

# 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.

February 2025

## Things Done and Undone

Pastor Jason Salmi  
Vancouver, Washington

**T**HE AFTERMATH OF THE HOLIDAY season, which builds up to and culminates at Christmas, and then trickles on to our celebration of the New Year, has a way of leaving some with a sense of hollowness. This can be due to unmet expectations of what the holidays could (or should) have brought. Or for some it is the reminder of another new year, when this past year hasn't been all that great and all of the signs point to the coming one failing to be great either. Suffice it to say that there is a reason why, for many, the holidays tend to leave them feeling down... and the reality of going back to "normal" life afterwards brings down still many more in the days and weeks following.

Christians are not immune from these sorts of struggles. In fact, many of us look backward and forward and see that, though we want to serve God faithfully, and have the best of intentions to do so, we often get in our own way. An honest accounting of our lives, try as we may, will generally expose that we have done much we shouldn't have, and left undone much that we should. While it's often easy to sense that God is near and feel our devotion to Him when we are worshipping together and singing songs which proclaim the great things He has done for us, it's also easy to afterwards feel a sense of condemnation because our sins and failures confront us.

This Christmas I learned a new song that is beautiful, especially in times like that. It's called "O Come, All You Unfaithful," by Sovereign Grace. While there is something wonderful about singing, "O come, all ye faithful, joyful and triumphant..." those words might leave a bitter taste when we are being dragged down by a sense of our own lack of faithfulness, joy, and triumph.

For those who are feeling as if you have nothing to offer to God, I invite you to ponder this selection of lyrics:

O come, all you unfaithful,  
Come, weak and unstable,  
Come, know you are not alone.  
O come, barren and waiting ones,  
Weary of praying, come,  
See what your God has done.

O come, bitter and broken,  
Come with fears unspoken,  
Come, taste of His perfect love.  
O come, guilty and hiding one,  
There is no need to run,  
See what your God has done.

He's the Lamb who was given,  
Slain for our pardon,  
His promise is peace  
For those who believe.

So come, though you have nothing,  
Come, He is the offering,  
Come, see what your God has done.



The power of the Gospel does not depend on either what you've done, or what you've left undone. The power of the Gospel is based on what He has done for you. And the promise of the Gospel is that it is for you. Find the rest, peace, help, comfort, and strength that you can't find in yourself in your Lord Jesus Christ. ~

*And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. And they, continuing daily with one accord in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart, Praising God, and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.*

Acts 2:42-47

# The Mighty Work of Redemption

Mark Traffic  
New Ipswich, New Hampshire

**W**HEN JESUS STARTED HIS MINISTRY on earth His first recorded words are as follows: From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, *Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.* (Matthew 4:17) Also: *Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.* (Mark 1:14-15)

This summarizes the core message in the Scriptures. God desires that His Word would find each one of us a guilty sinner before Him and thus repent. *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)

God is so good that He does not leave us in a place of hopelessness. We are instructed and encouraged that we would by faith believe the gospel.

*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.*

*For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.*

*Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ.)*

*Therefore as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: That as sin hath*

*reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.* (Romans 5:1-21)

I remember a story told by an old Christian when I was a young boy about the lies of Satan. When we are tempted to sin, Satan tells us that it is not a problem, it is ok, it is not really that bad, whatever the temptation is. So Satan deceives us and we give in. Then when we are condemned Satan tells us that it isn't too big of a problem, you don't need to talk about it, just put the sin in the sin bag with the rest of your sins and take care of it on wash day. The sad, sad story ends that, for many, wash day never comes.



On the contrary we have the wonderful Word of God that speaks to us so differently as we see in the previous text. That because of one man's offence Christ had to die. He wants each one of us to know Him that intimately that for the smallest and largest offenses that we have done that He was willing to suffer and to die for even me! Not only for our offences but to restore us to God, to restore what was lost in the fall of Adam. We do not have to wait for wash day but we can boldly come to the throne of grace and there find help in time of need. There we find forgiveness, redemption, peace, joy, and life. We thank God for His Word that continues to go forth into all the world, the Word to work repentance and grant faith in the hearts of men. May God continue to help us to proclaim that same message that Jesus came to preach. May all men personally know and experience this great and mighty work of redemption that Christ has performed for each one of us.

