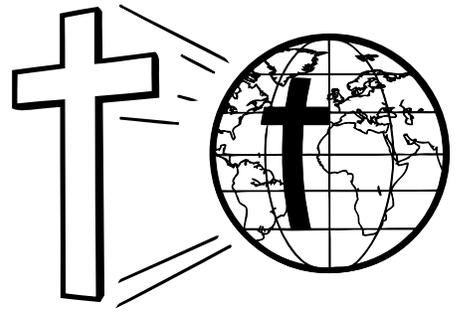


Foundation of Faith



THE BOUNTY OF GOD

Therefore Do Not Worry

Jesus Wants All to Be Filled

Blatant Ingratitude

The Ripened Harvest

A Christian's Wealth

Content

THE BOUNTY OF GOD

- 4 Blatant Ingratitude
With Heart and Hands and Voices**
 - 5 Lord, You Blessed the Earth (Poem)**
 - 6 Celebration of Love**
*Every year we celebrate Thanksgiving—
but what does it mean to us?*
 - 8 Thanksgiving**
 - 9 Do We Have Reason to be Thankful?**
 - 10 Therefore Do Not Worry**
 - 11 A Christian's Wealth**
 - 12 Jesus Wants All to Be Filled**
*God has abundance that we can access for
ourselves and pass on to others.*
- Radio Broadcast
- 14 The Ripened Harvest**
What message is it teaching us?

3 Editorial

Youth Page

16 The Importance of Reading Scripture

Children's Corner

19 Enjoying All Things

Senior's Page

20 I Shall Not Want

The Lord's Prayer

22 Your Will Be Done (Part 6)

Something To Think About

24 Two Small Coins

25 Don't Forget!

26 Treasures For The Future

18 Experiences with God

27 Announcements

28 Thank You Lord (Poem)

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Editorial

Dear Reader!

What type of news do we see and hear of nowadays? Wars, famine, streams of refugees, demonstrations, riots, acts of violence, crimes, murders, hate, great troubles, and terrible godlessness!

King Solomon already came to this significant realization about 3000 years ago: "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people" (Proverbs 14:34).

However, my dear reader, we can and should look up to our Savior Jesus Christ. We may ask of His bounty for grace, courage, strength, and help, just like the disciples and believers have done throughout the ages.

We know that these promises remain:

1. The river of God is full of water (Psalm 65:9)

2. In God's presence is fullness of joy (Psalm 16:11)

3. God will pour out His fullness of blessing (Malachi 3:10)

4. Through Christ we can all receive the fullness of grace (Romans 5:17)

5. God is our Helper, a Lord who is rich to all who call upon Him (Romans 10:12)

6. We have redemption according to the riches of His grace (Ephesians 1:7)

7. We can abound in God, in faith, in comfort, and have an abundance of every good work (2 Corinthians 9:8)

Even though the majority disregard God's Word, reject the love of Christ, and choose the path of destruction and eternal damnation, we can cling to our Lord and sing along with F. E. Belden:

Thanksgiving to the Lord belongs

For all His love and care;

With grateful hearts and thankful songs,

Thanksgiving all may share.

Our Father from His bounteous hand

Lets many blessings fall:

Our life, our friends, and freedom's land,

We owe to Him our all.

Oh! praise the Lord, whose works appear

In Heaven, earth and sea;

His mighty name let all revere,

And ever thankful be.

He is a refuge for the soul

Who trusts in Him alone,

And when our years shall cease to roll,

We'll praise Him 'round His throne.

H. D. Nimz

Blatant Ingratitude

In a large European city, a man gave a lecture in a public park on a Sunday to prove that there is no God. At the end of his speech, he confidently invited his audience to refute him. A simple man pushed his way through the crowd and stood close to the speaker's podium and said the following:

"I am, as you can see, only an uneducated man and do not understand any of these scientific things that we just heard about. I can only tell you a short but true story.

"I am a fisherman in this province. One day in my hometown, a mighty storm rolled in, like I had never experienced before. I was very worried about my boat which I had the privilege to fish from, which was on the shore of the river. So I went to go look at my boat.

"When I reached the shore of the river, I saw a man sitting in a boat in the middle of the wild, raging waters. He had lost both of his oars. The terrible, desperate cries

of this man were louder than the storm, and I can still hear them when I think about it. The man prayed, 'O God, do not remember my sins! O God, you can do all things. Send a savior! Do not let me go under!' he cried.

"I thought of my wife and child but then also of Him who had given His life for them and for me. I cried out briefly and silently to God for help for this rescue mission. Mustering all of my strength, I reached the man and brought him safely to shore. Then I took the man, completely soaked and nearly paralyzed, into my home, where my wife prepared a hot drink and food for him. This weakened man had to stay with us overnight. The next day, he left. I have never seen him since then until today, holding a lecture to try to prove that there is no God!"

The fisherman pointed to the speaker and left. At once, the man tried to distance himself from the disgruntled murmurings of the crowd.

With Heart and Hands and Voices

"Now thank we all our God, with heart and hands and voices." A true thank you has three parts: it should be felt, expressed, and shown. The last part is the most essential one. Feelings of thankfulness are blessed, and words of thanks are reasonable, but showing thankfulness is most important. Just like faith, love and thankfulness are dead without works.

A rich, greedy "Christian" had to hear these shameful words being told to him by his young son. Repeatedly, the father hurt the feelings of this young boy when he harshly sent people away from his door who were asking for charity, referring to it as a ban on begging at the house entrance.

One day it happened right before their devotions. After the father had especially fervently prayed for all the poor and suffering, widows and orphans, the young boy reluctantly blurted out after the "Amen" was said, "Dad, I wish I had half as much money as you did!"

"What do you want to do with it, my dear child?" the father asked.

"I would start answering your prayers for the poor and suffering," was the prompt answer.

Let us never forget that "giving" goes along with "prayer" and that with true thankfulness, "heart and hands and voices" have to help one another!

Lord, You Blessed the Earth with Goodness

*Lord, You blessed the earth with goodness.
Rain and sunshine graced our land,
And the harvest in its fullness
Is the bounty from Your hand.
On the mountains, in the valleys,
Forests green and meadows bright,
You have crowned the earth with gladness
As it basks within Your light.*

*Every eye is looking upward
For its sustenance each day.
And we once again discover
God is righteous in His ways.
From His storehouse He is sending
Gifts to satisfy the land,
For His goodness is unending
As He opens up His hand.*

*Graciously, You have provided
Such abundance liberally,
And the fullness undivided
Is now ripe for all to see.
Herbs and oats and fruit and melons,
You have kept from drought and hail.
See, the corn is golden yellow
And the harvest did not fail.*

*Lord, we know we are not worthy
Of such goodness unto us.
Let us learn from this to trust Thee
For our conscience speaks to us;
Let us turn from our transgressions
To obey Your will with love.
Let Your patience, love, and blessings
Turn our hearts to You above.*

*Let us use what You have given
From the cradle to the grave,
With ability and vision
And sustain the earth you gave.
All is good what God has given,
Blessed by prayer and through the Word.
Yes, the harvest will be plenty
So give thanks unto the Lord.*

Celebration of Love

“You have multiplied the nation and increased its joy; they rejoice before You according to the joy of harvest . . .” (Isaiah 9:3)

The prophet’s song of celebration brings everything together: the connection to nature, the relationship with God, and the contemplation of His miracles.

Many of us do not really understand how and why people rejoice at harvest. As a result, we cannot fully understand the essence of Thanksgiving. The people of that era cheered when the harvest was collected and the time of want and hunger was over. Our livelihoods, however, seem to be completely independent of the seasons.

To be sure, we do hear about people in far-away countries who lose their harvest due to natural disasters and end up facing death by starvation. However, we live under pressure to perform in an industrial society that no longer sees any connection between pay check and harvest.

We were sitting together and discussing Thanksgiving. Someone said, “What am I thankful for? I’m thankful that I’m still healthy and able to keep up. I’m being worked to the bone.”

However, in spite of all the wealth we earn this way, we ultimately live from the things that God allows to grow in nature. In this day and age, almost everything can be produced artificially, but not our daily bread. We remain dependent on the cycle of sowing, growing, ripening, and harvest even if we spend most of our lives between asphalt and cement. That is why Thanksgiving and its harvest symbols remind us that we get the simplest and most necessary foods not from factories, as we do status symbols, but rather from fields, as we have for thousands of years.

