

# 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.**

September 2015

## Taking Inventory

*Pastor Joel Baker*  
*Plymouth, Minnesota*

**W**HEN PREPARING FOR A RENOVATION in your home, additions to your garden or yard, or a vehicle you own, you are usually going to take inventory of the current situation, what materials are on hand, and the cost of updating, replacing or restoring.

In Matthew chapter 13 are seven parables that Jesus has been teaching the crowds and His disciples about the kingdom of heaven and what it's compared to or what it is like. At the end of several of them, He gives a clear warning of what happens to people left out of the kingdom of heaven with the phrases containing the words "bound up, furnace of fire, gnashing of teeth, and weeping" and encouragement as He talks about the righteous shining like the sun.



*View from the Lincoln Room during the White House Renovation, 01/23/1951; Wikimedia Commons*

Jesus often tells us that we should take inventory of our spiritual life just as we are concerned with our inventory for renovating our home or other similar projects. He tells us that there are active enemies in this world, both the devil and then our own selves who don't "hear" [both ears and hands/feet] what God has to say to

us through His Word. He asks us if our roots go deep in His Word or if they're only temporary so that in times of affliction or persecution they are pulled out. He asks if the cares of this world such as worries or the deceitfulness of wealth choke out His Word, making us unfruitful. He tells us that an enemy has planted weeds among the wheat that look physically alike so that we might listen to "weed talk"—twisting, poisonous, and dreadful—leading us astray and away from the One who loves us and can free us from the bondage and guilt of sin. He enables us to bear fruit thirty-, sixty- or one hundred-fold, to have a strong faith like the tree that sprouts from a tiny mustard seed, or to have a good effect on others like the small amount of leaven working unseen in three measures of flour to leaven them all. Jesus tells us that we are so valuable to Him that He gave everything He had for us—His precious sinless life, coming out of heaven with His Father, dying on a cross, allowing His shed blood to cover all sins, bringing about atonement/forgiveness of sins to those who believe in Him.

Those who learn these lessons and understand (like a scribe) will have treasure to share with others. Those who believe in Him, He says, will inherit the kingdom of heaven, shine forth like the sun, having radiant clothing, having an eternal future secured in the presence of Jesus. Some experience His presence now as they've passed from this life. But even on this earth, in spite of an enemy, with firm roots, we can persevere during the storms of life.

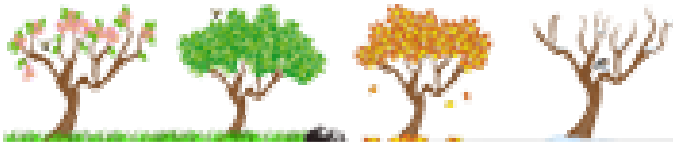
When that final dragnet is brought in from the sea, Jesus says, make sure you are one of the good fish by His presence and work occurring in you, and then by living a life for Him through the enabling of the Holy Spirit. Keep short accounts with those you live with and those you live/work around. When you look more like a weed or rotten fish than a good one, ask for forgiveness, for healing, and make things right as much as it depends upon you. Let others help you with those things if the Lord would lay that upon your heart. That's taking good inventory of your spiritual life. ~

# Signs and Seasons

Pastor Jay Weidner  
Laurium, Michigan

*Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.*

Hebrews 12:1-4



**A**S WE ENTER ANOTHER FALL SEASON, we are always reminded of the cycle of seasons that make up our calendar year. Seasonal changes have a great effect on our way of thinking and often are the topic of our speech with one another. We hope for a good spring or a nice summer. As we face the coming of fall, we notice how the cool nights cause the leaves to begin to change, meaning another winter is on the horizon.

Jesus spoke of this in Luke, that people often see the signs of the weather but don't recognize the time in which they live. And He said also to the people: *When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, There cometh a shower; and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass. Ye hypocrites, ye*

*can discern the face of the sky and of the earth; but how is it that ye do not discern this time? Yea, and why even of yourselves judge ye not what is right? When thou goest with thine adversary to the magistrate, as thou art in the way, give diligence that thou mayest be delivered from him; lest he hale thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and the officer cast thee into prison. I tell thee, thou shalt not depart thence, till thou hast paid the very last mite. (Luke 12:54-59)*