*In God's peace.*

# Forgiven and Forgiving

Pastor Jay Weidner  
Laurium, Michigan

**Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him. And the apostles said unto the Lord, Increase our faith. And the Lord said, If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye might say unto this sycamine tree, Be thou plucked up by the root, and be thou planted in the sea; and it should obey you. But which of you, having a servant plowing or feeding cattle, will say unto him by and by, when he is come from the field, Go and sit down to meat? And will not rather say unto him, Make ready wherewith I may sup, and gird thyself, and serve me, till I have eaten and drunken; and afterward thou shalt eat and drink? Doth he thank that servant because he did the things that were commanded him? I trow not. So likewise ye, when ye shall have done all those things which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do.**


**Luke 17:3-10**

How many times? Jesus says every time. Every time a person sins and repents they are to be forgiven. Isn't that a little much? No wonder the disciples told Jesus to give them more faith. They couldn't understand how they would ever be able to fulfill what He said, so they asked for more faith. However, as Jesus indicated, they didn't need more faith; they simply needed to be obedient servants and do what they were told. They had all the faith they would ever need; they only needed to be obedient.

So is the wideness of God's grace. He doesn't explain it, He simply gives it. It seems impossible, doesn't it? Doesn't God get tired of forgiving us after a while? Obviously not, God would not and could not invoke upon us what He wouldn't do Himself. God showed us the depth of His forgiveness and grace on Calvary's cross. There the Son of

God bleeding on the cross forgave us, not just once but once forever (Hebrews 10:12).

The disciples couldn't fulfill Jesus' expectation given their circumstance at the time Jesus uttered these words, but after His death, resurrection, ascension and sending of the Holy Spirit they not only understood; they did it. They forgave a world that treated them horribly, even at times imitating their Lord in forgiving the very people who were putting them to death. Those who had experienced so great a grace dispensed the same. The disciples received so much grace from God in covering their own sins that it became second nature to do the same for others; a new nature, the nature born of God; an eternal nature from a new birth in Jesus Christ.



It is of the LORD'S mercies  
that we are not consumed,  
because his compassions fail not.  
They are new every morning:  
great is thy faithfulness.

**Lamentations 3:22-23**

In this way we begin the new year, the same way we ended the last: forgiven. How sweet the sound, not just once but forgiven forever. So let us begin this year forgiven and forgiving, that grace would be the watchword of the kingdom and we would be found obedient servants for Jesus' sake.

*It is of the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22-23)*

*Happy and Blessed New Year.*

**Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth. The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.**

**Psalm 46:10-11**

As we are, in a personal sense, sometimes touched by tragedy, loss, sickness and pain, it's not unlike us to wonder, "God, where are You?" Where is God at times like that? You've probably heard that. People write books about it, trying to somehow give the Christian some kind of reason for why we seem to think God has permitted such terrible events to happen. Where was He? Today as I was reading this Psalm, two different Scriptures came to my mind. One was very early in the first chapters of the first book. We have our first parents there, Adam and Eve, long ago. The question wasn't from Adam, "God, where are You?" The question came from God, and God said, "Adam, where are YOU?" Remember that? "Where are you, Adam?" That was the question God had for Adam. Then my thoughts went to Job, as he struggled under the trials that he endured, and God asked Job, "Where were YOU when I laid the foundations of the world?" When I thought on that, I thought how small I am, and how often I fail to understand: GOD HAS NOT CHANGED. God has never, ever moved away from me. Just the opposite. I have moved away from Him. We have left Him. Every tragedy, every event that brings sadness to our hearts or questions to our minds, if we really, seriously take away all the emotion and look at it objectively, it's because of what WE have done, what humankind, the children of Adam, have done, through our first parents in original sin, and in actual sins that we have committed. By the grace of God, when we recognize that, we're no longer asking, "God, where were You?" We're thanking God that He never left us, in spite of the fact that these things have happened to us. His promises remain, as they have through all generations. Through all generations.