These fields require hard work, too. Harvesting and farm work in general are hard. I realized this when I

was once assigned several weeks of harvesting duty as a soldier. This episode, however, also allowed me to experience some of the spontaneous joy of harvest. In celebrating Thanksgiving, then, we should be overcome with the joy that God’s ancient promise remains true despite changes in time and lifestyle: “While the earth remains, seedtime and harvest, . . . shall not cease” (Genesis 8:22).

A Life for God is a Life of Joy

All the rejoicing and joy contained in the previous Scripture have their origin in two small words: “before You.”

We hunger for joy as much as for bread. True, deep joy cannot be found apart from the Heavenly Father. Even the joy of harvest is only real if it creates a connection to God. Thanksgiving is impossible without God. If everything is “only nature,” the most we can expect is a harvest festival. This involves calculating profit, being proud of one’s accomplishments, and planning how to improve performance in the coming year. We become arrogant, condescending, and greedy or, alternatively, unhappy and bitter if the harvest is not very good.

However, if we come before God with our harvest, we can be joyful regardless of the yield. In view of God and His gifts, we lose sight of ourselves and are reconciled with the labor of our work. My Heavenly Father knows what I need.

Just as God allows the farmer to participate in His creative growing and ripening process by sowing and harvesting, He gives honor to work on the assembly line, in the office, or wherever it may be, by blessing me



through it. Without a connection to God, pay checks become earnings with which I attempt to compensate for this joy, but under God's hands of blessing, they become a life-granting harvest. My life itself is sowing and harvest. "A man reaps what he sows" (Galatians 6:7), refers to an entire human life. A life lived for God will end in a joyful harvest.

A Joyful Harvest

What makes a joyful harvest possible? Ultimately, only the miracle of God which the prophet saw. He speaks to a people in ultimate desolation and desperation, to a people living in darkness. The miracle of God is its salvation, and the harvest is the image of its exultant joy. In the following passage, we find a "for" phrase that thrice intensifies to read, "For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder" (Isaiah 9:5). In his joy, the prophet already sees the fulfillment of what was then only prophecy but ultimately became reality for us through Jesus: salvation from the curse of sin, which also rests upon the fields (Genesis 3:17).

By contemplating the fruits of the harvest, we may gain a certain sense of the wonder of the life that we receive through death. "Most assuredly, I tell you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain" (John 12:24). However, contemplation of nature cannot give us more than an inkling of the whole. Only when we are illuminated by the light of God as seen by the prophet, i.e. only when God reveals Himself through His Word and His Son, can we truly see. The prophet sees the miracle and is moved to worship: "You have multiplied the nation . . . ; they rejoice before You . . . For You have broken the yoke" (Isaiah 9:3-4).

We become sincerely grateful if we look beyond the gifts to see the Giver, Who has won our hearts with His goodness. Thanks come from a joyful heart which has a reason for joy because it has been richly blessed. Thanks come from a humble heart which does not boast of its accomplishments but acknowledges the gift of God as an undeserved grace. Thanks come from a pure heart which is saved by the sacrifice of love on the cross and offers itself in worship as a thanks offering.



THE BOUNTY OF GOD

Thanksgiving

How many are guilty of neglecting their duty when it comes to thankfulness and thanksgiving? And yet the Holy Bible exhorts us to, “Give thanks to the Lord, for He is good! For His mercy endures forever.” (Psalm 107:1)

Who would not want to thank the Lord, Who is goodness Himself, Who allows the sun to rise over the good and the evil and rain to fall on the righteous and the unrighteous? “Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good; blessed is the man who trusts in Him!” (Psalm 34:8). Everyone must personally experience how good the Lord is. He is so good and loving towards humanity, even though He is the recipient of so much ingratitude. He opens His gentle hand and satisfies the desire of every living thing (Psalm 145:16). Who should not thank and praise the Lord, Who has, since birth, supported us with fatherly patience, Who gives us the breath of life, Who provides our daily bread, who refreshes us with the goods of His house?

The Lord’s mercy reaches to the heavens and His faithfulness to the clouds (Psalm 36:6–10). However, His mercy is terribly abused. Even though God pours out His blessings in abundance, there are so many who do not acknowledge it. They even mock the just and holy God! Our Lord is so patient! There is a saying: “Ingratitude is the reward of the world.” People receive God’s goodness and blessings daily. They are completely dependent on Him, and yet they are not thankful. How sad, how offensive that must be for kind and gracious God!

However, as children of the Almighty God, let us wholeheartedly be thankful. Let us never forget His goodness. If we do, He will not be able to bless us as He would like. Let us also not only express our thankfulness with words, but also with our actions.

How can we express our thankfulness towards God? We can express it by living a life that honors and glorifies Him, by being prepared at all times to do His will in love, by serving our neighbors by drying their tears, encouraging the lonely, feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, visiting the ill or imprisoned and leading those lost in sin to Christ. What a service! We, whom God has lifted from the pit of sin and misery and placed on the solid Rock of Jesus Christ, have much reason to thank Him!

If we look around us, we see so much pain and suffering in the world! Let us thank God that He has protected us from so much! Even in the middle of suffering, let us praise Him, for His thoughts are those of peace and His will for us is always in love.

“You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for you created all things, and by your will they exist and were created” (Revelation 4:11).



Do We Have Reason to be Thankful?

People often think that what they have earned or what they have harvested is the result of their labor and good effort. Yet, they seem to forget that without God's blessing, all effort and labor would be in vain.

Behind all that we have and achieve stands God, Who is the source of these blessings. Behind creation stands the Creator. In Him we live and move and have our being. Every thing that has breath derives life from Him. In all things, we are dependent on Him. If He did not grant us health and bless the work of our hands, if He did not give sunshine and rain, then there would be no food on our tables. We would lack proper clothing and the necessities of life. How often it is that in times of affluence, people forget to thank God from Whom all good things come. But when hard times come, grumbling and complaining begin.

Because all good things come from God, we owe it to Him to give thanks. And our thanks to Him should not just be lip service but should come from the heart. To be truly thankful, we must genuinely appreciate the blessings God has given us. Only when we realize the magnitude of God's goodness to us will we be able to thank Him from the depths of our hearts. The lovingkindness and gifts of God are not deserved. They are gifts of grace. Yet people still complain and grumble because they see and envy others who are better off than they are.

It would be much better for people to thank God for the blessings they partake of. That way, they would stop complaining and being discontented. They would start being thankful. If we open our eyes and look around, we

will find more than enough reason to give God thanks.

There will always be things that can be improved, but if we focus on the things we do not have, we will lose sight of the good things we do have. If we consider what we have and the blessings we have received, we will find ample reason to thank and praise God. That will give us joy and make us happy, because genuine thanksgiving opens up the wellspring of joy. Rich blessings from above will be able to flow down upon us.

We have a lot to be thankful for. We do not lack the necessities of life, while multitudes in other countries live in extreme poverty. And what about our spiritual blessings? Do we thank God for them? Let us never forget to praise God for the great gift of salvation that He has provided for us through Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Let us also remember the many times God has protected us from harm throughout life. Let us remember how He has led us. That should give us even more cause to give thanks. What would have become of us if God had not given us His protection?

Let us begin to count the many blessings the Lord has given us! Then we will not find enough words to thank God adequately. The Bible reminds us to be thankful in all things. One songwriter puts it this way:

Let's thank God instead of whining,
Praise Him even when we're down;
Then the sun will soon be shining,
And God's wonders will abound.

R. A. Owens

Therefore Do Not Worry

It was after the World War in the years of famine. I was nine years old at the time and will never forget this experience.

Our parents had a serious discussion. We were low on bread and there was no hope of getting more for another three days. Mother gathered the remaining food together in order to cook a soup for my brother and me.

When my father returned home the evening of the second day to check up on us, he found that my mother was very discouraged. "I don't know what to do. Our daughter is already complaining about a headache and I am growing very weak too," she said.

My father replied, "Why don't we just ask God for bread? If He sees our need, then He must also expect us to at least petition Him to provide what is lacking."

