

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.

October 2021

The Psalter

Martin Luther

THE PSALTER OUGHT TO BE a precious and beloved book, if for no other reason than this: it promises Christ's death and resurrection so clearly—and pictures His kingdom and the condition and nature of all Christendom—that it might well be called a little Bible. In it is comprehended most beautifully and briefly everything that is in the entire Bible.

In fact, I have a notion that the Holy Spirit wanted to take the trouble Himself to compile a short Bible and book of examples of all Christendom or all saints, so that anyone who could not read the whole Bible would here have anyway almost an entire summary of it, comprised in one little book...

A human heart is like a ship on a wild sea, driven by the storm winds from the four corners of the world. Here it is stuck with fear and worry about impending disaster; there comes grief and sadness because of present evil. Here breathes a breeze of hope and of anticipated happiness; there blows security and joy in present blessings.

These storm winds teach us to speak with earnestness, to open the heart and pour out what lies at the bottom of it. He who is stuck in fear and need speaks of misfortune quite differently from him who floats on joy; and he who floats on joy speaks and sings of joy quite differently from him who is stuck in fear. When a sad man laughs or a glad man weeps, they say, he does not do so from the heart; that is, the depths of the heart are not open, and what is in them does not come out.

What is the greatest thing in the Psalter but this earnest speaking amid these storm winds of every kind? Where does one find finer words of joy than in the psalms of praise and thanksgiving?

There you look into the hearts of all the saints, as into fair and pleasant gardens, yes, as into heaven itself. There you see what fine and pleasant flowers of the heart spring up from all sorts of fair and happy thoughts toward God, because of his blessings.

On the other hand, where do you find deeper, more sorrowful, more pitiful words of sadness than in the psalms of lamentation? There again you look into the hearts of all the saints, as into death, yes, as into hell itself.

How gloomy and dark it is there, with all kinds of troubled forebodings about the wrath of God! So, too, when they speak of fear and hope, they use such words that no painter could so depict for you fear or hope, and no other orator so portray them.

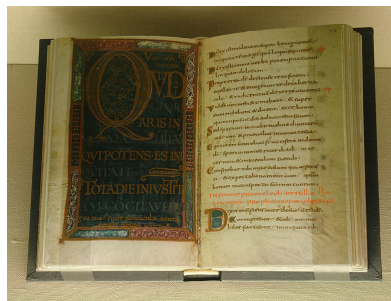
And that they speak these words *to God* and *with God*, this, I repeat, is the best thing of all. This gives the words double earnestness and life. For when men speak with men about these matters, what they say does not come so powerfully from the heart; it does not burn and live, is not so urgent.

Hence it is that the Psalter is the book of all saints; and everyone, in whatever situation he may be, finds in that situation psalms and words that fit his ease, that suit him as if they were put there just for his sake, so that he could not put it better himself, or find or wish for anything better.

This also serves well another purpose. When these words please a man and fit his case, he becomes sure that he is in the communion of saints, and that it has gone with all the saints as it goes with him, since they all sing with him one little song. It is especially so if he can speak these words to God, as they have done; this can only be done in faith. There is in the Psalter security and a well-tried guide, so that in it one can follow all the saints without peril... For it teaches you in joy, fear, hope, and sorrow to think and speak as all the saints have thought and spoken.

In a word, if you would see the holy Christian Church painted in living color and shape, comprehended in one little picture, then take up the Psalter. There you have a fine, bright, pure mirror that will show you what Christendom is...

To this may God the Father of all grace and mercy help us, through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom be praise and thanks, honor and glory, for this German Psalter and for all his innumerable and unspeakable blessings to all eternity. Amen, Amen.