Ron Holmgren  
Battle Ground, Washington

# The Prophecy of John Coming, Fulfilled

Gwen Wilson  
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children young and old,

God's peace to you all. I do hope this new year is off to a good start with each of you.

We are enjoying (well, some of us anyway) some very mild weather here in Washington state. Many wish it was snowy. We may get some of that yet, but we don't usually get too much white, except in the mountains.

For this article I am going to share about that voice of one crying in the wilderness that I'm sure you have all heard about in preaching at some point. Lets look in *St. Luke 3*.

**I**F WE GO TO **ISAIAH 40** in the Old Testament, we can read how that prophet prophesied of the coming of John. His name is not mentioned in that chapter but that was who was being spoken of. This prophecy was declaring the promise of the Gospel, that good news of Jesus.

*The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it. (Isaiah 40:3-5)*

700 years later in the New Testament, in *St. Luke 3*, there is that one who was spoken of, that voice crying in the wilderness.

*Luke 3:2b-6: ...The word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth. And all flesh shall see the salvation of God.*

This John the Baptist was Jesus' cousin and he was sent to prepare the way for the people to receive Jesus who was coming. Jesus was even physically walking into this area near the Jordan River where John was baptizing people.



It was here that Jesus also came and told John to baptize Him also. The people gathered near the river got the first sight of Jesus and witnessed the miracle of a dove coming down to rest on Him and hearing God speak, saying, *Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased. (Luke 3:22)*

The Savior of the world was come and He was beginning His Father's work.

Isaiah prophesied so many years before and it becomes reality in the New Testament. We can see even from this account that the Bible is the infallible Word of God. We can trust in it, believe it, and hope in it.

John was sent to bear witness to Jesus our Light, that light that would save us from our sins and give us such great hope in a life everlasting in heaven with Him one day.

Jesus is returning one day and my prayer is that you will all pray to stay fast in the Word that brings hope and peace that passes all understanding. We who believe are a very blessed people, and more blessed than those who got to see Jesus in the flesh when He walked on earth.

*But whoso keepeth his word, in him verily is the love of God perfected: hereby know we that we are in him. (1 John 2:5)*

God's blessings on each of you in this new year as you grow in Him.

*God's peace.*

***There failed not ought of any good thing which the LORD had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass.***

***Joshua 21:45***



**W**HAT A TESTIMONY to the faithfulness of God! He fulfilled His word to the letter, whether in grace or in government, as He brought His people through the wilderness and into the promised inheritance. As they looked back they could say, "All that God promised He has accomplished." So shall it be with those who now know Him as revealed in Christ Jesus. When we have ended our pilgrimage and we survey the way we have come from the vantage point of our eternal home in the Father's house, we shall praise and adore Him. He saved us and guided us to an assured habitation, and His Word has been our confidence through all the journey.

*H.A. Ironside*

# Of Simeon

Martin Luther

*And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.*

Luke 2:33

**W**HAT ARE THOSE WONDERFUL THINGS spoken concerning [Jesus]? They are the things concerning which St. Simeon had spoken immediately before, when in the temple he took the child Jesus upon his arms, saying: "Now lettest thou thy servant depart, Lord according to thy word, in peace; for mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou hast prepared before the face of all peoples; a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel." At these things, St. Luke says, they marvelled, namely, that this aged and holy man stood there before them in the temple, took the child in his arms and spoke of him so exultingly, calling him the light of the world, a Saviour of all nations, a glory of all the people of Israel; Simeon himself thinking so highly of him that he would now fain depart this life after he had seen the child.