All four of us knelt down and asked God earnestly for bread. During the prayer, the doorbell rang. My brother called, "Daddy, it's ringing!" Father calmly finished his prayer and then asked me to answer the door.

I will never forget that moment when an acquaintance of ours stood before the door with a large bread in her hand. Unable to say a word, I stared at the bread in her hand.

In the meantime, my father came. He was also speechless. The lady apologized because she had come so late. It was already 9 o'clock. She stated that she couldn't have come earlier. God Himself had called her to fulfill this assignment. She felt bad and apologized if her visit was not suitable.

Father took her by the hand, drew her inside and said, "We just rose from our prayer for bread and now God fulfilled His promise that our prayers will be answered even before we say 'amen.'"

Then the sister in faith explained, "In several towns near the city I have acquaintances. I run errands for them in the city. Today, I again made some visits, this time in the country. During this time, I handed out tracts and Christian literature.

"I was lovingly cared for and given several eggs and some butter for my journey home. As I intended to leave, a farmer came and tied three breads to my travel bag. 'This is for needy families,' he stated. Joyfully, I headed home. On my way, I was able to bless two families with two of the breads. I intended to keep the last bread for myself. Would that have really been wrong, since I had done more than my share of work for these people?"

"When I returned home, I was rather worn out from the trip and made sure I got to bed on time. But, I was unable to sleep. An inner voice said to me, 'Get up and deliver the bread!' Your address came to mind. I turned to lay on my other side, but still I was unable to find rest. Then I asked my husband for advice. 'This family is always well-dressed, and they must certainly be in a position to purchase everything they need on the black market. They could not need this bread.'"

"Again, I tried to sleep, but it was no use. I could not settle. I stood up, took the bread and set out on my bicycle.

"Now I stand here and know that it was God's plan for me to bring you this bread. We cannot do anything else but to thank God for this visible proof of His existence."

We all knelt down together and thanked God for His wonderful provision. That evening, I lay awake in bed for a long time. The wonderful experience impacted me deeply and I promised God that I would never be unfaithful to Him.

We never forgot the way God helped us that day. My father is now 83 years old and the last time I visited him, he asked me, “Do you still remember the time we prayed for bread?”

Our God’s goodness is great and it is marvelous to be able to have these kinds of experiences with Him!

R. Hannz

A Christian’s Wealth

“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.” (2 Corinthians 8:9)

In reality, no child of God is poor. Financially speaking, they may live in poverty. They may be poor in education or in natural gifts and talents. The Spirit said to the church in Smyrna, “I know your works, tribulation, and poverty” (Revelation 2:9). However, this is immediately followed by, “but you are rich.”

What do children of God possess that makes them rich despite outer poverty? The apostle Paul told the Corinthians, “all things are yours” (1 Corinthians 3:21–23). And, “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32).

In 2 Corinthians 6:10, we read, “as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.” How could the apostle Paul describe himself as possessing all when he was poor? The riches he possessed were the spiritual kind. The lack of earthly riches was no barrier to the possession of spiritual riches.

Why could Paul call these riches his own? He may have remembered what the father told the prodigal son in the parable, “all that I have is yours” (Luke 15:31). In the Bible we are called God’s heirs and we are told that we will inherit everything. How can any of us then call ourselves poor? We are children of the King and the Lord of the world, and He loves us dearly. As such, we also have a share in what He possesses. Through our relationship as

His children, we become shareholders and heirs to spiritual riches.

The wealth we possess as children of God is everlasting. Earthly riches can be lost, but spiritual riches remain.

Let us list some of the riches of God’s children: They have “abundance of grace” (Romans 5:17). They are rich in faith (see James 2:5). They are rich in good works (see 1 Timothy 6:18). They have an abundance of joy (see 2 Corinthians 8:2), as well as the abundance of peace (see Psalm 37:11). Many other spiritual treasures could be added to these.

Spiritual blessings are only part of a Christian’s wealth. The beauties in nature also belong to them. They rejoice in blue skies, sunshine, flowers, green grass, the gentle breeze, the singing of birds, the twinkling stars. We can take pleasure in all of these.

We also have the wealth of friendship. True friendship is a great gift. We must also remember the spiritual fellowship and the love of Christians, in which we can take part. That is in fact a great spiritual gift. Added to all this we also have fellowship with God and His blessing.

We should reflect on our spiritual riches and blessings more. If we tried to count them, we would find they are more numerous than we tend to think. If we do this, we will feel wealthy and be truly content—a contentment that a person of the world cannot know, even if he has many earthly goods.

Jesus Wants All to Be Filled

“And He took the seven loaves and the fish and gave thanks, broke them and gave them to His disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitude. So they all ate and were filled.” (Matthew 15:36-37)

Someone once said, “With God, I can joyfully die of starvation.” Now, we must take care not to ask others to “joyfully starve” while we are filled. Jesus would have been in a position to joyfully starve; however, He did not try that experiment on anyone. On the contrary, He was conscientious not to serve others with proverbs alone, but took care to serve them bread as well. Jesus often ministered to His disciples as head of the house or host. When His sermons seemed lengthy and the disciples became hungry, He did not presume that since they were in God’s presence, they would have no further need of nourishment. No! In fact, He provided bread for them. Yes, even the resurrected Savior, there at the Sea of Galilee, did not consider that He was above all earthly things and that the things of this earth no longer concerned Him. As a matter of fact, His first question to the disciples was, “Children, have you any food?” Jesus, the Master, knowing how important daily bread is for all of His people, actually taught them to pray for it.

The story of Jesus feeding the multitudes was well-loved by the early Christians. What may have been the reason for that? Possibly the kindheartedness that Jesus demonstrated or His unlimited resources. Perhaps the disciples fondly relayed this story because it was the first time Jesus requested their assistance. This was also a learning experience for them. They were only able to pass on to others what they personally had received. Moreover, they did not initially receive for themselves, rather for others who awaited their service. Finally, they were permitted to return to the Master once their hands had been emptied. This can also be applied to our service for the Lord.

The disciples were only able to pass on what they personally received.

They were not in a position to quench the hunger of the multitudes, which none of us are able to do either. Only the Lord has proper nourishment for the soul. Many personal ideas are offered these days from the pulpit and at doorsteps. However, this may not at all be “bread of heaven.” It is good for us to acknowledge our reliance on God and only pass on that which we have received from Him. That alone will result in blessings.

Before we are able to pass something on, we must first receive it. How important prayer and supplications become, so that we personally obtain something from the Lord. The disciples had no solutions to the problem, nor did they personally have anything to pass on. We people are often so ill-equipped to help lost souls. However, the disciples were in the proximity of Jesus. They heard Him, they saw His hands at work, and they understood and were willing to follow His command.

Passing on what we have received.

Many have received, but instead of passing it on keep it for themselves. In Matthew 25:28, we read in the parable, “Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents.” Such people can be likened to stagnant water: it begins to stink and offers no refreshment for others.

When salt remains unused, it becomes useless and not good for anything. For example, what a difference is found between the Sea of Galilee and the Dead Sea. Both are filled with the same water from the Jordan River. The Sea of Galilee receives the water from the Jordan,

clears it, and mixes it with its blue-green, pleasant-tasting water which provides for the fish as well as the inhabitants along its banks. It does not waste its overflow but relinquishes it to the spouting Jordan River. In contrast, the Dead Sea claims six million tons of essential water daily and eventually poisons that portion which the sun doesn't immediately evaporate. The Sea of Galilee gives and contributes to life, whereas the Dead Sea takes and keeps and kills.

Can these two bodies of water be likened to different types of people? Which body of water do you identify with?

To only receive and not share with others will cause misery and will eventually ruin your own life. If you have received life from God and wish to preserve it, you need to pass it on. This should not require great effort; it should happen naturally. When a vessel is full, it overflows—unless it has holes. Let God fill you; receive fully, and do not restrain the Holy Spirit.

The disciples did not receive first for themselves but for those who were waiting for their help.

This does not apply just to pastors, but to all disciples of Jesus. Disciples of Jesus are there for others. In 1 Corinthians 10:24, we read, "Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being." The German Albrecht translation writes it as follows, "No one should think only of himself, rather of the salvation of others." Jesus wants all to be helped. Disciples of Jesus need to pray for others and be available for them.