The season in which we live is a most amazing season. No matter what the seasonal cycle, the only One who could judge us for our faults has chosen instead to bring us to Himself, to wash away the cause of our accusation through the blood of His Son and free us from the sentence of death that was to be our lot, setting us free in Him for eternity. This is what Jesus wanted us to see and to regard as the sign of the season of our lives: the cross and His resurrection. This is the true and only sign of the season: the day of grace. This is what Hebrews 12 is about: the ability to see the signs not in the sky but in God's only Son and the joy of finding rest and peace being found in Him. Hebrews 12:3-4 read like this from Greek: "For take account of Him who endured such violent contradiction by sinners Himself, so that you wouldn't get worn down in your own lives and give up. Not yet to the point of shedding your blood did you stand as a substitute struggling against sin." God never asked us to atone for our sin; Jesus paid it all and all of it is paid.

We must not seek signs in the sky for plotting our course in life but rather remain fixed on Jesus only. We are to honor His joy who endured the cross and live our lives in trust. Seasons will come and go, but the completed work of Jesus remains the same forever. ~

## Two Covenants

*Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. (Psalm 110:3)*

THE OLD COVENANT HAS THE motivation of fear. If you don't keep the whole Law, the axe will fall and you will die; if you do keep the whole Law, you will live, which is impossible for fallen humans.

The devil promised Eve, "You will be like God," and we still desire this today.

The day of power is the day of Christ. Christ came in the fullness of time to redeem man who all his life is subject to bondage under the old covenant promise: do or die. In the new covenant, Jesus as true Man fulfilled all the demands of the Law and went willingly to the cross, taking our justly-deserved condemnation, making atonement for our sins in His blood, reconciling us to the Father. As new creatures in Christ, motivated by love, we desire to obey God.

Praise be to God for the covenant of grace! Martin Luther's exposition on this verse says it well:

The Scriptures speak of two periods: the first of weakness, which included those who lived under the Law. At that time, men did not observe the will of God freely through love but in the spirit of servile obedience. That day became to them an unbearable load and burden, impossible to enjoy. God's will must be done without compulsion and that, in the nature of the case, was impossible for them.

The second period is the covenant of grace and help through which man is made strong, willingly observes the will of God and His commands, and sincerely loves Him. Christians do this not for the sake of necessity or reward, nor do they fail through suffering or death. This is not the work of nature but of grace.

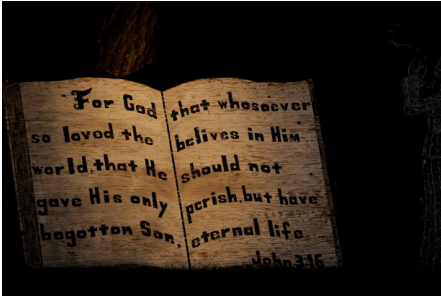
Pastor Mark Matson  
Pasco, Washington



# The Essence of the Gospel

Mark Sunnarborg  
Rhineland, Wisconsin

Father, in prayer and supplication I come to Thee in the name of Jesus. Blessed are they that draw near to the living God in heaven, for hallowed is His name. May Thy kingdom come in power and might. Father, Thy will be done in our hearts and lives, in earth as it is in heaven. Grant us the bread of life this day. Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors. Lead us not into temptation but lead us unto all truth for Thy name's sake. May Thy power reign in our lives now and forever. Amen!



*For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!*

**1 Corinthians 9:16**

**W**HAT IS THE GOSPEL? Is it not the Good News that your sins are forgiven? As one becomes a partaker of the Gospel, and as Jesus washed His disciples' feet, he likewise has his feet washed with the pure water of the Word in the forgiveness of sins. Jesus said, "If I don't wash your feet, you have no part with Me." So we believe that as other believers preach and assure us of the forgiveness of sins, it is Jesus washing us clean. Jesus lives in the heart of all who believe. The dirt that would come upon the feet of those who lived and traveled in the time of Jesus needed to be washed, and they were clean. Note: One does not have to be washed everywhere if one is a believer. Born of the Spirit and of the Word, only one's feet need to be washed of the things that burden upon life's journey. This person in turn washes his fellow traveler's feet with this same Gospel, for the essence of the Gospel is the forgiveness of sins.

