

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.

January 2025

The Year of Our Lord

Ken Matson

New Ipswich, New Hampshire

AS WE REFLECT on the last year, we see that many things have happened. Many of our loved ones have left this world, many new babies have been born, and there were many discouraging changes and yet also encouraging changes in our government. There's been abundant joys and abundant sorrows. But as believers we have an anchor, a hope in God through faith in His Son Jesus that whatever happens we can have peace. We know that God is in control and loves us.

Paul says in *2 Corinthians 4:7-12*:
But we have this treasure (Jesus) in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not ourselves. We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. So then death worketh in us, but life in you.

We know that in this life we will have troubles, sorrows, and persecutions, but when we have Christ living within us, we can be confident that though this mortal body dies we are given new life in Jesus. We see that when Jesus is manifested in our mortal bodies (our flesh) and our own wants and desires are pushed aside, it works life in those around us: *So then death worketh in us, but life in you.*" (*2 Corinthians 4:12*) This becomes a daily experience that when we are a living sacrifice as Paul says in *Romans 12:1*: *I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice unto God, which is your reasonable service.* I believe this means that moment by moment we are to put aside our own desires and wants for the sake of serving God and our neighbor. We are always to put others before ourselves which

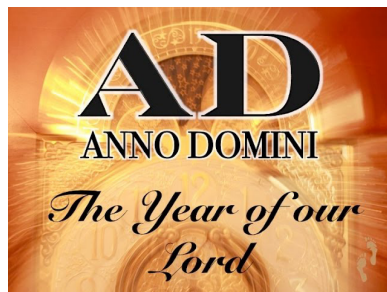
Paul says is our reasonable service. And when we set out to serve as we should, and find that we fail in so many ways, I say unto you to not become discouraged because in your failures Jesus is exalted, and through our weaknesses we are made strong. Jesus came to save sinners, of whom Paul says he was chief in *1 Timothy 1:15*: *This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.*

I encourage you this year to continue to serve and strive to walk obedient to God's Word and His calling. As Paul says in *2 Corinthians 12:9-10*: *And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.* Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak,

then am I strong. Therefore, let us as brothers and sisters in Christ love one another, pray for one another, comfort one another in our sorrows, troubles, sicknesses, etc... knowing that we all can have the peace of God that passes our understanding, knowing that whatever happens in this life we have a far better place waiting for us on the other side, where Jesus is waiting for us and where we will be reunited with all our loved ones that have gone on before us.

As we begin the new year, let's remember that it is the Year of The Lord. *2 Timothy 4:8*: *Henceforth there is laid up for me (us) a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me (us) at that day: and not me (us) only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.* Let us therefore wait with patience in the advent of our Lord our Savior Jesus' second coming to take us home to be with Him forever and ever.

Happy New Year and God's peace.



**Behold, he cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him:
and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of him. Even so, Amen.
I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord,
which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty.**

Revelation 1:7-8

The Gospel-Message of Light and Life

Paul Kretzmann

PAUL USES FRANKNESS in delivering his message: *Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God. But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us. (2 Corinthians 4:1-7)*



To be a minister of that office which he has just praised so highly was Paul's privilege: Therefore, having this ministry, even as we have received mercy, we do not become faint. It was an unmerited act of God's mercy which made him a minister of the Gospel (Ephesians 3:8). He had received this ministry, not for any reason for which he might boast, but by a free gift of God. This fact sustained him amidst the difficulties and trials of his official duties and kept him from becoming finally and definitely discouraged. Humble heroism was the key-note of Paul's character; his exalted position did not fill him with pride. The mercy and the grace of God, whose strength is made perfect in weakness, was the inexhaustible fount of his strength and courage.

But not only has Paul a certain remedy against discouragement and faintness, but also against the evils which he saw in the case of the false teachers: But we have renounced, disclaimed, the hidden things of shame. He wanted openness, candor, frankness to stand out most prominently in all his work. For unless the work of a pastor is at all times carried on in this manner, he will become identified with hidden things, with matters which shun the light of the sun, and which thus produce or bring dishonor upon him and his office. This behavior is almost invariably associated with such false prophets as try to break into organized congregations and steal the hearts of the members. And with reference to the same people Paul writes: Not walking in craftiness nor handling the Word of God deceitfully. He was not found engaged in, not busying himself with, intrigues and schemes by which men without a conscience sought to make a way for themselves and to acquire influence; he did not try to insinuate himself into powerful positions by false ambition. Nor did he adulterate the Word of God for such ends by preaching so as to obtain favor with the people, instead of proclaiming the Law in all its severity and the Gospel in all its beauty (2 Timothy 4:3). Rather by the manifestation of the truth he commended