Christians should not just think of themselves. Many around us are sick, and many are dying. Someone may be waiting for help, and perhaps you are the one that can help him. Could it be that you are too busy with your personal life? Is anyone waiting for your service? Christians receive from the Lord so that they can pass on to others. The disciples received from the Lord and went to the hungry. While they received for themselves, they primarily received for others. Did they suffer because they served others first? Never!

With emptied hands, they returned to the Master.

What would Jesus have said if one of the disciples had only fed a hungry person a half portion or a part of his allotment, and brought the rest back to the Lord? What can we learn from that?

We cannot be stingy in sharing.

Do not think that the reservoir is depleting. If we were using our personal supply, that would likely be the

case. But this is God's supply, which no person, not even all people put together, can exhaust. The good thing is that we can always return to the Source. When our hands have been emptied, we may return to the Lord and be filled anew. He will always supply a refill and then send us out to share once again. We just cannot allow ourselves to become tired.

We cannot hold the best back.

Do not pile anything up for later, as it may become old and foul. Be organized and divide fairly and in a timely manner as the needs arise. Give your best, give everything, and take care to deplete your supply so that God may refill your hands once again.

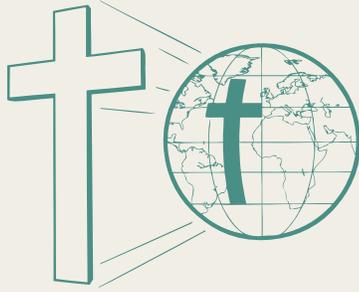
Be energized and joyful at work.

Be aware that you only have one life; do not thoughtlessly glide into your day. Do not imitate a drunkard who saw double of a candle when he came home one night. He asked, "Why do I need two lights burning? I will extinguish one." Blowing it out, he found himself in utter darkness. You have only one life, and soon it will be over. Be completely available to your Lord. "Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it" (Psalm 81:10b). Sooner than we like, the time will come when we are old and weak and cannot do much anymore.

The disciples received from the Lord and went to the hungry with that which they had received. Who actually fed the hungry? The disciples only passed on what they had received. The Lord supplied and satisfied them all.

In Ecclesiastes 11:1-6, we read, "Cast your bread upon the waters, for you will find it after many days. Give a serving to seven, and also to eight, for you do not know what evil will be on the earth. If the clouds are full of rain, they empty themselves upon the earth; and if a tree falls to the south or the north, in the place where the tree falls, there it shall lie. He who observes the wind will not sow, and he who regards the clouds will not reap. As you do not know what is the way of the wind, or how the bones grow in the womb of her who is with child, so you do not know the works of God who makes everything. In the morning sow your seed, and in the evening do not withhold your hand; for you do not know which will prosper, either this or that, or whether both alike will be good."

Otto Sommerfeld (1922-2008)



Radio Program Message of Salvation

Friedrich Krebs, Kitchener (ON)

The Ripened Harvest

Seeing a ripe harvest field floods our mind with many different impressions. We feel amazement, astonishment, joy and gratitude. It is also sobering to think of the spiritual harvest; the harvest of our lives.

The ripened harvest! What a wonderful sight! With regard to the harvest, Jesus addresses His disciples in John 4:35–36: “Do you not say, there are still four months and then comes the harvest? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together.” Who can stand before a ripened harvest and not want to look at it? A ripened harvest simply wants to attract our attention. Looking at these fields, we should not only be impressed by the so-called power of nature, but by the miracle of God!

Yes, in the harvest we see one of God’s greatest miracles. It is the miracle of manifold life, fertility, and fruit. In His parable of the fourfold field, Jesus spoke of a hundredfold yield.

It is a miracle that out of one seed, one gets a whole sheaf of grain. This cannot be attributed to human wisdom or artificial fertilizers. During the time of the patriarchs, there were no fertilizers. We read about Isaac in Genesis 26:12, “Then Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the same year a hundredfold.” How was this possible? The answer is, “And the Lord blessed him.” Doesn’t this sound wonderful? Therefore, lift up your eyes and recognize the blessing and He who gives it!

In the ripened field, we see the goodness and benevolence of God. In Psalm 65:10-11, David writes, “You wa-

ter its ridges abundantly, you settle its furrows; you make it soft with showers, you bless its growth. You crown the year with Your goodness, and Your paths drip with abundance.”

Realizing this as well, Jeremiah said, “Let us now fear the Lord our God, Who gives rain, both the former and the latter, in its season. He reserves for us the appointed weeks of the harvest” (Jeremiah 5:24). A failed harvest reminds us of the severity of God, whereas a good harvest shows us God’s goodness.

A good harvest gives us the gift of daily bread. Jesus taught His disciples to pray, “Give us this day our daily bread” (Matthew 6:11). The bread we have comes from a good harvest. Our bread supply depends on the prosperity of the harvest and will only be as good or bad as the harvest was.

A farmer’s heart often fears for the harvest. He pays close attention to the weather and constantly asks himself if the seeds will germinate, if they will bloom, bring forth fruit, and if this fruit will reach maturity and give a plentiful harvest. These concerns are not unjustified. A cold frost can quickly destroy the fragile spring blooms! A persistent drought can halt growth. And it is very difficult to bring in the harvest with continuous rain! The farmer stands helpless against the forces of nature and has to recognize that everything is dependent on God’s blessings. David aptly said, “The eyes of all look expect-



tantly to You, and You give them their food in due season. You open Your hand and satisfy the desire of every living thing” (Psalm 145:15-16).

“Lift up your eyes and look at the fields . . . !”—Whoever looks at a harvest with the right vision will do as a farmer did after seeing his potato harvest. He fell down on his knees and thanked God for the blessing of a wonderful harvest.

Jesus was also speaking of a different kind of harvest. He saw this harvest with eyes of faith and wanted His disciples to see it as well. He had been moved by what happened in the heart of the woman He had talked to at the well. She had been convicted of the neediness in her life and of its futility. Listening to Jesus, a healing self-awareness had matured in her. What happened in her heart Jesus had seen happen in many other hearts. For this woman rushed into the city and told everyone of her encounter with Jesus. Many came out of the city to Him. We read, “And many more believed because of His own word. Then they said to the

woman, ‘Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world’” (John 4:41-42).

The work or harvest field of our God is great, even in the twenty-first century. However, it is a necessity today to search for individuals who have matured inwardly and are ready to accept salvation and enter into the will of God. Unfortunately, there are hardly any crowds of people who come to Jesus nowadays, but surely there are still individuals to be won for our Master.

Jesus especially points to the coming final harvest. Every human life, with all that it includes, be it good or evil, is maturing toward that great final harvest. How frightening what people are “sowing” today, and how terrible that harvest will be!

Therefore, stop and look into your personal sowing and harvesting. And while you are looking at it, let God’s voice speak to your heart and conscience!

Friedrich Krebs

The Importance of Reading Scripture

Never before in the history of the human race have we had information so close at hand. If we are not sure about something, we can go online and ask “Google.” For many people, Google has become a part of life. As part of our internet experience, we now have news feeds giving us 24/7 access to news around the world. We can know what is happening on the opposite side of the world in a matter of seconds. Perhaps we are more knowledgeable as a race than ever before. As part of our news access, we are now faced with “fake news,” news that is presented as truth but is not truth. So how do we deal with all this information?

Years ago, the greatest human being Who ever lived asked the following question of a large crowd of people and of the scholars of His time: “Have you not read . . . ?” (Matthew 19:4), Jesus asked of the Scriptures. Jesus was talking about a very important subject, and He wanted to make sure His listeners were biblically informed about the subject. Considering where we are as a society, our access to information, and the current prevalence of “fake news,” perhaps the question Jesus asked is as relevant now as then.

According to many articles about Bible reading, we are seeing a growing tide of biblical illiteracy in the church today. There are many who call themselves followers of Jesus Christ, who do not know the Bible. “One thing I noticed about Evangelicals is that they do not read. They do not read their Bible, they do not read the great Christian thinkers . . .” (Hughes, R. K. 1991, p.78). There was a

time when the Bible was precious to the Christian, when Bible-believing was synonymous with Christianity, and when Christians would begin their day with reading and studying the Scriptures. As Christians, we face daily faith battles. How are we going to know what to do if we do not know our Bibles? We are faced with a new world that is undergoing what is called “social construction.” This is a new world based on man-knowledge and on the premise that ultimately there is no wrong anymore. We are seeing this “social construction” in our schools, in our government, and yes, even in our churches. Today the masses are not seeking freedom of religion, but freedom from religion. As western society leaves its Judeo-Christian roots, the battle for truth will only become more intense.