Now it must indeed excite wonder that such things were proclaimed openly by Simeon in that public and sacred place with reference to that poor and insignificant child, whose mother was so humble and lowly and whose father Joseph was not wealthy. How could such a child be considered the Saviour of all men, the light of the Gentiles and the glory and honour of all Israel? At present, after we have had so many proofs of Christ's greatness, these words do no longer seem so wonderful; but then, when nothing as yet was known of Jesus, they were indeed marvellous, and this lowly child was very unlike the great and mighty being portrayed by Simeon. But Joseph and Mary believed it nevertheless, and just therefore they marvelled. If they had not believed it, the words of Simeon would have appeared to them insignificant, untrue and worthless, and not at all wonderful. Therefore, the fact that they were marvelling, shows that Joseph and Mary possessed a strong and sublime faith.

But some one might say: why then do they marvel at this? Had not the angels told them before that this child was Christ and the Saviour, and had not the shepherds also spoken glorious things concerning Him? It was also very wonderful that the kings or wise men had come from distant lands to worship Him with their offerings. Mary knew well that she had conceived Him of the Holy Spirit, and that wonderful events had attended His birth. Moreover, the angel Gabriel had said that He should be great and be called the Son of the Most High. In short, all the preceding events had been marvellous, up to this time; now nothing wonderful occurs, but only those things are announced and proclaimed concerning Him which have not happened and are not yet seen.

It seems to me that in this case we need not look very far for an explanation. The Evangelist does not deny that they had also marvelled before this. He simply desires to relate here what they did when St. Simeon spoke such glorious things concerning the child. He means to say: When St.

Simeon spake thus, the child's parents did not despise his words, but believed them firmly. Therefore they remained and listened to him and marvelled at his utterances; what could they have done in addition to this? Thus it is not denied here that previously they marvelled just as much, if not more.

We shall inquire later into the spiritual significance of this wonderment; now we are concerned about the literal sense, serving as an example of our faith and teaching us how wonderful are the works of God concerning us; for the end is very unlike the beginning. The beginning is nothing, the end is everything; just as the infant Christ here appears to be very insignificant, and yet He finally became the Saviour and light of all nations.

If Joseph and Mary had judged according to outward appearances, they would have considered Christ no more than a poor child. But they disregarded the outward appearance and cling to the words of Simeon with a firm faith, therefore they marvel at his speech. Thus we must also disregard all the senses when contemplating the works of God, and only cling to His words, so that our eyes and our senses may not offend us.



The fact that they were marvelling at the words of Simeon is also mentioned to teach us that the Word of God is never preached in vain, as we read in *Isaiah 55:11*: *So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth (i. e. out of the mouth of God's messengers): 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.* Thus the Evangelist delivered a warm-hearted, beautiful sermon, preaching the pure Gospel and the Word of God. For the Gospel is

nothing but a sermon whose theme is Christ, declaring Him to be the Saviour, light and glory of all the world. Such preaching fills the heart with joy and wonder at this great grace and comfort, if it is received in faith.

But although this sermon was very beautiful and comforting, there were only a few who believed; nay people despised it as being foolish, going hither and thither in the Temple. Some prayed, others did something else, but they did not give heed to the words of Simeon. Yet, as the Word of God must produce results, there were indeed some who received it with joy and wonder, namely Joseph and Mary. The Evangelist here also rebukes the unbelief of the Jews, for as this occurred publicly in the temple, there were many present, and yet they would not believe, the fact that the Saviour was only a child causing them all to stumble. Thus we learn here that we should hear the Word of God gladly, for it will invariably produce good fruits. ~

# Our Bright and Morning Star

Pastor Chuck Bylkas  
South Range, Michigan

*I, Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star. 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 22:16-17*

**P**HILIPP NICOLAI WAS a hymn writer who lived in Westphalia, the northwest region of Germany during the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. Nicolai was perhaps best known for writing and composing the music for the hymns "Wake, Awake, For Night is Flying" and "O Morning Star How Fair and Bright" (#159 and #66 in our hymnal, The Hymns and Songs of Zion.) These two hymns were so well regarded, that they became known as the King and Queen of Chorales.