Carolingian Psalter by Jürgen Howaldt
Photo courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Eat, O Friends

Janne Marttiini
December 1962 CM

THE WRITER OF THE SONG of Solomon utters these beautiful words, "...eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." (Song of Solomon 5:1) Already in Old Testament times could be seen God's work of grace which was fulfilled by the Lord Jesus in the days of His flesh. It is He who says, "...eat, O friends; drink, yea, drink abundantly, O beloved." He said to His disciples, "I call you not servants ... but I have called you friends." (John 15:15)

Can you believe this, friend of Jesus, tempted and tried by many sorrows? He is your Friend! How does He appear in the eyes of the Singer one thousand years before His birth? He is "white and ruddy"—white in His innocence, and ruddy because of His suffering and grief. This is your Friend, you who have received His betrothal. Though you see yourself black and unclean, when by faith you can behold your Bridegroom as victor, you see yourself at the same time as wholly acceptable.

The faith which the Scriptures teach is faith in Him alone whom God has given for a foundation: Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul declares, "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 3:11) He is the Lord, our Righteousness. And, child of God, when you are standing upon this foundation, your salvation is not subject to changing feelings. It rests in the hands of which the Song says, "I rose up to open to my beloved; and my hands dropped with myrrh, and my fingers with sweet smelling myrrh, upon the handles of the lock." (Song of Solomon 5:5)

The door was firmly closed to sinners. But love was stronger than death and zeal stronger than hell. The waters of Belial could not quench the love which burned in the heart of the Bridegroom. That heart was opened with a spear. The hands which had committed no sin were fastened with nails to the cross. Thus the myrrh dropped from His fingers upon the handle of the lock. The door did open. He cried, "It is finished." Before this, from a confining pulpit, hands and feet nailed to the tree, He preached to the penitent thief the Gospel of release. His heart glowed with the holy fire of love, and He said, "To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:43)

"Why does the Lord Jesus take this first great sinner to His Father in heaven?" ask many of God's own. He does it for your sake, awakened soul, you who tremble because of your feelings and are many times about to drown in the waves of doubt. You ask, "Is it possible that such a poor Christian and great sinner can truly be saved?" I exhort you; behold the events of Good Friday in the light of the resurrection Sun. Then you will understand why the thief on the cross was first

to be taken to heaven. When this is revealed to you by the Holy Spirit, you are better able to believe that the work which Jesus accomplished on Good Friday is so great that you, feeling yourself to be devoid of fruit, may put your whole trust in Jesus. You will be assured that Jesus did not take one step upon the sword of the law nor suffer one pang for His own sake, but the Lord laid on Him our iniquity and burden.

When by faith you go to the garden of Gethsemane and hear in spirit the conversation between Father and Son before Good Friday, the mystery of the redemption is revealed. There, as if anew, the heart of the Father is tried—does He truly love the sinner? His beloved Son, who had not failed to do the Father's will, now in the weakness of His human portion pleads for mercy from the Father, "... if it be possible, let this cup pass from Me."

***But love was stronger than death and zeal stronger than hell.
The waters of Belial could not quench
the love which burned in the heart of the Bridegroom.***



He goes to arouse His slumbering disciples and returns again to the heart of the Father praying, "... if this cup may not pass away from Me except I drink it, Thy will be done." And He finds His disciples asleep again. Finally, a third time He tries the Father's heart, saying, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine,

be done." (Luke 22:42) Here is revealed in greatest measure the love of the Father toward sinners. Though His own beloved Son repeatedly pleads for mercy, the Father does not grant it, but looks past His Son's cries to the plight of His fallen children. For this reason the apostle writes that in the redemptive work of God our Savior the whole majesty of God was present. (Hebrews 1:3)

In these places (God's Word) I wish to linger and guide fellow pilgrims. There we find green pastures and refreshing streams for which the watching soul longs. When he yearns and asks of the Father in the name of His Son, the Father leads him to these places. When tarrying there, we remain in the first love. From there it is good to depart to meet that Friend and praise His good works forever. Then, dear children, we shall no longer be lacking in thanksgiving, no longer cold nor tempted, but drunk with the love of the Bridegroom eternally. Here we receive a few drops, but there all fullness. ~

He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease. He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all. And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and no man receiveth his testimony.

