

# 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 2022

## How Amiable Are Thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts! Psalm 84:1

Alvin Holmgren  
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**T**HERE ARE MANY BEAUTIFUL PSALMS that contain expressions of the believers' desire to draw near to God and to worship Him. These messages from Old Testament times should serve as an inspiration to us also today.

King David wrote of his longing for God in these words: *One thing have I 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. For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock. (Psalm 27:4-5)* He also prayed: *O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God. (Psalm 43:3-4)*

In the 122<sup>nd</sup> Psalm we see that David's joy and concern were for the worship of God. There he wrote: *I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the Lord. Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem... Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee. Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces. For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. (Psalm 122:1-2, 6-8)*

Although we know that in those times the worship of God was centered in the city of Jerusalem, Jesus wanted it understood that there is a more important consideration than the physical place of worship. He told the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well that *true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth. (John 4:23)* With these words, Jesus wanted to emphasize that the worship of God is more a matter of the heart than that which is outwardly visible. For that reason He also quoted from the writing of Prophet Isaiah concerning the people who drew nigh to God and honored Him with their lips, but their hearts were far from Him. Jesus added that they taught for doctrines the commandments of men and thus their worship was in vain (Matthew 15:8-9).

Those who have come to Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem... And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling (Hebrews 12:22,

24) have entered into a fellowship that is *with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. (I John 1:3)* In this fellowship we can say: *Because thy lovingkindness is better than life, my lips shall praise thee. Thus will I bless thee while I live: I will lift up my hands in thy name. (Psalm 63:3-4)*

Jesus taught His disciples to pray to God as "our Father." And so these New Testament teachings seem to open our eyes more fully to the privileged relationship that we have with God. Nevertheless, it is important for us always to remember that God is to be worshipped for He is the Eternal One. *Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. (Psalm 90:1-2)*

When we come to God's house, to the assembly of the people of God, let us prepare ourselves for worship and the hearing of the Word of God. This should include meditation upon the fact that we are entering into the presence of God where He speaks through His Word and Spirit. It requires prayer that God would prepare us so that we will have receptive hearts and willing, submissive and obedient spirits. It also includes prayer on behalf of those who labor in the Word and doctrine in order that they may be obedient and inspired servants whose desire is that the Word of God would have free course (II Thessalonians 3:1). God is concerned with our salvation and desires the worship, the praise, and the thanksgiving of His people.

**Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness. Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King. (Psalm 48:1-2)** *The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. Selah.*

Psalm 87:2-3



Happy and Blessed Thanksgiving!

# Hymns and Spiritual Songs

**M**ARTIN LUTHER, WHO IS SOMETIMES called “The Father of the Reformation,” encouraged singing by all Christians. He wrote several well-known hymns, including “A Mighty Fortress is Our God.” His songs echoed his teachings: salvation is by the grace of God alone, through faith in Christ alone. When Luther was troubled in heart, he would cry out to God. At a time of trial, he told others, “Come, let us defy the devil and praise God by singing a hymn.” Then he sang, “From depths of woe I cry to Thee...” a hymn he had written based on Psalm 130. This hymn was sung at his funeral.

From depths of woe I cry to Thee,  
Lord, hear me, I implore Thee.  
Bend down Thy gracious ear to me,  
My prayer let come before Thee.  
If Thou rememberest each misdeed,  
If each should have its rightful meed,  
Who may abide Thy presence?

Thy love and grace alone avail  
To blot out my transgression;  
The best and holiest deeds must fail  
To break sin's dread oppression.  
Before Thee none can boasting stand,  
But all must fear Thy strict demand  
And live alone by mercy.

Therefore my hope is in the Lord  
And not in mine own merit;  
It rests upon His faithful Word  
To them of contrite spirit  
That He is merciful and just;  
This is my comfort and my trust.  
His help I wait with patience.

And though it tarry till the night  
And till the morning waken,  
My heart shall never doubt His might  
Nor count itself forsaken.  
Do thus, O ye of Israel's seed,  
Ye of the Spirit born indeed;  
Wait for your God's appearing.

Though great our sins and sore our woes,  
His grace much more aboundeth;  
His helping love no limit knows,  
Our utmost need it soundeth.  
Our Shepherd good and true is He,  
Who will at last His Israel free  
From all their sin and sorrow.