Your enemy the devil comes as an angel of light. If you are not walking in the truth, how are you going to recognize him? The devil is not of the truth, but a liar from the

beginning. He fears the power of the Gospel; he fears the blood that cleanses and washes man white in the blood of the Lamb. You will recognize the devil because the truth is in you. Humble yourself, pray for patience and seek for a heart that showeth kindness, for the Word of God will not let you down.

The greatest gift is that one would lay down his life for his enemies. You no longer have to win the argument or fight; you are already a winner in Christ Jesus. Jesus said in *John 15:13: Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.* Love conquers all. You may lay down your life for a friend, but now God calls you to lay down your life for your enemy. Your fight is over; now is the time to recognize the victory you have in Jesus.

An act of kindness is better than a heart that is bitter. Feed your enemy with kindness, for this is what God wants you to do. Your enemy may be hungering and thirsting; give him to drink, for in so doing you may be the one to speak of the water of life. After all, it is not just natural food he needs, but spiritual. Speak of what Jesus has done for you in dying on the cross. *For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God. (1 Corinthians 1:18)* You can speak to your enemy of this living water if you are a partaker of the water of life that flows from the throne of God. This water speaks the forgiveness of sins to a contrite heart. Forgive your enemy even before he asks. If he had true peace he would not treat you the way he has, for the essence of the Gospel is the forgiveness of sins. The Gospel speaks the forgiveness of sins in the name and shed blood of Jesus.

This is what is missing in the world today. People's hearts are failing them because they have denied the power that God has given to His Church, where brother can say to brother, "Be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee in the name and shed blood of Jesus." This Gospel that speaks of the blood of Christ is your power along with the Word of God to conquer or have victory over all your enemies: the world, the devil and your own flesh.

Father, preserve this living Gospel in the hearts and lives of all who come to this fountain for cleansing. This Gospel speaks the remission of all sins in Jesus name and shed blood. I pray it be heard throughout this land and the whole world. Amen!



***That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. (Philippians 3:10-11)***

THE HOPE OF LIFE ETERNAL is rooted in the love of Christ, and to be made conformable unto His death is to be buried with Him. Plain and simple. I know we confess, as we do in the Apostles' Creed, that He alone endured the wrath of God on the cross of Calvary, and He died the sinner's death that we deserved and He did not deserve, but we are called to be conformed to that death, to know Him. To get really close to Christ and understand His love, how can you do it outside of that? How can you know the love of Christ if you don't know what He has done for you?

Pastor Ron Holmgren  
Hockinson, Washington

# The Rich Man and Lazarus the Poor Man

Gwen Wilson

Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children,

Hello to each of you. Once again I hope this finds you well. We are well here.

God's grace is new every morning. Did you know that each morning that you awake to see a new day, a miracle has happened? That miracle is you having been given another day of life. I want you to think about that and remember to thank God for each day He gives you.

I want to share with you *St Luke 16:19-31*.

**I**N THE FIRST PART of this chapter, Jesus was teaching about being good or bad servants, and was stating this to certain of His disciples. Also, He was telling them that one cannot serve two masters: you either hate one and love the other, or love one and hate the other. One cannot serve God and mammon (earthly goods).

Then Jesus taught them, saying: *There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously (he had much food, clothes and money) every day: And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores. (Luke 16:19-21)*

Lazarus was, I'm sure, not demanding anything but a few crumbs, but even though the rich man had everything, he did not have in his heart love enough to even offer a few crumbs to Lazarus.

The day came when Lazarus died. One writer said there may not have even been much of a funeral for this beggar. One would wonder who really knew him and would take care of those things, but the Bible tells us he was carried by angels into Abraham's bosom (heaven). Here he gained his heavenly reward.

There also came the day when the rich man died and was buried. Here we can stop to think what kind of funeral this rich man had. He most likely had many friends, and as he was rich there would have been money to make a nice funeral for him, and he most likely had a proper burial place, too.

But as we read on, we see where his riches and selfishness got him. *And in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom. And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame. (v. 23-24)*

**F**ROM WHERE HE WAS in hell, the rich man could see the same Lazarus he had seen sitting at his gate every day was now safe with Abraham, and he knew he was in a very bad place. He also pleads for only a tiny bit of water to cool his tongue and it would have if God willed it, but that was not to be.

Now Abraham speaks with authority and in love, and says, "Son, remember that you in your lifetime received your good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and you are tormented. And besides all this, between us and you there is a great gulf (dividing space) fixed (unchangeable, unmovable): so that they who would pass from here, they cannot come to you; neither can those from where you are come to us."