John 3:29-32

The Only True God

Ambrose

I give thee charge in the sight of God, who quickeneth all things, and before Christ Jesus, who before Pontius Pilate witnessed a good confession; That thou keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ: Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen.

1 Timothy 6:13-16

WHEREFORE SINCE NO CREATED BEING can be compared with the Godhead of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, Which is alone, not amongst all, but over all (our declaration concerning the Spirit being meanwhile held back); as the Father is said to be the only true God, because He has nothing in common with others; so also is the Son alone the Image of the true God, He alone is the Hand of the Father, He alone is the Virtue and Wisdom of God.

Thus the Son alone does what the Father does; for it is written: *Then answered Jesus and said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do: for what things soever he doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise. (John 5:19)* And since the work of the Father and of the Son is one, it is well said of the Father and the Son, that God worked alone; wherefore also when we speak of the Creator, we own both the Father and the Son. For assuredly when Paul said, "Who served the creature more than the Creator (Romans 1:25)," he neither denied the Father to be the Creator, from Whom are all these things, nor yet the Son, through Whom are all things (Romans 11:36).

And it does not seem out of agreement with this that it is written: "Who alone hath immortality (1 Timothy 6:16)." For how could He not have immortality Who has life in Himself? He has it in His nature; He has it in His essential Being; and He has it not as a temporal grace, but owing to His eternal Godhead. He has it not by way of a gift as a servant, but by peculiar right of His Generation, as the co-eternal Son. He has it, too, as has the Father. *For as the Father hath life in Himself, so also hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself. (John 5:26)* As He has it, it says, so He has given it. Thou hast learnt already how He gave it, that thou mayest not think it to be a free gift

of grace, when it is a secret of His generation. Since, then, there is no divergence of life between the Father and the Son, how can it be supposed that the Father alone has immortality, whilst the Son has it not?

Wherefore let them understand that in this passage the Son is not to be separated from the Father, Who is the only true God. For they cannot prove that the Son is not the only and true God, especially as here also it may be gathered, as I have said, that Christ too is true and only God; or the passage may at least be understood partly in reference to the Godhead of the Father and the Son, and partly to the Incarnation of Christ: for knowledge is not perfect unless it confesses Jesus Christ from eternity to be only-begotten God, true Son of God, and, according to the flesh, begotten of a Virgin. Which also this very Evangelist has taught us elsewhere, saying: *Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God. (1 John 4:2)*

Lastly, the whole of our passage teaches us that it is not improper in this verse to understand a reference to the sacrament of the Incarnation. For thus it is written: *Father, the hour is come, glorify thy Son. (John 17:1)* When, therefore, He states that the hour is come, and prays to be glorified, how can one suppose Him to have spoken but only in accordance with the assumption of our flesh? For the Godhead has no fixed moments of time, nor does eternal light stand in need of glorification. Therefore in the only true God, Who is the Father, we also understand the only true Son of God to be in accordance with the unity of the Godhead. And in the name of Jesus Christ, which He received when born of the Virgin, we acknowledge the sacrament of the Incarnation.

But if they wish to separate the Son, when they read that the Father is the only true God, I suppose that when they read of the Incarnation of the Son: *This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner; and further: Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved (Acts 4:11-12);* then they imagine the Father is to be cut off from the benefit of imparting salvation to us. But there is neither salvation without the Father, nor eternal life without the Son. ~

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

Luke 4:8

JESUS WAS BEING TEMPTED OF the devil. The devil promised that he would give Jesus all the kingdoms of the world if He would bow down and worship him. Jesus answered, *Get thee behind me, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.* Beloved friends, we also must worship the Lord our God only. We often think of worship as singing praises to God, honoring and giving Him reverence, praying and praising His holy name, and this is right. But it is not all. We also worship God when we come with our need, pleading and begging for His grace and blessing upon us, praying for His help in our distresses. *Matthew 15:25 says, Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.* This Syrophoenician woman worshipped Him when she needed and pleaded for His help. O that we also would worship Him and come with our need, beg of Him, and thank and praise Him for helping us, and being merciful to us! And may we also serve Him to the end!