Following is Luther's First Preface to *The Hymns of Martin Luther*, first published in English in 1884, which explains some of Luther's thoughts on singing and music:

That it is good, and pleasing to God, for us to sing spiritual songs is, I think, a truth whereof no Christian can be ignorant, since not only the example of the prophets and kings of the Old Testament (who praised God with singing and music, poesy and all kinds of stringed instruments) but also the like practice of all Christendom from the beginning, especially in respect to psalms, is well known to everyone. St. Paul also appoints the same, to sing spiritual songs and psalms from the heart unto the Lord, that thereby the Word of God and Christian doctrine be in every way furthered and practiced.

Accordingly, to make a good beginning and to encourage others who can do it better, I have myself, with some others, put together a few hymns, in order to bring into full play the blessed Gospel, which by God's grace has again risen, that we may boast, as Moses does in his song, that Christ is become our praise and our song, and that, whether we sing or speak, we may not know anything save Christ our Savior.

These songs have been set in four parts, for no other reason than because I wished to provide our young people (who both will and ought to be instructed in music and other sciences) with something whereby they might rid themselves of amorous and carnal songs, and in their stead learn something wholesome, and so apply themselves to what is good with pleasure, as becometh the young.

Beside this, I am not of opinion that all sciences should be beaten down and made to cease by the Gospel, as some fanatics pretend, but I would fain see all the arts, and music in particular, used in the service of Him who has given and created them.

Therefore I entreat every pious Christian to give a favorable reception to these hymns, and to help forward my undertaking, according as God hath given him more or less ability. The world is, alas, not so mindful and diligent to train and teach our poor youth, but that we ought to be forward in promoting the same. God grant us His grace. Amen.

***See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is. And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit; Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ; Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God.***

*Ephesians 5:15-21*

# Come

Pastor Don Salo  
New York Mills, Minnesota

**Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.**

**Isaiah 1:18**

**W**E SEE THE WORD "COME" many times in the Scriptures. "Come" can be a word that foretells future events. "Come" is also a word of invitation or a call.

The Word of God has always called men to follow the Lord. Yet despite the call, mankind has always rejected the call of the Lord to repentance and faith. *I have sent also unto you all my servants the prophets, rising up early and sending them, saying, Return ye now every man from his evil way, and amend your doings, and go not after other gods to serve them, and ye shall dwell in the land which I have given to you and to your fathers: but ye have not inclined your ear, nor hearkened unto me. (Jeremiah 35:15) But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. (Psalm 81:11) Therefore will I number you to the sword, and ye shall all bow down to the slaughter: because when I called, ye did not answer; when I spake, ye did not hear; but did evil before mine eyes, and did choose that wherein I delighted not. (Isaiah 65:12) My God will cast them away, because they did not hearken unto him: and they shall be wanderers among the nations. (Hosea 9:17) And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. (Matthew 22:3)*

Before ascending into heaven, Jesus gave His disciples a commission: that they go to all nations preaching repentance and remission of sins, teaching them and baptizing in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Ghost. This preaching is always to be an invitation for sinners to come to repentance and living faith. In the Old Testament we have some examples encouraging the people to repent. *Say unto them, As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live: turn ye, turn ye from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel? (Ezekiel 33:11) Come, and let us return unto the Lord: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. (Hosea 6:1) Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else. (Isaiah 45:22) Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. (Isaiah 55:1)*

Jesus Himself continued to call all to come unto Him. *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. (Matthew 11:28) Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. (Matthew 22:4) Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. (Matthew 22:9) 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. (John 7:37)*

The apostles continued the same message of calling all to faith in Jesus. *Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. (2 Corinthians 5:20) Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:16) The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. (2 Peter 3:9) Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth. (1 Timothy 2:4)*

In the book of Revelation there is a three-fold call unto Jesus because He is coming soon. *And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. (Revelation 22:17)*

Three times in the last chapter of Revelation He tells us that He is coming quickly. *Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book... And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be... He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. (Revelation 22:7, 12, 20)*

As the body of Christ we are to continue the same message that has been preached before by men of old. The Word of God and the message are the same yesterday, today and forever. We pray for the Holy Spirit to give us love for lost souls, and also that the Holy Spirit would open the ears of those who are outside of God's kingdom to repent and believe. May God bless His Church so that His name would be glorified.

*God's peace.*

## The Word Advent



- The word **Advent** means "coming" or "arrival."
- The focus of the entire season is the celebration of the birth of Jesus on His First Advent, and
- The anticipation of the return of Christ the King in His Second Advent.