As followers of Jesus Christ, we must make a decision regarding the life-compass we will use in these times. Will our life-compass be the Word of God, or something else? Are we going to read and follow Scripture unapologetically, or are we going to fall for the idea of “social construction”? Are we going to take seriously the question Jesus asked, or are we just going to ignore Him?

I would assume that most of you reading this article want to have the Bible as your life-compass. This does not just happen. This is something we must decide in our lives, and for that to happen, we must take appropriate actions to ensure that the Bible remains our compass in life. I would like to give some suggestions as to how to make the Bible our life-compass.

1. We must know that the Bible is true.

“All Scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for teaching, for rebuking, for correcting, for training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16). Is the Bible true? Is the Bible historically accurate? In his book, *Are the New Testament Documents Reliable?*, F. F. Bruce writes, “the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were written has now been removed. Both the authenticity and the general integrity of the books of the New Testament may be regarded as finally established” (1943, p.24). The Bible is God’s Word, given to us as our fully trustworthy life-compass for bringing us through the storms of life, and to guide us safely to our heavenly home. We can rest assured the Bible is true and that the good Bible translations of today are accurate. We must know that the Bible is true and good for us, because as we search and pore over the book, the Holy Spirit will speak through Scripture to us, showing us things that are amazing, as well as areas of our lives that need improving.

2. We must thoroughly investigate the Bible.

Jesus was once again speaking to a group of people. He said, “You pore over Scriptures because you think you have eternal life in them, yet they testify about Me” (John 5:39). What an amazing testimony given to these people by Jesus! What does it mean to “pore over” Scripture? These were people who were thoroughly investigating Scripture. These were people who were seeking truth in Scripture, knowing that Scripture is true. As already mentioned, we live in a world of “fake news.” We really struggle with knowing what is true and what is not true. We have results given to us from all kinds of studies, that want to sway us in a certain direction. We can read and watch and listen to so much, but at the end of all of that, the question must be asked, “What of all of this is true?” We are blessed to have the Bible. When we read the Bible, we know that there is never an intention to deceive us, but only to help us. We read the Bible knowing that the Author of the Bible loves us, and wants what is best for us. When we read the Bible, we pray before and during our reading, as we desire the Holy Spirit to teach us. If we come across things we do not understand, we trust that there may come a time when we will understand more. When we “pore over Scripture,” we allow Scripture to speak to us. Even before we open our Bible, it is good to

ask the Holy Spirit to speak to us during our reading. As we are reading, it is good to send up a brief prayer, so the Holy Spirit can teach us. Remember, Jesus spoke of the Holy Spirit as our Teacher. As we investigate the Bible, we should ask questions: 1) What was the Bible saying to the audience back then? 2) How does the portion of Scripture apply to me today, in my world? 3) How do I apply what I read in my daily life?

3. Hiding the Word of God in our hearts

“I have hidden Your word in my heart so that I may not sin against you” (Psalm 119:11). When we pore over Scripture and dig into Scripture, we must then store the portions of Scripture away for use in the future. We take the Word of God, and store it in our hearts so that in the moment of temptation or battle we have access to the Word. As we then use the Word, the Word protects us against sinning. In the heat of battle, we may not have time to quickly read the Bible. The outcome of the battle depends on what is stored in our hearts. Will we tell the truth, the whole truth? Will we fear what others think? Will we run away from issues, instead of saying something? It really does depend on where the Word of God is during these situations. Is the Word of God in our hearts, and does the Word act as our guide during these times? As we read Scripture, we should spend time on certain verses, and we should memorize certain verses. In this way, we have them with us, as required.

As we read and re-read the Word of God, we will come to love it more. We will desire it more. We will realize the more we read from the Word of God and learn from it, how little we actually know. We will realize that the Word of God is God’s letter to us to help us in finding the way to heaven. The Bible is a book of essentials, showing us Jesus Christ, the way to the cross, the way to live a God-pleasing life, and how to remain faithful to God on our way to heaven. So, once again the question is very relevant: “Have you not read” in the Scriptures? (Matthew 19:4).

Sieg Schuler
Calgary, AB

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Experiences with God

I would like to share a short testimony to the glory of God. About three months ago now, I went through what I like to call “The Valley of Baka,” as we read in Psalm 84:5-7:

*“Blessed are those whose strength is in you,
whose hearts are set on pilgrimage.
As they pass through the Valley of Baka,
they make it a place of springs;
the autumn rains also cover it with pools.
They go from strength to strength,
till each appears before God in Zion.”*

The trouble began long before I noticed what was really happening. As I was working my way through the past year of university, one task after another was placed upon my list of responsibilities. This did not keep me from staying active at church, at work, and at home. I was so focused on all my responsibilities and getting everything done on my growing to-do list that I started neglecting taking care of my own mental and spiritual well-being. Anxious thoughts began to trouble my heavily overloaded mind. Thoughts like, “What if I will fail a class?” “What if I won’t get all my assignments and projects done?” and a lot of other “what-ifs” troubled my mind and I started to worry a lot. At first the fears were based on real experiences, but as the constant pressure began to take a toll on my mind, the worry became full-blown paranoia. I felt like everyone was out to get at me for something. Teachers at school seemed to be working together behind my back to make things difficult for me.

I thought that my co-op teacher along with my faculty supervisor worked together to have me fail. Unrealistic fear took over and eventually I had no idea what was real and what wasn’t. Agonizing, crippling, horrifying fear took full control of my body and mind.

It was then that God said, “This is enough, it’s too much.” I didn’t realize what was happening to me, but loving friends and family took matters into their hands and made sure that I got the help I so desperately needed. I was unable to continue with my everyday responsibilities and had to take a break from everything for a few weeks. During these days of resting, God spoke to me and showed me that I had taken matters into my own hands, that I had tried to do too much and with my own strength. I had worried too much instead of “casting all my cares unto Him” (1 Peter 5:7).

As the road to complete recovery is slow, I still experience moments of severe anxiety. But it is also during these moments that I experience how faithful and true God is to all the promises He has given us in His Word. I always know where I can turn and He never disappoints, but gives me peace and security in His presence. Some days I need to pull strength from the Source every few hours to keep going through the day, but He is faithful in providing strength every time I come to Him and ask for more.

I was physically, mentally, and emotionally broken, but the presence of God sustained me. What an awesome God we serve! God is faithful! When we are weak, He is strong! God’s promises are real, and we can depend on them!

Maria Günter, Steinbach, MB

*“Bless the Lord, O my soul; and all that is within me,
bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget
not all His benefits” (Psalm 103:1-2).*

For a long time I have felt I should thank God and give Him the glory through a testimony.

In October 2014, I had a heart attack. I had not been feeling well that day, although I did not have any acute symptoms. As I had an appointment with my family doctor that evening, I explained to him how I felt. He ordered an EKG, which came back normal. He then ordered another test. This one was suspicious. I was immediately transported to the hospital by ambulance. After many examinations, the diagnosis was a myocardial infarction. I received five stents right away. I was told the next day that I would need

several bypasses. I was transferred to a specialty clinic where I received five bypasses and a new heart valve.

On October 19, feeling better already, I swallowed the wrong way while having lunch. This led to respiratory distress and heart failure. I was immediately resuscitated. By God’s grace, I lived, but several health issues occurred. I developed pneumonia. Because of the long ventilation time through my mouth, a tracheotomy had to be performed.

During this long illness, many prayed for me. God intervened and healed me. I thank and praise Him with all my heart. I would like to thank everyone who prayed for me. I am doing very well. Naturally, I have to take some precautions, but otherwise I have no problems.

Siegfried Zinn, Bergen (DE)

Enjoying All Things

"I don't like oatmeal," exclaimed Jack, looking at his mother.

"And I don't like prunes," added Jean daringly, as both children knew they were not allowed to complain about their food.

But this time their mother only smiled and said, "Your heavenly Father gives you prunes and oatmeal to enjoy."