himself, literally, to every conscience of men in the sight of God, to every possible variety of the human conscience. In his public and private teaching he brought out the truths of the Gospel plainly, so that no one could be in doubt as to the way of salvation. To every variety of human conscience he thus commended himself; they must needs acknowledge his sincerity, they must give him this testimony, that his motives were above reproach, that his teaching conformed to the highest ideals of truth and duty. He knew also that all his work was being done in the sight of God, that God was

present at all times to hear him. Men recognized the truth and the honesty of his preaching, and before God he had a clear conscience.

This fact being established, Paul can once more refer to his words in chapter 1:15-16 and 2:12-18, by saying: But even if our Gospel is veiled, in them that are perishing it is veiled. The Gospel in itself is anything but dark and obscure (chapter 3:13); it is a light that shines in the dark place of this world, intended to illumine the hearts of all men. But the opposition of men, their refusal to accept its simple statement of grace, places the

veil of willful ignorance before the bright beauty of the Gospel, thus preventing its clear rays from entering into their hearts. Thus it is the punishment of their own guilt that they are lost (1 Corinthians 1:18); they are judged already (John 3:18). "But it must be so, the Word of God must be the most peculiar thing in heaven and earth; therefore it must do both things at the same time, enlighten and honor in the highest degree those that believe and honor it, and blind and disgrace in the highest degree those that do not believe it. To the former it must be the most certain and best known: to the latter it must be the least known and most hidden. The former laud and praise it in the highest degree; the latter blaspheme and disgrace it in the highest degree, so that its works bear full sway and are not unimportant, but peculiar, terrible works in the hearts of men."

The cause for this condition is very distinctly not in the Gospel itself, but in man, due to the machinations of the devil: In whom the god of this world, of this present age, has blinded the minds of the unbelieving. Satan is the god, the prince, of this present age (chapter 2:11; John 12:31; 14:30). He has his work in the children of unbelief (Ephesians 2:2; 5:6; 1 John 3:10); they give him willing obedience. But he, in turn, as a fitting wage, has blinded the minds of the unbelieving. Because they were guilty of rejecting the truth, the blinding could make progress in their hearts, could be a judgment upon them; for Satan could not perform this wickedness in the hearts of the believers, of them that are being saved, because to them the Gospel is not veiled. And the purpose of the devil in blinding the hearts of the unbelieving is: That the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should not shine forth, should not dawn upon them, or that they should not see it clearly, it should remain hidden before them. The sum total, the content, of the Gospel is the brightness of the glory of God in Christ Jesus, the glorious revelation of Jesus as the Savior of the world. But so well is the design of Satan realized in the children of unbelief that

this glory of Christ, who also in regard to His work is the perfect image of God, is not seen by them, does not penetrate into their understanding.

To justify his calling the Gospel which he preached the proclamation of the divine glory, the apostle now writes: For not ourselves preach we, but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for the sake of Jesus. If Paul had been preaching himself, his own wisdom, if he had been seeking honor and glory for himself, it would have been wicked presumption on his part to condemn those that refused to accept his teaching as being on the way to perdition. But his one thought, his one object, was to set forth Christ Jesus before his hearers as the Lord, to whom they owed the obedience of faith by reason of His redemption. And far from asserting any authority, power, or lordship over them, he stated, on the contrary, that he considered himself and his fellow-teachers the servants of the congregations, not absolute slaves bound to do their will as they dictated, but servants for the sake of Jesus, ministers of Christ, stewards of the mysteries of God. And in this sense also every true preacher of the Lord Jesus Christ is a servant of the congregation entrusted to him, as he becomes all things to all men in order to gain souls for Christ (1 Corinthians 9:19).