**T**HE CELEBRATION OF ADVENT IS possible only to those who are troubled in soul, who know themselves to be poor and imperfect, and who look forward to something greater to come. For these, it is enough to wait in humble fear until the Holy One himself comes down to us, God in the child in the manger. God comes. The Lord Jesus comes. Christmas comes. Christians rejoice!

*Dietrich Boenhoeffer*

# Thanksgiving

Gwen Wilson  
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children,

God's peace to you all. Again I'm hoping this finds you well. If you are not well or struggling with something, I pray God gives you healing and comfort.

It is in our country the month that is set aside to remember to give thanks for all of our blessings. I want to share with you some Bible verses that speak of giving thanks but I want to focus on giving God thanks.

**L**ET'S GO TO THE PSALMS. These verses speak of thanking our God for who He is.

**Psalm 107:1, Psalm 136: O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good: for his mercy endureth forever.** This particular verse is repeated 26 times in Psalm 136 alone. This psalm is about God's love but is very much about thanksgiving.

It's about thanking our God who made the heavens and the earth and all that is in them, and He helped Moses lead the people out of Egypt and take them to the Promised Land. He never failed them. They whined and complained plenty, but God was with them all the way.

He is ever merciful, full of compassion and forgiveness.

**Psalm 103:2: Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits.**

There are many benefits (advantages) to be enjoyed for believers.

- He forgives all your sins.
- He heals all your diseases.
- He redeems your life from destruction.
- He crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies. (Notice this is plural!) God holds nothing back from His children whom He dearly loves.
- He satisfies your mouth with good things; SO that your youth is renewed like the eagle's. You may wonder as I did how the eagle is used here. Some scholars say that as an eagle needs to shed old plumage and get new feathers that is a picture of people needing to turn away from sin and become new. When a person repents or when Christians acknowledge their sin, it frees us to soar like the eagle, so to speak.
- God executes (carries out) His plan for righteousness (quality of being morally right) and judgment for all who are oppressed (having a difficult time).

**Psalm 28:6: Blessed be the Lord, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications.** (Supplication means asking, begging, or pleading for something in an earnest or humble way.)

**Psalm 66:19: But verily God hath heard me; he hath attended to the voice of my prayer. Blessed be God, which hath not turned away my prayer, nor his mercy from me.**

God promises to hear, and we can be so thankful that He pays such close attention to us.



**2 Corinthians 9:15: Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.**

**1 Corinthians 15:57: But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**

These last two verses go together. That unspeakable gift is God's own Son, Jesus Christ, who was sent down to earth from heaven to save us from our sins. It is the greatest gift one could ever receive and it is free. For this we should thank God daily. I will be the first to say that I forget this. I pray that I could be of a more earnest heart and mind.

We have much to be thankful for in all that God provides for us in our daily life, from the big things down to the smallest details. He is ever near us and ready to do all He can to help us on this journey.

He is a jealous God in that He so wishes for people to love and serve Him, and for believers to hold fast to their faith in Him and His Son. He wants to give us a home in heaven with Him where it will be beautiful and full to the brim of peace and joy.

You children, sons and daughters of the most high God, are blessed beyond words if you have Jesus in your heart.

God is good and deserves daily praise. We will never be able to thank Him enough for sending Jesus to us, but this is where our greatest thanks should be practiced. I'm praying He holds you in the palm of His hand. He is sending His Son Jesus back one day to receive us who believe, unto Himself - FOREVER!

I do hope you who celebrate American Thanksgiving have a very blessed time together with your families.

God's peace.

**Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil. And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.**

**1 Thessalonians 5:16-24**



# Bear One Another's Burdens

Pastor Gene Mixon  
Pasco, Washington

*We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.*

*Romans 15:1-3*

**A**T DIFFERENT TIMES in my life people with the best of intentions have offered me a piece of advice that is in direct contradiction to the above verses. "Gene, you have to look out for yourself because nobody else will. Remember: take care of number one first!" I am sure that you have also heard similar advice. This particular thought is common in the world and as long as time remains it will continue to be offered. The above words of God tell us something very different.

We are told not to think of ourselves but to think of those who are weak and to help them in their failings. That first verse speaks to us who are strong. Who is strong? The Christian is strong. Certainly we are not strong in ourselves; we are strong in the Lord Jesus Christ. This is where the third verse comes in. Our attention is removed from ourselves and focused on Jesus Christ. We are reminded that He came to bear our sin against God; that Jesus, our Savior, did not come to please Himself. If our blessed Savior did not come to please Himself, then we also should not look to please ourselves.