"How do you know He wants us to enjoy them?" asked Jack, who always wanted to know the reason for everything. "It doesn't say anything about our eating prunes or oatmeal in the Bible."

"No, the Bible doesn't mention them," answered his mother. "But it says He gives us 'all things richly to enjoy.' And since the food He provides is part of all things, then we ought to really like them. You like candy and ice cream, don't you? Think how nice it would be to enjoy everything you eat as much as you enjoy them."

"It surely would be nice," said Jean.

"I like oatmeal better already. Let us see how many things we can find today to enjoy that we didn't like before," suggested Jack.

"I'd love to," replied Jean who almost always agreed with her brother's plans. He was two years older than

she was, and she considered him very wise.

"An excellent plan," said their mother. "You'll want to make a list of them, for you'll find a great many things if you try hard enough. You can put them in this box," she called as she placed a small covered box on the sideboard.

Several times during the day Jack and Jean put slips of paper into the little box. At bedtime their mother opened the box.

"Let's read Jean's first," suggested Jack as he stood on one side of his mother's chair and Jean on the other.

"Jean likes spinach, dusting the chairs, and doesn't mind so much if Lois brings her little brother to play. Fine!" said Mother approvingly as she took up Jack's slips.

"Jack likes cabbage better, pulling weeds, sweeping the walk, and picking up his clothes."

"Excellent," said Mother, "and now aren't you glad that God gives us everything to enjoy?"

"I certainly am," said Jean. "Let's play this game every day, Jack."

"Let's do," said Jack. "We can have much more fun if we learn to enjoy all of God's good gifts."

A. M.

I Shall Not Want

David had this assurance when he wrote the shepherd's Psalm. It expresses such trust and security in God. This can be your assurance as well, regardless of the situation that you are in.

“The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want” (Psalm 23:1). If we can truthfully say that, we must be the happiest of all people! Is it even possible to “not want”? In Psalm 34:9 it says: “Oh, fear the Lord, you His saints! There is no want to those who fear Him.” In Psalm 84:11b it states: “No good thing will He withhold from those who walk uprightly.” Therefore, we can see that the promise of “not wanting” is dependent on a condition: we should fear the Lord and walk uprightly. That means we should cling to the Lord and be in union with Him for all of our lives.

With these words, David wants to say: If the Lord was not my shepherd, then I would need to suffer difficulties. A sheep cannot look after itself. It has not been gifted with intelligence as other animals have. It cannot find the right pasture by itself and cannot find its way back to its stall. It has no sharp teeth or claws like a predator does. It is completely defenseless. Is this not a picture of children of God? That is why Jesus is their comfort, power, and strength. They are secure in the Lord. Children of God can say:

*He is my shepherd meek
Who gently guides His sheep.
He leads to where green pastures grow,
Where springs eternal flow.*

*When clouds blot out the sun
And twilight has begun,
Yes, even in the darkest night,
Christ Jesus is my light.*

“I shall not want.”—For many of us, as children of God, it seems that our Bible says: “I lack something.” But if we believed that Psalm 23 was the truth, that “I lack nothing,” we would not worry so much. The Lord stands

by His promises. He who feeds the ravens and clothes the lilies of the fields will not forget His children. If the birds were asked: “Did you lack anything?” they would have to admit: “Lord, nothing!” Although the Lord doesn’t generally give His children great wealth, we don’t view this as “wanting,” for we know: “What is all this life possesses? But a handful of sand that the heart distresses.”

“I shall not want.”—In the midst of this world, His children are provided for. The cry of the children of this world is, “I am dying of starvation.” The praise of the children of God is, “And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19). If “the hired servants have bread enough and to spare” (Luke 15:17), how much more will the children of God have!

*The Lord my shepherd is,
I shall be well supplied;
since He is mine and I am His,
what can I want beside?*

“I shall not want.”—This also applies to you in difficult circumstances that you need to face. Perhaps you have an unsaved spouse or a difficult marriage or a challenging boss. Perhaps you are feeling the sting of persecution on the difficult road you are walking. Trust in God alone! He gives you what you need. If you are surrounded by people who make your life difficult, remember that you can draw from His ocean of love.

“I shall not want.”—The sick have experienced this as well. A young girl was in the hospital. She had no arms or legs but was ready to praise with her mouth. She often sang, “I have a wonderful Savior.” Imagine singing “I have a wonderful Savior” joyfully without arms or legs. The

Lord must give His children something that the world does not have!

“I shall not want.”—This also applies to those who need comfort. It may be that the one who took care of you until now has passed away. In your deep grief, you may be worrying: What will happen now? Be comforted, for you are not entering the future alone. One goes with you, and that is the Lord. Walking alongside Him, the words “I shall not want” become truth!

The Lord gives His children the power to witness at the workplace or wherever they may be. The wife of an atheist came to a biblical presentation. She gave her life to Christ, but she had one worry: How do you tell your husband that you are now following the Lord, whom you had always mocked until now? We still prayed together, and she left with confidence. The next morning, she was reminded of a song that her grandmother had taught her when she was seven years old. She took courage and sang while working in the kitchen:

*“Safe in the arms of Jesus,
safe on His gentle breast,
There by His love o’er-shaded,
sweetly my soul shall rest.”*

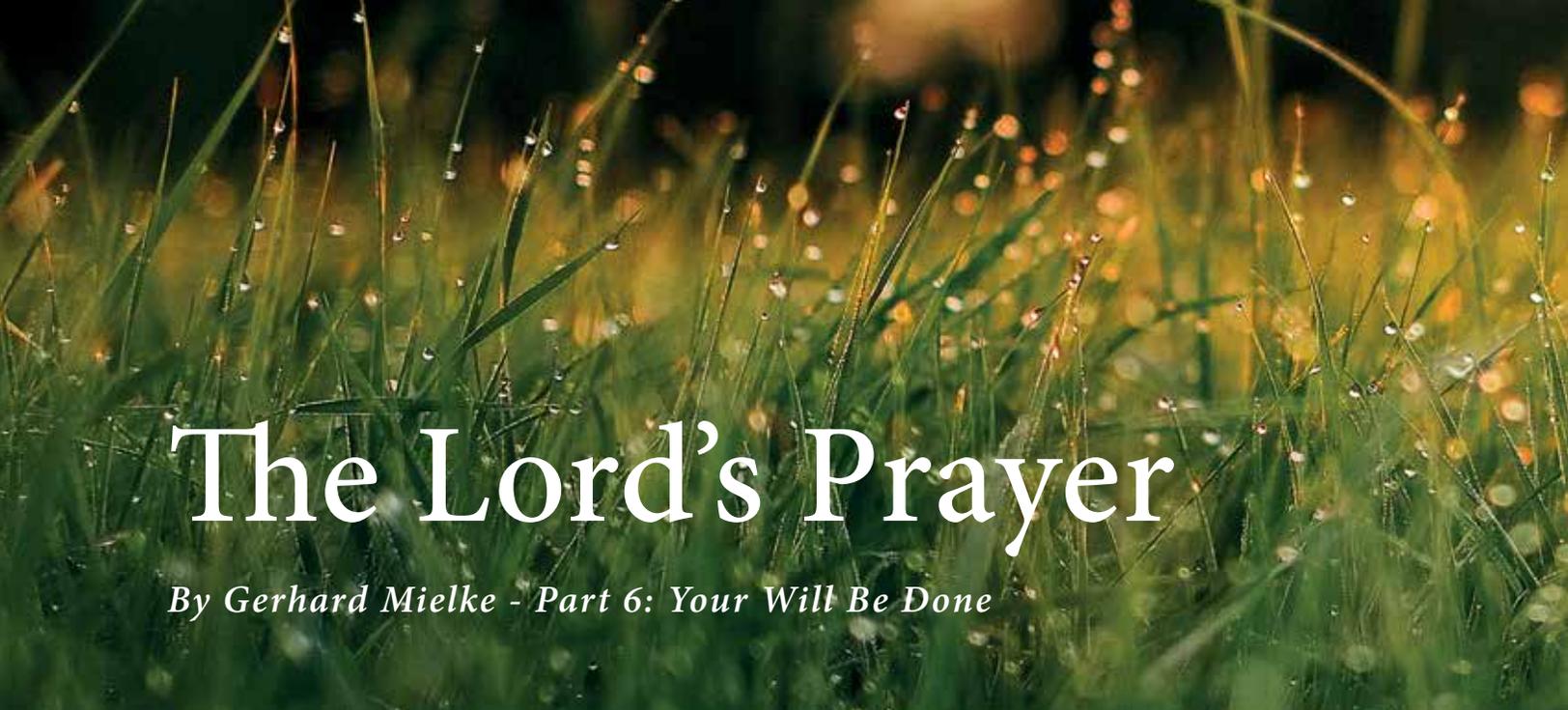
Afterwards, she radiantly told me that the Lord had given her strength to witness to her husband.

