor. 2:14ff; 3:5ff.

Book of Concord, The Solid Declaration of the Formula of Concord

The Perfect Sacrifice

Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington

And Abraham said, My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering ...

Genesis 22:8

The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

John 1:29

THE BIBLE SPEAKS OFTEN OF SACRIFICE. Abraham, at the command of God, went to offer his only son Isaac as a sacrifice. Abel offered a lamb. Noah sacrificed after the Flood. God gave Moses very specific instructions regarding the sacrificial system under the old covenant. After the institution of the priestly office, the children of Israel through the priests sacrificed many, many animals as the payment for sin. All the Old Testament sacrifices pointed to the One Sacrifice of the New Testament, the Lamb of God who was slain from the foundation of the world.

What do we know about sacrifice and the penalty and payment for sin? A couple of things come immediately to mind:

- God takes sin very seriously. When God gives a command, He means it. When God told the children of Israel to keep His perfect and holy Law, He meant it. When He told them, "I AM the LORD; be holy for I am holy," He meant it. Peter quotes this text in his first epistle: *But as he which hath called you is holy, so be ye holy in all manner of conversation (in your way of life); Because it is written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. (1 Peter 1:15-16)*
- Paul writes that the wages of sin is death. The shedding of blood is the payment for sin, the only payment. Moses writes: *For the life of the flesh is in the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls: for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul. (Leviticus 17:11) And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission. (Hebrews 9:22)*

All those Old Testament sacrifices offered by the priests didn't really take away sin. *And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. (Hebrews 10:11)* The blood of those sacrifices were but a shadow of the New Testament and the

blood of Jesus, whose single and perfect Sacrifice, DID take away sin, all the sin of the world.



But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the

transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. (Hebrews 9:11-15)

For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us: Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others; For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment: So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. (Hebrews 9:24-28)

But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. (Hebrews 10:12-14)

As with Abraham, God provided Himself the Lamb for the offering. Jesus is both the Great High Priest and the Lamb of God who offered His own blood, once and for all, for the sin of the world. We can only be thankful. ~

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Advent—He's Coming

Pastor Chuck Bylkas
South Range, Michigan

And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light. Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying. But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

Romans 13:11-14

THE SEASON OF ADVENT MARKS the beginning of a new Church year. Although the season of Advent leads up to the Christmas season, Advent is more than just a preparation for Christmas. The word “advent” means “coming”, so in the Christian sense, the Advent season is a celebration of the coming of our Lord. Jesus came to us in the flesh at Christmas. He comes to us in the present in Word and Sacrament. And finally, Jesus promises to come again and bring us home with Him to heaven.

One of the prevailing themes of Advent is that of watchfulness. The hymns and Scripture readings for this time of year warn us against complacency and exhort us to live in watchful preparation as we await the return of our Lord. We live our lives in service to God and to one another, not by our own efforts, but because of who we are through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Through the cleansing of His blood, we are made new creatures in Christ, who now act in faithful service to Him. Like the Apostles in the early church, our response is one of urgency, as if the Lord Jesus were going to return at this very moment. We await Him not with fear, but with anticipation; as a bride awaits her bridegroom. In one of our Advent hymns we sing:

“Our Hope and Expectation, O Jesus now appear;
Arise, Thou Sun so longed for, o’er this benighted sphere!
With hearts and hands uplifted, we plead O Lord to see
The Day of earth’s redemption, that brings us unto Thee!” (Laurentius Laurenti)

The Apostle John says at the end of the book of Revelation, chapter 22, verse 20: *He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus.* In the same way, may God grant us grace to long for the day of Christ’s return, for He indeed is the lover of our souls.

And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh. (Luke 21:27-28)
Yours in Christ.

*Our Hope and
Expectation*

The Living Bread from Heaven

IT IS WONDERFUL THAT GOD RAINED manna on our fathers and they were fed with daily food from heaven. And so it is written: Man ate the bread of angels. Yet those who ate that bread all died in the desert. But the food that you receive, that living bread which came down from heaven, supplies the very substance of eternal life, and whoever will eat it will never die, for it is the body of Christ.

Consider now which is the more excellent: the bread of angels or the flesh of Christ, which is indeed the body that gives life. The first was manna from heaven, the second is above the heavens. One was of heaven, the other is of the Lord of the heavens; one subject to corruption if it was kept till the morrow, the other free from all corruption, for if anyone tastes of it with reverence he will be incapable of corruption. For our fathers, water flowed from the rock; for you, blood flows from Christ. Water satisfied their thirst for a time; blood cleanses you for ever. The Jew drinks and still thirsts, but when you drink you will be incapable of thirst. What happened in symbol is now fulfilled in reality.

If what you marvel at is a shadow, how great is the reality whose very shadow you marvel at. Listen to this, which shows that what happened in the time of our fathers was but a shadow. They drank, it is written, from the rock that followed them, and the rock was Christ. All this took place as a symbol for us. You know now what is more excellent: light is preferable to its shadow, reality to its symbol, the body of the Giver to the manna he gave from heaven.

Ambrose