Paul Coponen; Chassell, Michigan
Submitted by Ralph and Barbara Somero; New Ipswich, New Hampshire

TRUST and OBEY

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children,

Hello to you all. I pray that you are well in body and in your heart. My family is well. We (26 of us) spent a week together in one big home several hours away from where we live. It was nice to be together, but we missed our daughter-in-law and granddaughter who were taken from us in March of 2020. Being together reminded me of my home growing up. I'm from a family of 20 children and I could only imagine how busy our home was with so many under the same roof.

Well, children, summer vacation is over and school is starting once again for many of you. There are new challenges before you, and I pray that you will look to God for strength to face them. I pray that you will seek God's will in your actions, work, and words. Pray to be a good example.

We desire to trust God and obey Him, and I want to focus on those two actions.

THIS LIFE FOR EVERY CHRISTIAN requires TRUSTING and OBEYING. Oh, of course it requires faith in believing in Jesus and what He did for us. We cannot trust in ourselves and our own power to do whatever is in front of us.

So many greeting cards say, "Believe in yourself! Follow your heart and your dreams." I'm not saying you cannot believe you're capable of accomplishing something or pushing on toward something you've dreamed of doing, but I want to encourage you to always put God and Jesus first and their will for you. It is by doing this that you can see what God's best is for you. This is where trusting and obeying is so important.

Trusting and obeying is hard work for us humans. I know this too well. We too often want to do things our way and forget our God who loves us so much.

We know that Jesus was fully God and fully man, and His life was one of trust and obedience to His Father God. People hated Him for it and wanted Him dead so they could silence Him. Jesus cannot be silenced. We know that Jesus came here to die to save US. We know that even at the hour of death, He prayed for the cup of death and the burden of the sins of all mankind to be taken from Him, BUT He prayed that not His will but the Father's will would be done. We are blessed to have His words today, of TRUSTING and OBEYING.

The Psalmist David prayed this when he fled from Saul in the cave: *Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities (times of destruction) be overpast. I will cry unto God most high; unto God that performeth all things for me. He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach (disapproval) of him that would swallow me up (kill me).* (Psalm 57:1-3) Even in this verse we see David, a follower of God, running from his own father-in-law who, because of jealousy of David's trust and obedience in God, wanted him dead, and out of his hair, so to speak. David knew who he could turn to in this time of trouble. We know who we can turn to also.

Our Father God is ever ready to hear our cries, pleadings, and prayers. His Son Jesus is ever ready to intercede; He speaks to the Father on our behalf. We pray to God who hears

our requests, desires, wants, needs, hurts, hopes, worries, joys, and praises. Jesus is at God's right hand to give or not give what we have prayed. God knows what is best for us.

This also requires us to TRUST and OBEY. We must trust that our unanswered and answered prayers were the Father's will.

There are many more verses I could share, but it would be too much. I will share a few.

Proverbs 4:20-21: *My son (follower), attend to my words; incline thine ear unto my sayings. Let them not depart from thine eyes; keep them in the midst of thine heart.*

Psalms 143:10: *Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness (honorable, honest).*

Deuteronomy 5:33: *Ye shall walk in all the ways which the Lord your God hath commanded you, that ye may live, and that it may be well with you, and that ye may prolong your days in the land which ye shall possess.*

Proverbs 3:5-8: *TRUST in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths. Be not wise in thine own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil. It shall be health to thy navel, and marrow to thy bones.*

This last line speaks to me that a healthy mind and heart is the blessing of serving God. Only good can come from serving Him.