How is this possible? *With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. (Matthew 19:26)* It is natural to our flesh to think of itself. Selfishness is part and parcel to our human nature. When God gave His Law on Mount Sinai, no

man could deny it any longer. "Thou shalt not covet" is the commandment. As a matter of fact, commandments four through ten deal with our relationship to others. We are to love. These commandments bring the knowledge that we are not able to love selflessly as God would have us love. We are convicted in our hearts by the Word of God and the Spirit that we are sinners. Here we are again, at verse three, looking to Jesus Christ. He is the One who has become our mediator with our heavenly Father. It is He who has shed His blood for our reproaches against God. It is He who is our righteousness, our good standing with God. It is through Him that we can love others and not look to please ourselves.

Galatians 2:20 says we are crucified with Christ and yet we live. However, it is not we who live, but it is Christ living in us and that the life which we now live in the body we live by the faith of Jesus. This is exactly what our Savior is saying in Luke 17:33. We must lose our life so that it can be saved. We are dead but Jesus lives! Let us all hear these words recorded in Romans that we should seek to please our neighbor and not ourselves, doing as our Savior did and heeding the new commandment He gave us: *That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. (John 13:34)*

I want very much to encourage you all in your Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Fix your eyes on Him who loves you and gave His life for you. With your salvation by faith in Christ came the Holy Spirit. It is that same Holy Spirit who poured God's love into your hearts (Romans 5:5). With His love you will be able to bear one another's burdens and fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2). ~

## Give Thanks



**I**N COLOSSIANS, PAUL WRITES TO the Colosse brethren in Christ and gives thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, because he had heard of their faith and love which they had to all saints and for the hope laid up for them in heaven. This greeting to the Colossians gave encouragement to them in their faith, hope and love. We, too, as children of God's promise need this strengthening message, for it is in Christ Jesus that our hope is laid up for us in heaven through the Word of truth in the Gospel.

In November, a day has been set aside by the leaders of our country to give thanks for the bountiful harvest. The observance of this day has been passed on from generation to generation. It is a great legacy to pass on to our children that the things we have been given are a result of a gracious, merciful and kind Lord who gives to the just and the unjust. Thankfulness is not without obstacles. What are the obstacles to giving God thanks?

*Deuteronomy 8: 17-18* says, *And thou say in thine heart, My power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth. But thou shalt remember the LORD thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth...* The "I have done this" gets in the way and becomes an obstacle to the giving of thanks to God. Paul writes in *1 Thessalonians 5:18*, *In every thing give thanks...* Thankfulness helps to lift our attention to God who has made us and given us our life, breath and all things. *For in him we live, and move, and have our being. (Acts 17:28)* Daniel is an example for us of one who gave thanks by his window knowing certain men would move against him.

In *1 Corinthians 15:57*, Paul gives thanks for the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. What victory does he have in mind? In this chapter, Paul mentions several things that Jesus Christ has been victorious over:

- v. 3 - He died for our sins.
- v. 10 - The grace of God has been bestowed upon us.
- v. 17 - We are no longer in our sins.
- v. 19 - Hope in Christ goes beyond this life.
- v. 21 - By man came resurrection of the dead.
- v. 22 - In Christ shall all be made alive.
- v. 54 - Death is swallowed up in victory.
- v. 55 - The grave becomes our victory.

These are won for us by Jesus Christ who saw we were His enemies but has now reconciled us to God. As we pause to give thanks, let our hearts be refreshed in the generosity of our Lord Jesus Christ. God bless you!

Jim Maunu  
Vancouver, Washington

# Lift Up Your Heads

Pastor Dennis Hannu  
Spruce Grove, Minnesota

**T**HE SEASON OF ADVENT REMINDS US of the first coming of our Lord and also points us to the expectation of His second coming. The word “advent” comes from the Latin word *adventus* which means “coming” or “visit.” Another term commonly used for the second coming of Christ is *parousia*, a Greek word meaning “presence” or “arrival.” The Parousia of Jesus Christ refers to the time when Christ will return to this earth in all of His power and splendor. He will then judge the world, and those who are believers will be united with Him for all of eternity.