There is another reason also which causes Paul to be so fearless and frank in his ministry: For it is God that said, Out

of darkness light shall shine, who has shined in our hearts for the enlightenment of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. It was in the beginning of the world that the creative power of God's word caused the light to shine out of darkness (Genesis 1:3). And the same God who thus created the physical light is the Author of the true spiritual light. It was not merely that he blew a dying ember into flame, as Luther remarks, but that he brought forth light out of darkness. There was darkness in the heart of Paul, as in that of all men by nature, spiritual darkness and death. But God created spiritual life and light in his heart in his conversion; and this reflection of the glory of God is now used to illuminate others; God has given to the preachers of the Gospel the ability to give to others the light of the knowledge of God through Christ, as manifested in Christ. Note: This function of the converted people is not confined to the pastors, but every believer that has experienced the illuminating power of God in his own heart will, in turn, act as a light tower to lead others to know Christ as their Lord and be saved. Mark also the contrast in the entire passage: The god of this world, the devil, blinds; the ministry of the Gospel gives light. Without the Gospel and its illuminating power the heart of man will remain forever in spiritual darkness; but if that power removes the darkness, there is a fullness of light and glory. ~

Yearly Observance of Epiphany Is Profitable

Leo the Great



IT IS THE RIGHT AND reasonable duty of true piety, dearly-beloved, on the days which bear witness to the works of Divine mercy, to rejoice with the whole heart and to celebrate with all honour the things which have been wrought for our salvation: for the very law of recurring seasons calls us to such devout observance, and has now brought before us the feast of the Epiphany, consecrated by the Lord's appearance soon after the day on which the Son of God co-eternal with the Father was born of a Virgin. And herein the providence of God has established a great safeguard to our faith, so that, while the worship of the Saviour's earliest infancy is repeated year by year, the production of true man's nature in Him might be proved by the original verifications themselves. For this it is that justifies the ungodly, this it is that makes sinners saints, to wit the belief in the true Godhead and the true Manhood of the one Jesus

Christ, our Lord: the Godhead, whereby being before all ages in the form of God He is equal with the Father: the Manhood whereby in the last days He is united to Man in the form of a slave. For the confirmation therefore of this Faith which was to be fore-armed against all errors, it was a wondrous loving provision of the Divine plan that a nation which dwelt in the far-off country of the East and was cunning in the art of reading the stars, should receive the sign of the infant's birth who was to reign over all Israel. For the unwonted splendour of a bright new star appeared to the wise men and filled their mind with such wonder, as they gazed upon its brilliance, that they could not think they ought to neglect what was announced to them with such distinctness. And, as the event showed, the grace of God was the disposing cause of this wondrous thing: who when the whole of Bethlehem itself was still unaware of Christ's birth, brought it to the knowledge of the nations who would believe, and declared that which human words could not yet explain, through the preaching of the heavens.

Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him. And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born. And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel. Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared. And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was. When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. (Matthew 2:1-10)

Wise Men Bow the Knee to Jesus the King

Gwen Wilson
Ridgefield, Washington

Dear Children far and near,

Hello to each of you readers, and greetings of peace from our King and Lord. A New Year is here!

We have just celebrated our Saviors birth and ponder on the mystery of it all. That should fill our hearts with thankfulness and praise. The wonder of it all that we get to be God's children through His Son who came to save us.

We will look into *St. Matthew, chapter 2*.

I AM THINKING that the wise men were astronomers, and it was revealed to them through a new star that the Messiah was born. These men lived in the land of Persia (modern-day Iran), around 800-900 miles from Bethlehem. These men had obviously read about the Messiah being born at some time. No one knew when that was to take place, until the angel Gabriel visited Mary and told her she was to have a son who would be the Savior of the world, that His name would be great.

In the recorded account, it was nigh 2 years later, and these wise men were just doing what they always did, reading the stars, and then they saw a new star. They knew what it meant and packed up their things, loaded their camels and possibly hired servants to lead the camels and set out on a very long journey. Their hearts were set on finding the Messiah and this journey would take several months.

I can only imagine what the trip was like. They would have met many new peoples and saw many sights that were so different from where they lived.

I wonder what they told people where they were traveling and the reason for their trip. I am sure that they told people about the new star and what it meant. In essence they were doing God's work by spreading good news to many who may not have heard of Jesus' birth 2 years before.

They would have have to stop each night to rest and let the animals rest and most likely traveled in a caravan, as this was the safest way to travel. They used routes that were used for trade, so they were bound to meet others traveling, going the same direction as they or in the opposite direction.

On they went until they reached Jerusalem. Here, they went to seek out king Herod to ask, *Where is he that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. (Matthew 2:2)*

Just picturing these wise men so close to completing their journey makes me feel excited for them.

Herod was troubled at what they told him and immediately his heart was set on finding Jesus to kill Him.

He gathered all his wisest men to ask them what they knew of this "king." They told him, "The prophet said He'd be born in Bethlehem." Herod put on his best face and asked the

wise men to come tell him where Jesus was after they found Him, as he'd like to worship Him also.