The rich man knew he was doomed and could not be freed. He then begs Abraham to at least send Lazarus to his father's house to warn his five brothers of their rich brother's state, or they will be in the same fix if they don't serve God. But Abraham tells the rich man, "Your brothers have Moses and the prophets. Let them hear them." These brothers knew the Law and had heard the prophets before.

The rich man says, "No, Father Abraham! If someone would go to them from the dead, they will repent."

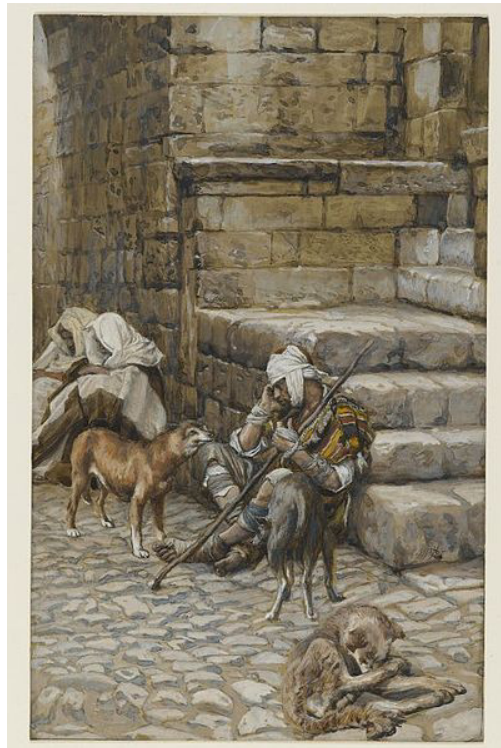
Abraham replies: *If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead. (v. 31)*

**S**O THIS IS HOW THE chapter ends. Abraham says it how it is. The rich man has to hear this and cannot be helped; the rich man's brothers have to be left up to God's will, and Lazarus rests peacefully in Abraham's bosom. Just as Abraham told the rich man, "If the brothers won't hear Moses and the prophets, neither will someone from the dead change their minds," so it was when Jesus walked here on earth and taught, loved and healed the people. We know Jesus died for sinners, yet He was hung on the cross by those who were to be His people, and of course, all of our sin put Him there. But we also know that Jesus rose from the dead. Even as many who saw Jesus risen after His death did not believe in Him, so many today who know of Him as a

risen Lord do not believe in Him as their Lord.

Let us pray to ever be in Jesus and to serve Him all the days of our lives. Heaven will be perfect peace, rest and everlasting joy where we will live forever.

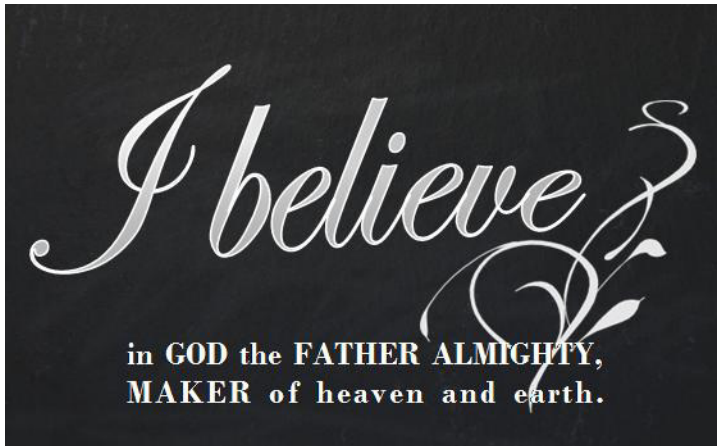
*God be with each of you today. God's peace.*



*The Poor Lazarus at the Rich Man's Door*  
by James Tissot; Wikimedia Commons

# The Apostle's Creed: Article I

Martin Luther, The Large Catechism



**T**HIS PORTRAYS AND SETS FORTH most briefly what is the essence, will, activity and work of God the Father. For since the Ten Commandments have taught that we are to have not more than one God, the question might be asked, What kind of a person is God? What does He do? How can we praise or portray and describe Him, that He may be known? Now, that is taught in this and in the following article, so that the Creed is nothing else than the answer and confession of Christians arranged with respect to the First Commandment. As if you were to ask a little child: My dear, what sort of a God have you? What do you know of Him? he could say: This is my God: first, the Father, who has created heaven and earth; besides this only One I regard nothing else as God; for there is no one else who could create heaven and earth.