I pray that we will trust more fully and pray to God for the faith and strength to be obedient to Him. I say this in almost every letter I write, and I will say it again: GOD LOVES US SO MUCH THAT HE SENT JESUS TO DIE FOR US – TO SAVE US. There is such a beautiful heavenly home waiting for us. Let us press on toward it, with our armor of faith kept shining and bright, TRUSTING AND OBEYING!

God's peace.

Why Do the Righteous Suffer?

Wayne Juntunen
February 1963 CM

WHY DO THE RIGHTEOUS SUFFER? This question has haunted the minds and hearts of men and women of God through the ages, and today, especially when misfortune besets a person, the question comes to mind: "Why? Why this?" I suppose as often as the question has arisen, so also has arisen an answer of one sort or another. I too would wish at this time to help point at least to a possible answer to what appears to be an unanswerable question.

Perhaps the most frequently quoted book of the Bible in regard to this question is that of Job. Job, who had enjoyed health and prosperity, all of a sudden finds that all of his possessions and his family are taken away. His only recourse is to sit in sackcloth and ashes. Friends try to comfort him, but they only make his suffering worse. The entire book is an attempt to answer the question: Why do the righteous suffer?

In the New Testament this question also arises. In John 9:2, the disciples of Jesus question Him concerning a man born blind and say: "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Again in Luke 13:1-5, we read of some who had answers: "Do you think that these Galileans were worse sinners than all the other Galileans, because they suffered thus? ... Or those eighteen upon whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them, do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others who dwelt in Jerusalem?"

The implication seems to be among the people of both the New and Old Testament, that suffering is experienced by people as a result of their sins. Consequently, if one does not experience suffering of any kind he is a righteous person. Many today also feel this same way. Often we can hear testimonies to this belief. Christians, especially those who now live a prosperous, successful life, proclaim their good fortune as being due to their having become Christians. Now this may be entirely true. God does bless those who put their trust in Him. But it does not necessarily follow that everyone who becomes a Christian will enjoy prosperity. As far as the world looks at things, Jesus was about the most complete failure that a man could be.

Furthermore, when Christians have this attitude, then those who are, in fact, suffering for some reason or another can find no comfort for they began to think that they must not be Christians. And this is the temptation which Satan would most gladly instill in our minds, namely, that God does not love us, that He no longer cares who we are or where we are going. So again we must ask: "Why do the righteous suffer?"

As disheartening as this may sound, there is no answer to that question. Why is there no answer? Because it is the wrong question, and when one asks the wrong question he will get the wrong answer. In fact, this is perhaps why there have been so many attempts at the answer. Because no matter what answer is given, it is always wrong. I suppose by now you are asking: "Well, what are you writing this foolish-

ness for? If there is no answer, what are you trying to say?" Well, it seems to me, if we say that the question is the wrong one, then we must necessarily ask: Why is it wrong? And it is to this that I would now want to direct your attention.

In the first place, the question is the wrong one because the one who asks the question in this way assumes that because a person is "right," or "just," he has a **right** or **privilege** to that which is "right" or "good" for him. This is not a biblical belief at all. It arises out of the Epicurean ethics which believes that a person should do that which would bring him the greatest pleasure. And, according to this way of thinking, if Christianity is the greatest good, then it should give the Christian the greatest pleasure. This idea informs much of so-called American Religion, which I am afraid is more pagan than Christian. It's sort of a Boy Scout idea that people are rewarded according to their deeds. So as long as they "live right," they will receive nothing but the best from the hand of God.

We see life only from this side of eternity. We cannot see the whole puzzle, or rather, the pattern which the Weaver is weaving.