The wise men stepped outside Herod's palace and there was the star up ahead waiting to lead them. The star led them right to Joseph and Mary's home. Oh, how those wise men's hearts were feeling the joy and excitement to know they were about to meet the King of the Jews! The Bible says, *When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. (Vs. 10)*

They lighted from their camels, dug out their precious gifts. I can imagine them looking at each other with hearts bursting with joy and reverence as they walked towards Jesus' home. With a light knock on the door, it was soon opened and there stood Joseph, who invited them in. *And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh. (Vs. 11)* (That last line made me cry because its just so beautiful.) They had come all those miles that took months of travel and now they have met this KING. Journey complete, they could go back home with their hearts full and overflowing. Now they could and would share with those they met on the way and all those they had contact with in their homeland, that the Messiah has truly come and its all true of what the Word says of Him.

We all know that the wise men were warned by God not to return to Herod but go back to their country another way.

Soon after the wise men left, God sent an angel to Joseph in a dream warning him to flee to Egypt with Mary and Jesus, as Herod was seeking to kill Jesus. Joseph did not wait until daylight. He woke Mary and they gathered some things and under the cover of darkness they departed into Egypt. They remained there until the death of Herod. This was the fulfillment of the word of the Lord through a prophet, *Out of Egypt have I called my son. (Vs. 15)*

Verses 16-18 give the account of Herod who was yet living, sending his soldiers out to slay all the boy children 2 years old and younger. There was much weeping and sorrow that came upon the people. Herod was hoping that would surely take out this KING. He was so jealous. He did not succeed. God was protecting His Son.

As this chapter wraps up, Joseph, Mary and Jesus do settle in Nazareth, and this was to fulfill another prophecy that said, *He shall be called a Nazarene. (Vs. 23)*

One day at the end of our earthly journey of many or few years, we will come face to face with Jesus our KING. All will be as it was prophesied and all will be complete.

I pray that you and I and all who believe in Jesus will press on and no matter what life throws in our path, that our hearts will be set on heaven and meeting our GOD and KING.

I wish you all a Happy New Year in the Lord.

God's peace.



The Gift of Salvation

Pastor Phil Wilson ; Hockinson, Washington
May 2004 CM

Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children: Let them praise the name of the Lord: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven.

Psalm 148:12-13

A mere utterance of the Lord's name is praise unto Him, and He is glorified. Oh, that God would give me the humility and childlike reverence which would keep me as a babe unto whom the truth may be revealed, and not as one who is wise and prudent, unto whom the truth is hidden.

I have wondered how God has chosen me, a weak vessel, to be one of His elect. Although we should not question God's will or His perfect plan, I see in myself nothing but corruption. This leads me to wonder how it can be. If we look at this blessing against our total unworthiness, we can clearly see that life eternal, given by God, is a true gift.

He has freely given us the gift of everlasting life if we but lay hold of it by faith. The Bible teaches us in many places that a reward awaits, for it says, *Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven. (Matthew 5:12)* A Christian may be rewarded in this life for his good works to his family, or to society, but all glory truly belongs to God. The just, who live by faith, have a reward in heaven unequalled by anything this world has to offer.

Jesus, in the most beautiful sermon ever spoken, warned of the rewards of the flesh in this life. *Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. (Matthew 6:2)* And that reward is that they may be praised and exalted as men, and by men. The reward of life eternal has been stripped from the unjust, for they *shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (Matthew 8:12)*

We may not look at this as a reward in the same manner as eternity in heaven, but nevertheless it is a "reward" of eternal separation from God. What a contrast there is between the rewards of the just and the unjust. We shall receive one of these rewards. Will we accept our reward in this life, or in the life hereafter? As the songwriter wrote:

Fading is the worldling's pleasure,
All his boasted pomp and show;
Solid joys and lasting treasure,
None but Zion's children know. *John Newton, "Glorious Things of Thee Are Spoken"*

How is it, then, that we are chosen? It is a gift from God. We have done nothing, and can do nothing, to merit salvation. As Apostle Paul wrote, *For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of*



Glorious things of thee are spoken,
Zion, city of our God;
he, whose word can ne'er be broken,
formed thee for his own abode.

yourselves: it is the gift of God. (Ephesians 2:8) To the church in Rome, he wrote, *For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord. (Romans 6:23)*

We can relate to this in a natural sense as fathers whom God has blessed with children. I've looked at ours when they were helpless infants, and asked, What have they done to earn the earthly care and love that Gwen and I, as parents, can give? This care is but our "gift" to them, our children. How much greater is the gift from our heavenly Father, who freely gives us everlasting life?

Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith? (Luke 12:27-28) This is another example of God's grace toward unworthy souls. Although Jesus spoke of natural blessings, they signify the spiritual. Solomon, in all his God-given wisdom, wasted his gift, and caused the kingdom of Israel to be divided. For all of his own efforts, he gained no earthly profit. But the lilies of the field, which are submissive recipients of God's grace, are more gloriously arrayed than Solomon was. Let us pray that we may be as those lilies; that God would pour out His grace unto us, and clothe us with the roads of righteousness as beautifully as He has clothed the lilies.

As it was in biblical times, it is now, and always will be: people try to earn the reward of eternal life. Like the rich man who asked Jesus, *Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? (Matthew 19:16)*, many people think that, by their own efforts, they can gain the crown of life.

I remember a young man who said one of his greatest achievements was becoming a born-again Christian. How many ways has man tried to enter into the sheepfold, disregarding the gift that God has given us through the merits of His Son? Jesus said, *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. (John 10:1)* Jesus went on to explain: *Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. (John 10:7-9)* In no way can we earn the gift of salvation by our efforts, for in so doing we leave out Jesus Christ, who so plainly states that through His works we are granted salvation.

The Word gives us many warnings about trying to earn the free gift of God. Simon of Samaria tried to buy the power of the Holy Ghost from Peter. *But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. (Acts 8:20)*

Isaiah wrote, *But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. (Isaiah 64:6)* How, then, can any work of the flesh be an acceptable price for the gift of God, when even the flesh, from which the works come, is nothing but filth? Not only are all our self-righteous acts unworthy of God's gift, but neither are any works of "righteousness." Paul explained it to Titus in this way: *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the*

washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:5-7)

Not even by the efforts to uphold the holy Law of God can one earn the gift of salvation. *Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ, and not by the works of the law: for by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified. (Galatians 2:16)*

Oh, but many great works and deeds have been done by men of God, some may say. This is true, for consider the great work which Abraham did in his willingness to give his son, Isaac, as an offering to God. But was it merely a work of Abraham's flesh? No, it was a work brought about by faith which God gave to Abraham. *Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. (Romans 4:3)*

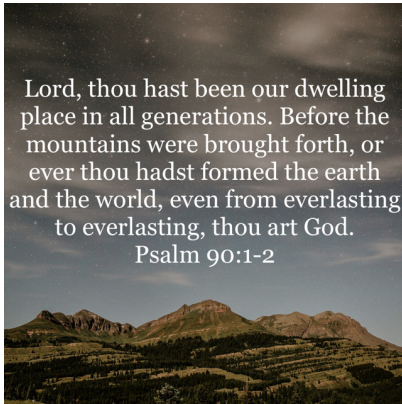
There is a definite contrast between works and faith, and it is important that we understand which is built upon which, and upon which one our salvation is based. Faith is that

foundation upon which the structure of works or fruits can be built. We do not build a structure of faith upon works, which is a crumbling foundation of building blocks that we raise in effort to earn the gift of God.

For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also. (James 2:26) We see that works are needed in a Christian's life, for Jesus said, *Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. (Matthew 7:19)* But let us build the fruits on the foundation of faith in Christ's redemptive work—faith which God gives us by grace—and that these works of faith may glorify God only, so that we may inherit that good gift which comes from heaven: the crown of eternal life.

Let us pray that we may all be clothed in that wedding garment, ready to meet the Bridegroom. We wait for that day when He shall appear, so that we may hear *the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. (Matthew 25:34)*

Leaving you in God's tender care.



Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.
Psalm 90:1-2

Our God, Our Help

Pastor Jay Weidner
Laurium, Michigan

Do you know what's going to happen in the new year? Some people think they do. There are always some famous people who predict the future. Most the time they're wrong but people find the predictions entertaining so they continue to be published. I won't even pretend that I know the future, so I won't make any predictions. Still I do know one thing: God will continue to be with us and be faithful to His promises even as Moses said:

Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God. (Psalm 90:1-2)

What a marvelous assurance it is to know that God has always been with us and even more to know that God has become one of us through His Son Jesus. Now we may rest in His peace knowing that He constantly keeps watch over us.

In our lives we all have times that we count as good and some that we count as bad, yet we experience all these times under the watchful eye of our God. It is this knowledge that lets us rejoice in the good times and to bear with the bad times, realizing that our God is always at work for our good.