But for the learned, and those who are somewhat advanced [have acquired some Scriptural knowledge], these three articles may all be expanded and divided into as many parts as there are words. But now for young scholars let it suffice to indicate the most necessary points, namely, as we have said, that this article refers to the Creation: that we emphasize the words: Creator of heaven and earth. But what is the force of this, or what do you mean by these words: I believe in God the Father Almighty, Maker, etc.? Answer: This is what I mean and believe, that I am a creature of God; that is, that He has given and constantly preserves to me my body, soul, and life, members great and small, all my senses, reason, and understanding, and so on, food and drink, clothing and support, wife and children, domestics, house and home, etc. Besides, He causes all creatures to serve for the uses and necessities of life—sun, moon and stars in the firmament, day and night, air, fire, water, earth, and whatever it bears and produces, birds and fishes, beasts, grain, and all kinds of produce, and whatever else there is of bodily and temporal goods, good government, peace, security. Thus we learn from this article that none of us has of himself, nor can preserve, his life nor anything that is here enumerated or can be enumerated, however small and unimportant a thing it might be, for all is comprehended in the word Creator.

Moreover, we also confess that God the Father has not only given us all that we have and see before our eyes, but daily preserves and defends us against all evil and misfortune, averts all sorts of danger and calamity; and that He does all this out of pure love and goodness, without our merit, as a benevolent Father, who cares for us that no evil befall us. But to speak more of this belongs in the other two parts of this article, where we say: Father Almighty.

Now, since all that we possess, and, moreover, whatever, in addition, is in heaven and upon the earth, is daily given, preserved, and kept for us by God, it is readily inferred and concluded that it is our duty to love, praise, and thank Him for it without ceasing, and, in short, to serve Him with all these things as He demands and has enjoined in the Ten Commandments.

Here we could say much if we were to expatiate, how few there are that believe this article. For we all pass over it, hear it and say it, but neither see nor consider what the words teach us. For if we believed it with the heart, we would also act accordingly, and not stalk about proudly, act defiantly, and boast as though we had life, riches, power, and honor, etc., of ourselves, so that others must fear and serve us, as is the practise of the wretched, perverse world, which is drowned in blindness, and abuses all the good things and gifts of God only for its own pride, avarice, lust, and luxury, and never once regards God, so as to thank Him or acknowledge Him as Lord and Creator.

Therefore, this article ought to humble and terrify us all, if we believed it. For we sin daily with eyes, ears, hands, body and soul, money and possessions, and with everything we have, especially those who even fight against the Word of God. Yet Christians have this advantage, that they acknowledge themselves in duty bound to serve God for all these things, and to be obedient to Him [which the world knows not how to do].

We ought, therefore, daily to practice this article, impress it upon our mind, and to remember it in all that meets our eyes, and in all good that falls to our lot, and wherever we escape from calamity or danger, that it is God who gives and does all these things, that therein we sense and see His paternal heart and His transcendent love toward us. Thereby the heart would be warmed and kindled to be thankful, and to employ all such good things to the honor and praise of God.

**T**HUS WE HAVE MOST BRIEFLY presented the meaning of this article, as much as is at first necessary for the most simple to learn, both as to what we have and receive from God, and what we owe in return, which is a most excellent knowledge, but a far greater treasure. For here we see how the Father has given Himself to us, together with all creatures, and has most richly provided for us in this life, besides that He has overwhelmed us with unspeakable, eternal treasures by His Son and the Holy Ghost, as we shall hear. ~



# Re-Baptism

David Olson; Rindge, New Hampshire

Reprinted from the October 2010 CM at the request of a

**T**HERE IS A THOUGHT in many denominations that those of us who have been baptized as infants need to be baptized again after we reach the age of understanding and make a new commitment of our own to God. But consider this.

Jesus said, *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved...* (Mark 16:16) He also said, *...Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.* (Matthew 19:14) Jesus also said, *But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me...* (Matthew 18:6) From the words of Jesus, it is evident that little children have living faith. Someone may ask, "How can this be, since they have no understanding yet?"