Secondly, the person who raises this question takes for himself the role of God. On the one hand, he makes God his puppet or Santa Claus. He says to himself: "I became a Christian because God promised that it would be an abundant life, so now God must

reward me for all the good that I am doing." To such thinking, Paul writes: "No one does good, no, not one. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." On the other hand, such a person, by taking the role of God to himself, believes he knows what is good or best for himself. And needless to say, because we love ourselves, we want life to be comfortable. We don't want any kind of sickness, tragedy, or pain. Our natural man would be more willing to sell his bowl of porridge for the comforts of this life than stand over against the culture or society in which we live. Such a person believes he would be better off with a sexy affair, or a masculine physique than to be, as far as the world is concerned, somewhat homely or frail; or that he have a brilliant mind, rather than a mediocre one; or that he have the ability to carry on a conversation rather than be shy. No matter what terms you want to use, when a person has such an attitude, it is the same as the clay saying to the potter: "Why have you formed me thus?" It's telling God that He really didn't know what He was doing when He created us. We would rather be the Creator than the created, and we think we know how to do it better than He has done or is doing.

Since it is wrong to assume that we have a "right" to expect the best, and because it is wrong to take the role of

God to ourselves, the question “why do the righteous suffer?” is wrong. The questioner asks the question from the vantage point of pride.

The questioner could equally as well ask the question from the vantage point of humility. That is, he could say: “Why does God bless me with such goodness? Why does He love me so much as to die for me?” But as with the first question so also with this one, there is no answer. Why then is there no answer to this question either?

I think the answer lies in the fact that we’re human beings limited by time and space. We see life only from this side of eternity. We cannot see the whole puzzle, or rather, the pattern which the Weaver is weaving. Our life is but one

short strand in the whole picture. A necessary one, to be sure, but we ourselves cannot see what effect our life and the events which happen to us have, or will have, on our contemporaries or on those hundreds and thousands who come after us. The suffering we experience may not necessarily be on our behalf, but for the sake of others. You see, Christ Himself endured the cross, despising the shame, for the joy that was set before Him.

What then can we say? It is not for us to ask, “Why?” But, rather, it is for us to pray that God who does know what He is doing will still grant to us grace to believe so that even in the midst of unreasonable suffering, we can say: “Into Thy hands I commend my life. Lord, I believe; help Thou my unbelief.” ~

The Battle Belongs to the Lord

Pastor Joel Baker
Plymouth, Minnesota

If, when evil cometh upon us, as the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we stand before this house, and in thy presence, (for thy name is in this house,) and cry unto thee in our affliction, then thou wilt hear and help. And now, behold, the children of Ammon and Moab and mount Seir, whom thou wouldst not let Israel invade, when they came out of the land of Egypt, but they turned from them, and destroyed them not; Behold, I say, how they reward us, to come to cast us out of thy possession, which thou hast given us to inherit. O our God, wilt thou not judge them? for we have no might against this great company that cometh against us; neither know we what to do: but our eyes are upon thee. And all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children. Then upon Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, the son of Benaiah, the son of Jeiel, the son of Mattaniah, a Levite of the sons of Asaph, came the Spirit of the Lord in the midst of the congregation; And he said, Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's.

2 Chronicles 20:9-15

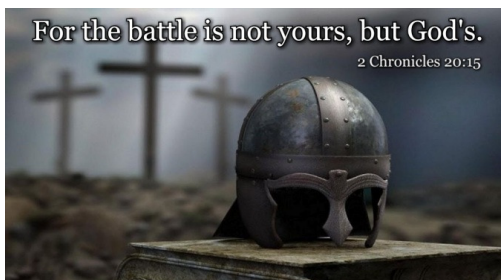
CURRENTLY IN OUR SOCIETY IT seems as though thoughts, actions, and behavior are increasingly opposing what is laid out in Scripture and opposed to the Lord Himself, including His true followers/servants. This progression, started long ago, is bearing a harvest of counterfeit rotten fruit, everywhere one turns! It would seem like it would be time to surrender and follow the current crowd. **However, just as the Scripture above encourages us, we can read that the battle is God's!** Instead of surrendering to society and its wayward direction—through the sword, judgment, pestilence, famine—we regularly should surrender our body and mind to Jesus only.