The seminary has experienced both good and bad times as well but, in every situation, God has shown Himself faithful in sustaining us and keeping us on the course He wishes us to run. There are times when we have many students and times when we have few, times we have sufficient funding and times when we lack for funds. Still God does not change and His steadfastness never wavers. Isaac Watts recognized this when he penned his wonderful hymn based on Psalm 90:

Our God, our help in ages past,
Our hope for years to come,
Our shelter from the stormy blast,
And our eternal home.

Thanks be to God for His kindness toward us visited upon us so gently through Jesus Christ. Thank you for your support in supplying our needs to continue to operate for another year. Please continue to remember us in your giving. May all the blessings of the new year be freely bestowed upon you and yours. Happy New Year!

God's peace.

So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Return, O LORD, how long? and let it repent thee concerning thy servants. O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil. Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it.

Psalm 90:12-17

Blind Minds and Heart-Eyes

Lois Matson
Yacolt, Washington



Have you seen the emoji with a smiling face and hearts for the eyes? Giving a smiley face more intensity, the heart-eye emoji expresses happiness with an element of playfulness or even flirtatiousness.

But did you know that the Bible talks about **the eyes of our heart** being able to see?!

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him: In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will: That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ. In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory. Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints, Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: **The eyes of your understanding (ESV: “eyes of your hearts”) being enlightened;** that ye may know what is the hope of his calling, and what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come: And hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be the head over all things to the church, Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all. (Ephesians 1:3-23)

Blindness can strike more than the eyes. Paul also writes about blinded minds: *But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom **the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not**, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them. For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord; and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake. For God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:3-6)*

Light makes things visible. When our minds are blinded by the god of this world, we cannot see Emmanuel—God with us. The glorious gospel of Christ for us is hidden. The Light of the world is veiled.



But when the Word is preached and God gives us His Spirit of wisdom and revelation, we know Him and the hope of His calling. When we have received the riches of His inheritance, then our minds are no longer blinded. When we, with unveiled face, see the glory of the Lord, we are being transformed into His image. When eyes of our hearts are not darkened but enlightened, our whole body will be full of light. Jesus warned in *Matthew 6:22-23: The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!* The light of the glorious gospel of Christ brings sight to our darkened heart-eyes and our blinded minds. ~

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The Evangelism of Epiphany

Pastor Nicholas Kandoll
New York Mills, Minnesota

And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret, And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.

Luke 5:1-11

ONE OF THE MAJOR THEMES of Epiphany is Evangelism, that God reveals Himself to the world in our age through the Church. Jesus tells the disciples that He will make them “fishers of people” if they follow Him. Throughout the gospels, He teaches them how to fish for people.

Jesus met people where they were and met their physical needs as well as their spiritual needs. At the end of the Gospel of John the disciples are once again fishing unsuccessfully. Jesus tells them to cast their net on the other side, and they fill their nets instantly. This is not only about showing them who He is but also reminding them what He has called them to do. God has shown us how to evangelize through the life of Jesus. However, we can easily lose focus, put the emphasis on numbers. If we ever get discouraged about the size of the Church the answer is not to find something new to draw people in. The answer is to return to the basics that Jesus laid out through His life, to focus on His Word and trust that God will provide. For God has promised that He will give the increase and give us the harvest.

Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. (Matthew 5:14-16) Jesus does not say that we must try **to be** the light of the world, He says that **we are**. He even goes on to say that our light cannot be hidden. As a Christian, we are joined with Jesus Christ. Jesus not only has taught us how to fish for people but He also directs us where to fish and He fills our nets. It is important to realize that God is the One Who saves people. It is not up to the Christian; the Christian is merely a vessel that sows seeds. The cool thing is that when we do this, we are serving Jesus, too. Jesus has said that whatever we do for our neighbor, we do for Him. When we serve our neighbor, we are directly serving Jesus Christ. That’s what it is to be a fisher of men. ~



**Brightest and best of the stars of the morning,
Dawn on our darkness and lend us your aid!
Star of the east, the horizon adorning,
Guide where our infant Redeemer is laid.**

**Say, shall we yield Him, in costly devotion,
Fragrance of Edom, and off'rings divine?
Gems of the mountain, and pearls of the ocean,
Myrrh from the forest, or gold from the mine?**

**Vainly we offer each ample oblation;
Vainly with gifts would His favor secure:
Richer by far is the heart's adoration;
Dearer to God are the prayers of the poor.**

Reginald Heber