One of the texts for the season of Advent is Luke 21:25-38: *And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. 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. And he spake to them a parable; Behold the fig tree, and all the trees; When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away: but my words shall not pass away. And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man. And in the day time he was teaching in the temple; and at night he went out, and abode in the mount that is called the mount of Olives. And all the people came early in the morning to him in the temple, for to hear him.*

This portion of the 21st chapter of Luke refers to the second coming of Christ. The cosmos (world or universe) is rocked by disorder and chaos. People upon seeing this become fearful and their hearts fail them because of the uncertainty of what is happening. In the midst of all of this, Jesus says to His followers: “Look up and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth near.” The consummation of the eschaton is about to appear. Our Redeemer, our Savior,

our God, and our King is about to appear. Don't be afraid; rather lift up your heads and when you do you will see Jesus!

This is the best way for us to understand eschatology. The study or understanding of end times is found in the One who has brought the end with His death and resurrection. Jesus in His finished work has already accomplished the eschaton or the end. It is not now available by sight but rather by faith, and so with the faithful we simply wait for its consummation. We now live in the end times or the last age. *Hebrews 9:24-28: 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.* We, then, as partakers of the kingdom of God wait with patience for the Parousia of our King. We do this standing tall, with our heads held high in full expectation of His arrival.

We are to have the right perspective of the end and not simply engage in our fleshly activities with no awareness of the coming of Christ, so that the end comes upon us like a trap. The end is coming for all whether it's the end of the world or the end of one's own life. The encouragement is to always be watchful and in constant communication with the One whose return is imminent. Jesus is the One who has restored all things and now we being fully aware of that are to “lift up our heads.” As we celebrate this coming Advent season, let us always be mindful of His accomplishments for us in His first Advent and let us rejoice in full expectation of His second Advent.



“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!”



*O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah,*

## **Behold your God!**

*Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him: behold, his reward is with him, and his work before him. He shall feed his flock like a shepherd: he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young.*

*Isaiah 40:9-11*

# Things Above and Things Below

Lois Matson  
Yacolt, Washington

**I** RECENTLY HEARD A SERMON on Colossians, chapter 3, and it set my mind to thinking about the “things above” and the “things on the earth” mentioned in that chapter.

*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.* (Colossians 3:1-4)

The Apostle Paul in his letter to the Colossian saints, the faithful brothers and sisters, reminds them that they have been buried with Christ in baptism and that God has raised them again to a new life with Him. Then he gives instruction to those saints, telling them to seek the things that are above. They are to set their affections—their focus, their minds—on things above, not on things here below.

What “things above” are we to seek? What things above are we to set our minds on, instead of the things below?

This world promotes and glorifies sin and self-focus. Immorality and wickedness are celebrated. My truth can be different than your truth, and we must all co-exist happily, celebrating our diversity. When trials come or when the future seems uncertain, we can be consumed with anxiety and fear. All of these are things below.

Even good things, like the blessings of family and friends, vocations and callings, tend to continually draw our attention away from the things above. We become so easily distracted and absorbed by our lives here on earth.

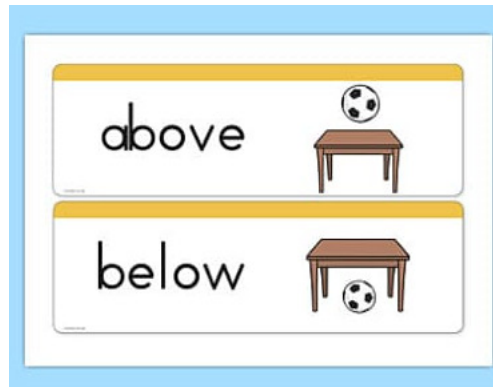
But when we seek the things which are above, when we look into the heavenly throne room, we see Jesus!

- He is the Word of God who created all things (John 1:1-3).
- He is the Word in human flesh (John 1:14).
- He is the Bread of Life (John 6:35).
- He is the Light of the world (John 8:12).
- He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).
- He is the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8).

- He was delivered up for our offenses and raised for our justification (Romans 4:25).
- He is the Captain of our salvation.
- He tasted death for every human.
- He is crowned with glory and honor (Heb 2:9-10).
- He is our Great High Priest who has entered the Holy of Holies with His own blood (Hebrews 9:11-12).
- He ascended into heaven.
- He will return! (Acts 1:9-11)
- He is seated at the right hand of God, interceding for us (Romans 8:34).

When we set our minds on things above, we see Jesus. We hear Him in His Word, read and preached to us. We taste Him in the Lord’s Supper, given and shed for us. The things above give us hope when the things below are in tumult.

We have died with Christ in our baptism, and our life is hidden in Him. He is our REAL LIFE! Christ is seated at the right hand of God, but He will appear on earth once more. And when He appears, we will appear with Him in glory. Until then...