Keep your eyes on Jesus.

We often keep our eyes on the multitude and how great that they seem to be instead of standing before the Lord and crying out to Him in our distress, counting upon His hearing us and delivering us. Focusing upon the multitude brings fear and discouragement. But the battle is not ours but God's. He certainly will use us and have things for us to do on His behalf, but victory belongs to Him.

Don't lose hope—keep focused upon Jesus and look for, as well as anticipate, what He will do in bringing about victory. Call upon Him and stand firm before Him. The battle belongs to the Lord—seek Him, serve Him, and proclaim Him!

Shalom2u as we serve together in this battle.



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. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And

take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God: Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

Ephesians 6:10-20

Comprehend the Incomprehensible

Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington

*For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, **May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.** Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen.*

Ephesians 3:14-21

THE HOLY SCRIPTURE USES AMAZING contrasts that we cannot sort out by our own reason. In this beautiful letter, Paul prays that we would be able to comprehend the love of God that is so broad, and so long, and so deep, and so high. How can we begin to comprehend what is incomprehensible to us? And Paul wants us to know the love of Christ that passes knowledge. If Christ's love passes knowledge, how can we know it? How can we know what is unknowable? Then Paul also adds this request to his prayer: that we might be filled with all the fullness of God. How can we finite creatures contain the infinite fullness of God?

Paul says that this only happens by the working of the Spirit, that He would strengthen us in our inner being with His might. If the Holy Spirit strengthens us, then we are strong. Christ dwells in our hearts by faith, and we are rooted and grounded in His love. If Christ plants us into Himself, our roots and grounding are firm, based on His unfailing and infinite fullness.

It may not make sense to our natural mind, which is still captive to this world's reason and comprehension, but we trust that God's promises are true and faithful. We continue to be strengthened in faith in our inner being by the power of the Holy Spirit, through Holy Baptism, through the preaching of the Word, through the receiving of the Lord's Supper.

Luther writes about the amazing contrasts of human reason and the true knowledge of God in the Large Catechism, in Article 3 of the Apostles' Creed:

Behold, here you have the entire divine essence, will, and work depicted most exquisitely in quite short and yet rich words, wherein consists all our wisdom, which surpasses and exceeds the wisdom, mind, and reason of all men. **For although the whole world with all diligence has endeavored to ascertain what God is, what He has in mind and does, yet has she never been able to attain to [the knowledge and understanding of] any of these things.**

But here we have everything in richest measure; for here in all three articles He has Himself revealed and opened the deepest abyss of his paternal heart and of His pure unutterable love. For He has created us for this very object, that He might redeem and sanctify us; and in addition to giving and imparting to us everything in heaven and upon earth, He has given to us even His Son and the Holy Ghost, by whom to bring us to Himself.

In the articles of the Apostles' Creed, we see God the Creator, the Redeemer, the Sanctifier who has opened His heart to us and shown us His very rich and abundant love. In the letter to the Ephesians, we see the God who is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think. This One is at work in us, and He deserves glory and praise.

This knowledge that is past knowing, this comprehension of the incomprehensible should

bring us to our knees in thanksgiving, as it did for the Apostle Paul. Glory, glory, glory to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ!

*O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! **how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!** For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory for ever. Amen.*

Romans 11:33-36



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Send **articles for publication** to:
Lois Matson, Editor
Email: cm@apostoliclutheran.org
Phone: (360) 904-6951
Postal Mail to:
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Address **subscriptions, payments, and Book Concern orders** to:
Anders & Clara Sundqvist, Managers
Email: books@apostoliclutheran.org
NEW Phone: 360-601-5117
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Apostolic Lutheran Church of America