It is really very simple. God, our Creator and Redeemer, who is capable of all things that are according to His will and who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will (Ephesians 1:11) has instilled living faith, based on the death and resurrection of Jesus, in the heart of every little child who is born into this world. Can we be sure of this?

We certainly can, because we have it on the best authority in the universe, the words of Jesus Himself, quoted above. He says, "little ones which believe in Me." Little children not only believe that God is in heaven above and all powerful, they also believe in Jesus. They actually believe in the redemption of the sinner by the death and blood of Jesus and that they are saved by the grace of God. They have living faith, given by God.

In this living faith children receive the covenant of baptism, and the grace and promises of God. They are established in the grace of God. God promises to love them

always, to lead them always, to call them always, and to be gracious to them always. They are on the good, solid foundation of God's grace.

Dear young Christian friends, and older friends too, who may come in contact with the forces of the enemy, with people who would persuade you to switch your confidence and hope of salvation from the solid foundation of God's grace to the flimsy foundation of your own understanding and commitment, beware of them. Do not go with them to their baptism. You have already been baptized in the grace of God.

Experience has taught us that we often fail. It has also taught us that God never fails. Every time we have cried to Him in our failures, in our needs, in our sins, in our sorrows, for His help, for His mercy, for His grace, and for His forgiveness, He has always been faithful to His promises and delivered us from our troubles, especially the troubles of sin and conscience.

He has also given us a traveling staff upon which to lean when our way has become heavy, when our hearts are weary, when sin has overtaken us and weighed us down, when our consciences are troubled. It is the proclamation of the forgiveness of sins in the name and blood of Jesus. We do not need to be baptized again. We need only to cry unto Him for His help. The covenant of baptism that He made with us when we were babies is still in force, and to re-baptize constitutes an invalidation of the first baptism, and God's promise.

May God bless us all and preserve us all in living faith until we reach our true homeland in heaven above.

*God's peace.*



***Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and do testify that the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world. Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God. And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. We love him, because he first loved us. (1 John 4:10-19)***

THE BIGGEST MIRACLE OF ALL is the miracle of God's love, the miracle of life. We know that God has created life. Without an eternal God there would be no life. There would be nothing, in fact, nothing at all. An eternal God is the only way to explain the existence of existence. He's the only way to explain the existence of *anything*, and He's created life. Of course, we know the results of the fall into sin, that death has been brought into this world, and imperfection came with it. But the miracle of God's love is that He sent His Son into this world to live a perfect life in our place. And the miracle is that God can take a sinful heart like mine—like yours—(and not just that He can, but that He did!)—He took this on Himself, every sin in the world, every sin we've ever committed, and He carried it to Calvary's cross. As a man He bore the guilt and the load of that sin on His own shoulders, and as God He was capable of doing so. He suffered and died in our place. He shed His blood to the last drop to wash our sins away, all away. This is the miracle of all miracles, that love like this would come into this imperfect world.

Donny Matson  
Yacolt, Washington

# Let It Rain

Lois Matson  
Yacolt, Washington

*O God, thou art my God; early will I seek thee: my soul thirsteth for thee, **my flesh longeth for thee in a dry and thirsty land, where no water is;** To see thy power and thy glory, so as I have seen thee in the sanctuary. 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. My soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness; and my mouth shall praise thee with joyful lips: When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night watches. Because thou hast been my help, therefore in the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice.*

Psalm 63:1-7

**T**HE EARTH EXPERIENCES SEASONS OF abundant rain and drought, and we could compare these natural seasons to our Christian walk. We sometimes feel the presence of God closely: our faith is strong, our lives are full of hope, and it seems that God is near. At other times our faith is wavering, we doubt, and God seems distant, so distant that we fear our very souls will wither and die for lack of the refreshing Water of Life.

During a season of drought, the wild grasses and flowers wither, the ground itself becomes parched and cracked, and the danger of wildfire greatly increases. It seems the rain has gone forever and every living thing will dry up and blow away.

So during a drought in our spiritual lives, we feel our souls withering. Our hearts seem cracked and parched, and the wild fires of hell seem to blow over our spirits. We feel forsaken of God, and we may pray: *How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?* (Psalm 13:1)

When we *feel* forsaken, have we truly *been* forsaken? Is God near only when I *feel* that He is near? Does our Christian faith depend on our feelings? No, no and NO!