“May the mind of Christ, my Savior,  
Live in me from day to day,  
By His love and pow’r controlling  
All I do and say.

May the word of God dwell richly  
In my heart from hour to hour,  
So that all may see I triumph  
Only through His pow’r.

May the peace of God, my Father,  
Rule my life in ev’rything,  
That I may be calm to comfort  
Sick and sorrowing.

May the love of Jesus fill me  
As the waters fill the sea.  
Him exalting, self abasing:  
This is victory.

May we run the race before us,  
Strong and brave to face the foe,  
Looking only unto Jesus  
As we onward go.”

Kate B Wilkinson

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Lois Matson, Editor  
Email: cm@apostoliclutheran.org  
Phone: (360) 904-6951  
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**Apostolic Lutheran Church of America**

www.apostoliclutheran.org

Western Mission: western@apostoliclutheran.org

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Foreign Mission: foreign@apostoliclutheran.org

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## Give Thanks to the Lord

Pastor Chuck Bylkas  
South Range, Michigan

*Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the Lord: This gate of the Lord, into which the righteous shall enter. I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvellous in our eyes. This is the day which the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it. Save now, I beseech thee, O Lord: O Lord, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. Blessed*

*be he that cometh in the name of the Lord: we have blessed you out of the house of the Lord. God is the Lord, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar. Thou art my God, and I will praise thee: thou art my God, I will exalt thee. O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.*

**Psalm 118:19-29**

**I**N THE MONTH OF NOVEMBER, we celebrate the holiday of Thanksgiving. In many homes, it is a tradition for each family member to mention one thing for which they are thankful. The Holy Scriptures teach us that we are to live our lives in gratitude for all that God has done for us. In His first letter to the Thessalonians, the Apostle Paul tells us *In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. (1 Thessalonians 5:18)* This means that we are to be thankful in good times and in bad. Remarkably, when President Abraham Lincoln issued the Thanksgiving Proclamation of 1863, he did so while the nation was still in the throes of the Civil War. Lincoln encouraged the nation to give thanks, even though the nation's future was still uncertain.

Because we are sinners, it is difficult for us to be thankful, especially during times of trouble. Even a Presidential proclamation cannot force us to be truly grateful. However, when God calls us to be thankful, He does so by revealing His great love for us in the Gospel. It is that revelation that kindles faith in our hearts and moves us to thankfulness and praise. In Psalm 118, we hear a phrase that is heard over and over again in the Old Testament: *O give thanks to the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endureth forever.* We give thanks to God, because He is good and because He is merciful to sinners.

In that same Psalm, the writer expresses how God has shown us His mercy. *I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.* We praise God, because He has heard our cries for help and has given us salvation in His Son, Jesus Christ. Even though mankind rejected Him, Jesus suffered, bled and died on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins. It is the death and Resurrection of Jesus Christ that is our hope, our cornerstone and the foundation of our faith. The hymn-writer says it so well, "When all around my soul gives way, He then is all my hope and stay." So *Give thanks to the Lord; for He is good: for His mercy endureth forever!*

*Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift. (2 Corinthians 9:15) ~*

***As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water. Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to day do I declare that I will render double unto thee.***

***Zechariah 9:11-12***

**A** PRISONER IS ONE WHO is not free, bound by that which holds them captive. The prisoner that it speaks of here is the prisoner of God. Jesus speaks, *By the blood of Thy covenant I have sent forth Thy prisoners,* listen, He says *...Thy prisoners, out of the pit wherein is no water.* Such is the prison of sin and unbelief that we find ourselves in. The captive is told, *Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope:* This is quite amazing. This is a prisoner, bound and captive, who yet has hope. The Psalmist speaks to his own heart, *Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou disquieted within me. Hope thou in God. (Psalm 42:5)*

Beloved, this is where we have hope. Through tribulation we patiently wait for the experience of faith which brings us the hope of salvation. And this hope maketh not ashamed. The hopeful prisoner beholds the double payment wrought by Christ on the cross with His death and blood. Jesus says, *...even today do I declare that I will render double unto thee.* This is the only place that one could have hope. By the blood of His covenant. Yes, He cries to the prisoner, *Turn ye to the strong hold.* Turn to the wounds of sacrifice. Turn ye away from yourself, and look to Jesus. This is where hope is found and preserved. Thank You, Jesus, for going into the dry pit and sending us out with Thy own precious blood, which are the waters of life!

*Paul Coponen; Chassell, Michigan*

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