Nicolai also served as a Lutheran pastor in the village of Unna during a dreadful time of pestilence. Between July 1597 and January 1598, over 1300 people died of the plague. During a single week in August, 170 individuals were victims of this deadly pestilence. In the midst of this deep distress, Nicolai wrote a series of meditations entitled "Freuden Spiegel" or "Mirror of Joy" in English. It was his prayer that these meditations would bring comfort to his readers in their great sorrow. Both "Wake, Awake" and "O Morning Star" arose from Nicolai's "Mirror of Joy."

In one version of "O Morning Star," Nicolai reminds us that God blesses us even in the midst of sorrow: "Earth's deep sadness may perplex us, and distress us, yet with heavenly joy You bless us."

God not only speaks light and life into a world of suffering and death, but also overcomes the dominion of darkness by the finished work of His Son, Jesus Christ. We have the forgiveness of sins, life and salvation through the cross of Christ. Nicolai echoes this thought in the fourth verse of the same hymn:

"Almighty Father, in Your Son  
You loved us when not yet begun  
Was this old earth's foundation!  
Your Son has ransomed us in love  
To live in Him here and above;  
This is Your great salvation. Alleluia!  
Christ the living, To us giving

Life forever, Keeps us Yours and fails us never!"

Thanks be to God for His Son Jesus, the Bright and Morning Star, who paid our ransom with His holy and precious blood, who gives us life and who never fails us. *Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot: Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you..." (1 Peter 1:18-20) ~*

## The Sabbath Rest

Pastor Nicholas Kandoll  
New York Mills, Minnesota

*And it came to pass, that he went through the corn fields on the sabbath day; and his disciples began, as they went, to pluck the ears of corn. And the Pharisees said unto him, Behold, why do they on the sabbath day that which is not lawful? And he said unto them, Have ye never read what David did, when he had need, and was an hungred, he, and they that were with him? How he went into the house of God in the days of Abiathar the high priest, and did eat the shewbread, which is not lawful to eat but for the priests, and gave also to them which were with him? And he said unto them, The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath: Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath. And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand. And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him. And he saith unto the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. And he saith unto them, Is it lawful to do good on the sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other. And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him.*

*Mark 2:23-3:6*

**J**ESUS' DISCIPLES WERE picking grain on the Sabbath. Some Pharisees questioned the practice, viewing it as a violation of God's law. Here, it's important to remember the context. The Sabbath was a gift from God, a day of rest and worship. However, the Jews had strayed from the original intent and developed a legalistic interpretation. They turned the best day of the week into the worst. They took the gift of God and turned it into something that they had to do.

The Sabbath rest extends to everyone – family, servants, and even livestock. This reflects God's desire for all creation to experience renewal and restoration. In his explanation of the Ten Commandments, Martin Luther emphasizes that the Sabbath is for hearing God's Word. He says, "We should fear and love God that we may not despise preaching and His Word, but hold it sacred and gladly hear and learn it."

Jesus' core message is that the Sabbath exists for the benefit of humanity; it's a blessing! Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath and He fulfills it for us! Christ is our Sabbath Rest as He said, *Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. (Matthew 11:28-29) Amen.*

*God's peace.*

# Anticipation and Appreciation

Lois Matson  
Yacolt, Washington

**Y**EARS AGO WE WOULD TRAVEL across the country to visit my family, and often one question while planning our trip was, “Should we tell our Michigan family that we’re coming?” Of course we needed to arrange lodging ahead of time, but sometimes we had the opportunity to surprise certain family members. That was a moment of fun, but it didn’t always work out well. Doctor appointments, travel and previously-made plans sometimes conflicted with our time spent with family.

With a surprise visit, there was one second of, “Oh! You’ve come home!” followed by a longer period of juggling schedules and meetings. We may have missed some family time because they were out of town when we were in town.