Thanks be to God, our feelings do not determine our nearness to God or our status before God. Our feelings are easily shaken. God's promises are sure and He has said, "I will never leave you or forsake you (Hebrews 13:5)." He has said, "I am with you always, even to the end of the world (Matthew 28:20)." He holds our right hand. We are guided by His counsel and He will receive us into glory. He is the strength of our hearts and our portion forever (Psalm 73:23-25).

The Apostle Paul says we are washed, sanctified and justified in the name of Jesus and by His Spirit (1 Corin-

thians 6:11). The Apostle Peter says we are redeemed, not with gold or silver but with the precious blood of Christ. We are born again by the Word of God, which lives and abides forever (1 Peter 1:18-23). Believe it.

We can rest in God's promises in the seasons of drought. Still, we pray for relief. We long for the refreshing rains which revive our hearts and renew our hope. We beg God to open the floodgates of heaven and let it rain.



*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. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David. **For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.** For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree: and it shall be to the LORD for a name, for an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off. (Isaiah 55:1-3, 10-13) ~*

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## The Value of Time

Pastor Rod Johnson  
Laurium, Michigan

***To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven: A time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up that which is planted. (Ecclesiastes 3:1-2)***

**A**S FALL APPROACHES, so also does the time of harvest, the time of reaping that which was planted in the spring. So it is fulfilled as it is written: there is a time to every purpose under the heaven. This frequently causes

us to reflect on the passing of time, to consider how quickly it passes, and to feel that there never seems to be enough time to do everything we should do or that we would like to do. We may realize again that, as we age, time seems to go by faster and faster. The Apostle Peter reflects on the words of the psalmist when he wrote: *For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away: But the word of the Lord endureth for ever. And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you. (1 Peter 1:24-25)* We are reminded how brief our life spans really are, so that we might consider the importance of time and how we use it.

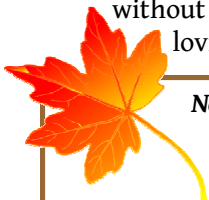
The Lord tells us in His Word that the whole duty of man is to *fear God, and keep his commandments (Ecclesiastes 12:13)* and that our purpose here on earth is to bring honor and glory to God. If this will be done in our lives, it can only happen if we set priorities, considering what is really important and how we should rightly spend our time. Otherwise we will spend too much time, as someone recently put it while contending with earthly frustrations, “dealing with the crabgrass of the lawn of life.”

Some say “time is money” when putting the emphasis on working to gain wealth. With that priority, our goal in life will be to acquire earthly treasure which withers and falls away, rather than having our treasure in heaven which endures forever. This pursuit will always rob us of the time we need to spend with family, friends and the Lord.

Children see this matter clearly for they understand that it is a display of love when people spend time with them, doing things together. Friendship requires time with one another if that friendship will grow and flourish; marriage requires time with our spouse if that relationship will thrive. Time spent with the Lord reading His Word, in meditation on His Word, and in prayer and worship are expressions of our love for Him, because He first loved us.

Apostle Paul wrote: *See then that ye walk circumspectly (heedful of circumstances or future consequences), not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. (Ephesians 5:15-16)* Sometimes we get so caught up in our daily routines and interests that we forget to consider the future and the consequences of neglecting the truly important things in life. So again we are reminded of this in the Word: *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. (Romans 13:11)*

May the God of all grace teach us and enable us to set the right priorities in our lives, giving first place to praying without ceasing and the giving of thanks in everything. May our lives be a living testimony of His presence through loving Him and our neighbor. ~



***Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. (2 Corinthians 2:14)***

ANOTHER TRANSLATION READS, “God which always leadeth us in Christ’s triumph.” He, the mighty conqueror, has come forth from the battle with Satan at the cross, leading His foes in chains at His chariot-wheels. He has spoiled principalities and powers and annulled him that had the power of death, that He might deliver us, and now we who have been delivered from captivity to sin and Satan march with Him in His triumphal procession sweeping onwards to the glory of God which we are destined to share in all the ages to come. But as we journey on we are privileged to tell abroad the gospel of His grace which rises up to God as fragrant incense, to His praise and honor. Whether men heed the message or reject it, God is glorified as we proclaim the story and tell out His love to a ruined world.

H.A. Ironside