“I shall not want.”—God’s children will experience this in the future as well. We live in a world that is against Christ. However, we know that the Lord has called to us: “Look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near” (Luke 21:28). Therefore, we can be confident.

Isn’t it a glorious blessing to be in the hand of such a Lord? The deceased Fritz von Oetzbach was a small, deformed man but a joyful child of God. He once wrote: “We are rich and blessed people! As such, we want to go throughout the world and prove to the world that children of God have it good.” As children of God we know: “I shall not want.” We are joyful and have an abundance of this gifted richness of joy to bring to others.

*Since Christ became mine and He stills my soul,
A joy blooms in me, so rich and so full.
O what a blessed life in this world so dark,
To pass on to others a joy that will spark.*





The Lord's Prayer

By Gerhard Mielke - Part 6: Your Will Be Done

In the Lord's prayer, right after the words "Your Kingdom come," comes the phrase "Your will be done." Jesus not only taught His disciples to pray in this way, but He Himself put it into practice, even in the face of suffering and death. In the garden of Gethsemane, He prayed; "Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done" (Luke 22:42).

Often, people have a list of things they pray for, things they want God to do for them. Jesus, however prefaces His request by: "Father, if it is your will." Note that the Lord's prayer begins by praising God. This is followed by requesting that His kingdom come, that His will be done, and only after that come requests for benefits. Is that the order of our prayer as well? Do we first praise God and thank Him in our prayer? Do we pray for His kingdom, for His church, for His will to be done first, or do we begin with our concerns? Praying according to God's will has a great promise associated with it. We read: "Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him" (1 John 5:14-15).

How do we discern the will of God?

In order to do the will of God, we should first know what the will of God is. So how do we find out what the will of God is? If we desire to do His will, God will guide us.

1. Through His Word

God reveals His will to us through His Word. In Hebrews we read: "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds" (Hebrews 1:1-2). What God's Son has spoken is recorded in the Gospels. We can read it for ourselves. Not only are the words of Jesus recorded in the Gospels, but Jesus himself is revealed as the Word of God which became flesh and lived among us. God reveals his will to us through his Word.

In the Bible we read that God does not wish anyone to be lost, but wants everyone to repent and receive forgiveness for their sins (John 3:16; Acts 2:37-38, 2 Peter 3:9). We know this is the will of God. We also know that God wants us to be baptized (Mark 16:16). Concerning sanctification, we read: "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor" (1 Thessalonians 4:3-4). In Romans we read: "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God" (Romans 12:2). These scriptures show us what the will of God is. Peter also reveals to us that "this is the will of God, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men" (1 Peter 2:15). It is also the will of God that we be

thankful (1 Thessalonians 5:18). Since the Bible reveals the will of God, let us continue to study it.

2. Through the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit helps us to do the will of God. In Romans 8:26 we read: “Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God” (Romans 8:26-27).

The will of God is revealed through the Holy Spirit. “But as it is written: “Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him. But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God” (1 Corinthians 2:9-11).

We do not need to rely on our own strength and on our own interpretation. God has promised the Holy Spirit to those who ask. Jesus Himself said: “However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come” (John 16:13). God reveals His will to us through His Holy Spirit. If you hear His gentle voice, act upon what He is telling you.

3. Through Opportunities and Circumstances

Often we have plans for our future, but things may not work out the way that we planned them. We should not forget that nevertheless “all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28). When God closes a window, He will often open a door. Sometimes these opportunities present themselves to us for a reason.

It is difficult for the Lord to show us His will if we have already made up our own mind. If a young man is attracted to a non-Christian girl, it may be hard for the Lord to show him that she is not the right one for him, despite what is written in 2 Corinthians 6:14. We should pray for God’s leading, but let us first follow His will in the things He has already shown us. If we are not will-

ing to do that which we already know as God’s will, we should not expect Him to reveal more to us.

Sometimes we find ourselves in a situation for a reason, but we are oblivious to it. We may be praying for God to send help, where He wants us to be the help we are praying for. If God has put a burden on our hearts, let us look to His grace despite our weakness. His promise to Paul is also a promise for us: “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9a).

4. If We Are Willing

We will find out what God’s will is if we are willing to walk in His ways. Jesus says: “If anyone wills to do His will, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority” (John 7:17). In John 6:30, the people who demanded a sign so that they might believe were not given the sign they asked for. But the disciples who believed Jesus first received confirmation (John 6:69).

Too often we focus on doing instead of on being. Jesus says: “He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” (John 15:5b). That is the secret in doing the will of God. If we are not in Christ, our works will be our own. If we are in Christ we are not our own, but His. Just calling Him Lord and yet disobeying Him is useless. Jesus says: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). This brings us back to where we began. Jesus teaches us to pray “Your will be done” because it is those who do the will of the Father that enter the kingdom of heaven. And only by doing the will of God does His kingdom come. We do the will of God by being in Him. If we rest in Him, He works through us.

For those requesting a summary of God’s will, King Solomon in the Old Testament put it this way: “Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments” (Ecclesiastes 12:13). And in the New Testament Jesus sums up the will of God in these words: “‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.’ This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40). Love is not only the will of the Father but also the law of Christ. That is why Paul writes: “Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2).

Two Small Coins

In the large crowd of people that came from far and near to attend the feast, it is likely that no one noticed the quiet Observer. He found the perfect spot to observe this special part of the service. He watched with great empathy as the events were unfolding. Three things captured His attention: the Lord's treasury, the giver, and the offering.

Many might have felt that giving an offering was a matter of small importance, just as many today treat this as secondary. But not the Lord! For Him it is not a trivial matter how and how much one gives. However, for Him it is a given that everyone who proclaims to be His follower is also willing to give an offering.

He knows that if His Word is to be proclaimed in this world, there needs to be an offering. And this is the business of those who carry His name. This is the reason He is so interested in the process taking place at His treasury—"Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury" (Mark 12:41).

The rich people came and gave a large sum. Was anyone aware that someone was sitting quietly and observing them? It is true that only a few realize that the eyes of the Lord are watching as they give. If everyone had this in mind, wouldn't things be done differently?

"And many who were rich put in much." Did this need to be mentioned? Certainly! God's Word pays everyone recognition, even the rich for their offering. On the other hand, however, it is fully self-evident that the rich should not be satisfied by giving only a scarce and meager gift. God expects more from them than from the poor.

God does say: "The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine" (Haggai 2:8). He would certainly have resources and ways so that His Work would go forward. But He has assigned His people and pays attention to how these children of God carry out His work here on earth. If it is

their heart's desire or a burden, if they do it with joy or with moaning, God takes note (see 2 Corinthians 9:6-7).

How does the Lord see congregational offerings today? Even if each of us determines how we take part in spreading the Gospel with our offering, it is, however, an undisputed and proven fact that "how" it is done will determine if it is a blessing or a curse. We cannot forget that it is written: "Cursed is he who does the work of the Lord deceitfully" (Jeremiah 48:10). This should prompt us all to think about the way and manner in which we contribute to the Lord's work.

Isn't Jesus' evaluation of the poor widow's mite showing us that it doesn't depend on how large the amount is? The least valuable coin, the quadran, was divided. That is to say, a fraction of the smallest. I once held worship services in a certain town. From time to time a wealthy lady gave the smallest offering possible—one cent.

But in the story we read in Mark 12:41-44, it shows us another meaning attached to the word "mite": "Then one poor widow came." Her poverty was not hidden. One could see that she had nothing. Who pays attention to a poor widow? What can she give? The gifts of a rich person mean much more. How much more value does their gift have compared to the small gift of the widow! Of course, one cannot deny her gift, but she cannot acquire honor for it. What can one do with such a meager offering? These are the thoughts of many people. Is there no one in the congregation who would have understanding for the widow, her poverty, and her offering?