www.apostoliclutheran.org

Western Mission: western@apostoliclutheran.org

Eastern Mission: eastern@apostoliclutheran.org

Foreign Mission: foreign@apostoliclutheran.org

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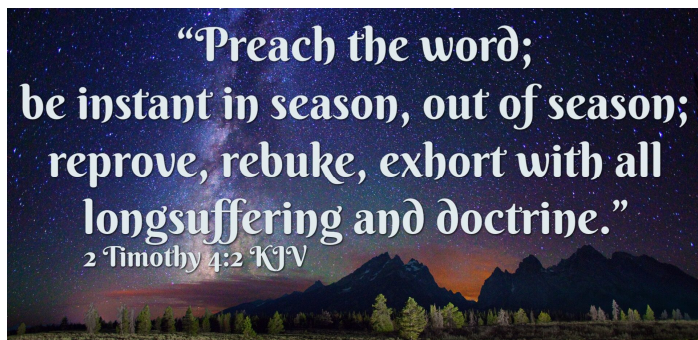
Pastor Nicholas Kandoll
New York Mills, Minnesota

And king Herod heard of him; (for his name was spread abroad:) and he said, That John the Baptist was risen from the dead, and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him. Others said, That it is Elias. And others said, That it is a prophet, or as one of the prophets. But when Herod heard thereof, he said, It is John, whom I beheaded: he is risen from the dead. For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her. For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife. Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not: For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly. And when a convenient day was come, that Herod on his birthday made a supper to his lords, high captains, and chief estates of Galilee; And when the daughter of the said Herodias came in, and danced, and pleased Herod and them that sat with him, the king said unto the damsel, Ask of me whatsoever thou wilt, and I will give it thee. And he sware unto her, Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, I will give it thee, unto the half of my kingdom. And she went forth, and said unto her mother, What shall I ask? And she said, The head of John the Baptist. And she came in straightway with haste unto the king, and asked, saying, I will that thou give me by and by in a charger the head of John the Baptist. And the king was exceeding sorry; yet for his oath's sake, and for their sakes which sat with him, he would not reject her. And immediately the king sent an executioner, and commanded his head to be brought: and he went and beheaded him in the prison, And brought his head in a charger, and gave it to the damsel: and the damsel gave it to her mother. And when his disciples heard of it, they came and took up his corpse, and laid it in a tomb.

Mark 6:14-29

THIS ACCOUNT BRINGS TO MIND the words of our Lord, Jesus Christ. In Matthew 5:11-12, He says that John the Baptist was imprisoned for preaching the Word of God. The king had entered into a relationship that was not in accordance with God's Word. The king had taken for himself his brother's wife. John preached what was given him to preach, and this gained him the wrath of Herodius. She conspired with her daughter to gain his death. Their plan worked flawlessly. Herod granted the request, despite his better judgment, and John the Baptist's head was delivered on a platter. The grisly imagery that Mark uses paints a clear picture. In the vast history of humanity there have been many who have died for faithfully teaching God's Word. This goes against the wisdom of the world and even the wisdom of our own sinful nature.

When facing down Herod, John could have easily backed down out of fear. He could have easily compromised and not condemned Herod's actions. The task of the Christian is to proclaim God's Word regardless of what people think. God's Word is often something people don't want to hear. The sad news is this isn't limited to unbelievers.



Paul says in 2 Timothy 4:1-5: *I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.*

Over the course of my ministry I've heard many opinions concerning what a preacher should preach. Although I am

open to criticism and correction, often times I find myself in a quandary after these conversations. Do I heed their advice and preach what they want me to? Would that be scratching itching ears? It's at these times that Paul's exhortations ring true: *Preach the word and we preach Christ crucified...* (1 Corinthians 1:23)

May God give us the grace to approach this sacred duty with the faithfulness of John the Baptist, with our thoughts not on ourselves or our own comfort, but on the welfare of our neighbor. The good news is that we are not alone in this endeavor. For we are children of the Most High God, who works in us to will and to do according to His good pleasure (Philippians 2:13). Jesus has also promised never to leave us nor forsake us.

God's peace.