On the other hand, if we told everyone ahead of time that we were coming for a visit, they didn’t have the initial surprise, but they had the longer-lasting anticipation of our arrival.

Anticipating our trip brought almost as much joy as the actual trip itself, both for those who traveled and those who were at home waiting for company. My parents and siblings looked forward to our arrival from the minute they learned we were planning to come. Our children planned and re-planned what they would bring along to occupy the long hours of riding. They looked forward to cousin time, sightseeing, and souvenirs. We all discussed routes and weather, snacks and reading material.

And I realized a basic truth. Anticipation leads to appreciation. When we look forward to something, it builds an appreciation for that thing. Maybe that’s why we are often encouraged in the Scripture to anticipate—to hope for and look forward to—the good things that God will do in the future.

It works the other way, too. When we look back at the promises that God has fulfilled in the past, it gives us confidence and hope that He will continue to keep His promises in the future.

The Scripture uses “hope” and wait” more often than anticipation. We hope in the Lord, and we wait on the Lord:

**Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy; To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine. Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he is our help and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name. Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.**

*Psalm 33:18-22*

**I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons. I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fulness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.**

*Psalm 16:7-11*

The psalmist writes of our anticipation of God’s good work toward us, our hope in His salvation:

**My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him. He only is my rock and my salvation: he is my defence; I shall not be moved. In God is my salvation and my glory: the rock of my strength, and my refuge, is in God. Trust in him at all times; ye people, pour out your heart before him: God is a refuge for us. Selah.**

*Psalm 62:5-8*

The Apostle Peter wrote about our anticipation of Christ’s return:

**But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. 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.**

**But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.**

*2 Peter 3:8-13*



We wait.  
We hope.  
We trust.  
We anticipate.  
We appreciate.  
Thanks be to God!

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## The Plenteous Harvest

Pastor Orval Wirkkala, 2018

*And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest.*

*Matthew 9:35-38*

**A**POSTLE PAUL WAS transformed into one who became a gatherer of precious-redeemed souls into the kingdom of God, whereas until that amazing turn around he had been a scatterer of souls, acting as a sorter in that he according to his knowledge of God considered himself justified in determining who God wanted and who God didn't want.

Faith now drove him to a new way of life in that he wrote thus: *It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. (Galatians 2:20)*

*And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. (Acts 20: 22)*

Paul had come to freedom, come to the death of himself, which meant that he now saw things as God sees them. His desire for all to be saved became concert with God's desires, and his flesh now being dead no longer had dominion over him. How did he then approach his calling towards his fellow humans?

*For though I be free from all men, yet have I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more. And unto the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might gain the Jews; to them that are under the law, as under the law, that I might gain them that are under the law; To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. To the weak became I as weak, that I might gain the weak: I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you. (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)*

The harvest is great, the laborers are few. We are those who have been gathered into His kingdom and as a result our hearts burn with desire for those who have not yet been gathered unto Him. May we consider the greatness of the harvest and the need for laborers as we continue to present our bodies as living sacrifices unto the Lord for His purposes. May it be that when we hear the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" that we reply with the Prophet Isaiah, "Here am I! Send me."

But where shall we go? What shall we do?

*And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled. (Luke 14:23) ~*

### Prayer of Martin Luther

Behold, Lord, an empty vessel that needs to be filled.

My Lord, fill it.

I am weak in the faith; strengthen me.

I am cold in love; warm me and make me fervent, that my love may go out to my neighbor.

I do not have a strong and firm faith; at times I doubt and am unable to trust You altogether.

O Lord, help me.

Strengthen my faith and trust in You.

In You I have sealed the treasure of all I have.

I am poor; You are rich and came to be merciful to the poor.

I am a sinner; You are upright.

With me, there is an abundance of sin; in You is the fullness of righteousness.

Therefore I will remain with You, of whom I can receive, but to whom I may not give.