There is One! The man who was sitting and observing the treasury. And He values her offering far more than the others. Strangely enough, He assesses it according to what she has left over. She didn't keep anything back—her heart, her love, her trust in God's providence—all this was included in her offering. She didn't give from what she had left over, but rather, she gave everything.

Jesus took His disciples aside and taught them an important lesson: greed and selfishness makes one poor, but not the offerings that are brought to the Lord. These are gifts for God's kingdom and His work.

Jesus does not value the offerings according to the number of dollars given, but rather to the measurement He uses, which comes from God and eternity. God expects His children to love His work and support it joyfully to the best of their ability. Giving should not be forced, nor done with ulterior motives, but rather with selflessness and a trust in God, who gave His life for us and died that we might live.

A wealthy lady told her pastor: "I also want to offer my mite," as she compared herself to the poor widow. "Oh," answered the pastor, "that will probably be too

much for you!" She thought she could do her part with a small gift and was dismayed when the pastor reacted negatively. "Haven't you read that the poor widow gave everything that she had?" "The widow's two mites" has become a commemorative story because of the way Jesus assessed her offering.

What if Jesus would be visibly among us today? What would He see, and how would He assess our offering?

Even if we can't see Him, He is actually among us in all our worship services and watches with great interest. One of the first things He pays attention to is your offering and my offering. Let's never forget this. How would He value our offering?

W. B.

Don't Forget!

"Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits" (Psalm 103:2).

Don't forget! We need this commandment because we have a tendency to forget. Because we cannot keep everything in our head, we make notes on pieces of paper or in our day timer. How embarrassing it is when we have to admit, "I forgot that."

It is particularly serious when we forget the goodness God has shown us. How many days have we been satisfied with food, yet forgot to thank? Without a second thought we receive and enjoy good gifts from the heavenly Father. But who thinks about the One from whom all good things come? Are we even embarrassed about this forgetfulness?

How is it with God?—Because of His great love for us, He does not forget. "Can a woman forget her nursing child, and not have compassion on the son of her womb? Surely, they may forget, yet I will not forget you. See, I have inscribed you on the palms of My hands" (Isaiah 49:15-16).

God does not forget to show us His goodness. He knows what we need. "For your Father knows the

things you have need of before you ask Him" (Matthew 6:8).

Amidst the unfortunate circumstances of life, let us not forget the goodness that God has shown us. When you fold your hands and tell God your concerns, don't forget all of His benefits toward you! If we encounter goodness, let us not forget God.

If your work is successful and you are able to support your family with your income, don't forget all His benefits toward you!

When your marriage is harmonious and your children bring you joy as they mature and walk in faith together with you, don't forget His goodness toward you!

When you have been protected from harm, fear and sin, from sickness and suffering, don't forget!

When you experience answers to prayer and grow in your faith, when your work in the church is fruitful, don't forget all of His benefits.

But above all: If God has forgiven your sins and helps you to lead a life of victory, don't forget to thank Him!



SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

Treasures For The Future

Our God gives more than we need. His provisions are never exhausted. The time will never come when we will have to say that we have already received the richest blessings. No, more marvelous ones await us! His love is like an immeasurable house of treasures. We need never fear that His grace is now exhausted and that His blessings can no longer guide us.

Even the riches of His grace are not displayed as tall mountains when we begin our walk with Him. Oh no, they are saved up for us until we need them. Only then are they granted us. The Holy Scripture states that, in the future, God wants to show us His lavish riches of His grace in His kindness (Ephesians 2:7). Based on this premise, He deals with the earthly and heavenly things.

Consider the farmer who goes out during hot summer days to delight in his ripening grains and his fruit trees bowed down by their bounty. In a few weeks, the crops will be harvested for use during the time of year when the cold winter arrives and the surroundings are bare and inhospitable. Is he not like the father who saves to secure the future for his children? Likewise, God has done this for us, His children, with the lavish riches He has gathered for our future.

God has outfitted the earth with incredible gifts through His mercy. Before man was created, the earth was already created for him to occupy. God created the mountains, valleys, and cliffs, as well as the air and water. These treasures were all put into nature to later benefit humans' needs. No intelligent thinker can say that these

occurred by chance. God's lavish care for His children has accumulated these treasures for us.

In the same way, all the needs of the spiritual realm are also provided. From eternity, God's goodness has stored up treasures of mercy for us humans. By becoming human, and by suffering and dying, Christ stored up numerous treasures of mercy. We too easily forget what it cost Him to bring about our salvation.

Through many years of poverty and sacrifices during the days when the Tempter hotly tormented Him, and at the time of His bitter death, He brought us immeasurable treasures of blessings and an everlasting eternity. Yes, every hope and true happiness that our belief gives us flows from the lavish riches that our Savior gathered for us during His years of deprivation and during His agony of death.

These treasures were also meant for the future and were not all immediately distributed. This applies to the realm of nature as in the kingdom of grace. Need is the key that opens the door to God's cupboard.

For example, take the Bible. It contains lavish treasures of mercy. Since the time when the apostle John was inspired to write the last Amen, no chapter, line, or word has been inserted. Nevertheless, each generation finds new treasures in this Book of Books.

This also applies to each individual's experiences. When as children we are introduced to the Bible, we memorize many verses without understanding their deep worth. We do not grasp the treasures of light, comfort, and power that the Bible offers us. We are not mature enough to appreciate the Word because we lack experience and the acknowledgement of our inner personal poverty. For a time, it may appear as if the precious truths of the Bible are hidden and their meanings unknown to us. Even when we read them in our youth, the full comfort and refreshment of the Word is still hidden. However, when life's battles, challenges, and contradictions confront us, then how precious are the familiar words in the Bible! Promises which earlier held no meaning for us and appeared to be written with colorless ink, now have deeper and richer meanings. Experience has now allowed our eyes to see their worth.

Probably every Christian who is able to look back on a long life filled with temptations and challenges knows Bible verses from his younger days that were not important to him at the time. Then, however, when as yet unknown needs and challenges near, these words come to mind like a newly lit light illuminating the darkened path. This is not a new light. The Christian was unable to see this light, even though it had been close to him. The other surrounding lights had dulled his eyes.

It is also almost impossible to come to a personal knowledge of the Holy Scripture in any other way. The Bible's words are in our memory as years come and go and we acquire new experiences. The lights of the earthly joys vanish, our body's strength lessens, and we experience failures. Worries cause problems for us, and our friends desert us. The sun that yesterday shone so brightly and cheerfully has suddenly set. Then suddenly, they appear before us: the old words of the Bible, which have been ignored and had no meaning for us. Now, suddenly, a hopeful light surrounds us. Even this mercy has been stored up for the time when we really need it!

According to God's wise planning, no desert is without an oasis, no steep stony mountain is without a summit, and no dark gorge is without a friendly light. God's kindness has stored up treasures of His mercy for the time when real needs arise. Take, for example, the various promises He made. We first realize their full worth when we have been in need and have tested them. The Lord provides us with needed mercy from day to day. He gives us mercy to live for Him. If we, therefore, are able to live victoriously, He will also give us the mercy to die victoriously.

Surely worries will come our way, but then the light of the godly promises will shine correspondingly brighter, even if our most loved one is taken. Even though the cup of sorrows is often bitter, it is medicine for the sick soul. When death nears, it is not the end but the beginning of life, because He leads us "from the shadows, out of nothing, into the land of eternal lights."

J. R. M.

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Thank You, Lord

*Lord, for food and drink we thank You,
And for all that You have given.
Oh, what blessings and abundance
You've bestowed on us from heaven.*

*We thank You, Lord, for Your great
kindness;
Help us to love You, as we should.
Our soul and body have been nourished;
We praise You, Lord, for You are good.*

*You gave us rain, you gave us sunshine,
You gave that harvest, which we need;
Provided pasture for the cattle,
And crops of plenty from our seeds.*

*Far greater than these earthly blessings,
You have a gift for everyone.
Eternal life, and hope of heaven,
Through Jesus Christ, Your only Son.*

Gerhard Mielke