

MAY, 2023

REFLECTIONS

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Worship Times

8:00 & 10:45 AM - In sanctuary
9:30 AM - Bible Study
10:45 AM - Zoom
6:00 PM - Monday - In sanctuary
Parking Lot - FM 88.7

A Publication of Ascension Lutheran Church - Huntsville, AL

Even If We're Stuck, We Can Still Lift Up Our Hands

It's a well-known fact, among LCMS Lutherans, anyway, that clapping in church is frowned upon. By God?

It's also a traditional no-no that LCMS Lutherans don't raise their hands in worship. Unless you're the pastor, giving the benediction. Says who?

Psalm 53:2 - *"God looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were [any] that did understand, that did seek God."* (NIV)

OR

"From heaven God looks down to see if anyone is wise enough to search for him." (CEV)

OR

"God looks down from heaven on the children of man to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God." (ESV)

When I first read this verse as an adult, I thought, "Well, sure, I want

to show God that I am listening, that I am searching for Him, that I want to let Him know He's got me and I'm glad!"

But how does one get God's attention, besides in prayer? And if He's *looking down from heaven*, searching for those who want Him to *see* them, what better way than by raising our hands to heaven to get His attention? Not only raising our hands to heaven, but waving them crazily to make sure He sees us?

Have you ever wondered what God does see when He looks down from heaven? A ka-zillion peoples' heads, not their faces, but the tops of their heads - some bald, some full of hair of all styles; some with scarves, some with ball caps, some with crowns, some with hoodies. How many of these ka-zillion people ever think to lift up their hands and try to grab God's attention, or lift up their faces to worship in a crowd, sometimes with eyes closed, sometimes with tears, sometimes with not much hope.

Here are just a few passages that show people can worship God without "traditional restrictions," shall we say?

"Even If We're Stuck, We Can Still Lift Up Our Hands" continued on back cover





VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

. . . is scheduled for June 25-30 from 6:00-8:00 PM. The theme for this year is **RAINFOREST XPLOREERS**. At Rainforest Explorers, we learn how Jesus is our ultimate guide in the rainforest and throughout our lives. We might feel lost, but He'll show us the way. We already have people lined up for refreshment time and recreation. We are still in need of volunteers for Bible time, crafts, music, and opening/closing.

Please volunteer to serve our congregation, and our Lord by filling in one of these positions.

Jennifer Hartwig and Kelly Aschenbrenner are spear-heading VBS this year, so please reach out them, or another member of the Board of Ed to ask how you can help!



From the DCM

Carla Jo Peebles

Over at the CDC we are accepting a limited number of enrollments for the summer program, due to the number of staff.



The Graduation program for our prekindergartners is set for Wednesday, May 17 at 11:00 AM. It will be held in the fellowship hall. Immediate family members have been invited. A light meal will follow the program and graduation.

STRONG IN THE LORD

A letter from our Heavenly Father

Strong in the Lord: *"Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go."* (Joshua 1:9)



Dear students of _____,
(You can fill in the blank)

I can tell you are excited for your

summer vacation to begin. When you hear the word summer, your minds fill with vacation plans, sports practices, thoughts of sleeping in, and maybe even a summer job. Change can be good, but it also brings uncertainty and questions. This school year, you focused on a promise I gave Joshua. I reminded him in a time of doubt to be strong and courageous because I was with him wherever he went. I made that promise a long time ago, but it still stands for you too. I will be with you, wherever you go this summer.

Your path will undoubtedly include challenges and trials. Know that you will face temptations. Some temptations may come in the form of friends, who look to lead you away from my word and the commandments you have memorized and to worldly things. They might lead you to think sin is "no big deal" or something everyone else at their school does. Some temptations will come from your sinful nature. You may feel a pull to ignore my Word or feel that reading the Bible is only for when you are in school. Ignoring my Word puts distance between us.

Temptations may come from the sinful world through your cell phones and computer screens. Satan loves to use the popular things of this world to twist you into thinking they are worth all your time and attention, and all too often, all your heart. In all these temptations, you will find

strength in me to overcome. I will be with you, be careful not to cast me aside for temporary, worthless things.

As I have been, with countless Christians before you, I will be there when you fall. Return to me in repentance for my arms will be open to welcome you back with the forgiveness my Son won for you. You are always welcome. I have promised: never will I leave you, never will I forsake you. The only way to grow stronger in me is through the power of My Word. The good news of My Son's death and resurrection turns hardened hearts of stone to living, joyful hearts.

Your pastors, teachers and parents have taught you this year to remain Strong in Me. These men and women are my faithful servants. Honor them, pray for them, and encourage them for they shepherd your souls. Listen to their instruction, for the wisdom they share, they have learned from me.



In your homes and among your family and friends, let the light of the gospel shine bright. For when others see your good deeds, they bring praise before me. Look for opportunities to love and serve those around you. For in loving and serving them, you also love and serve me. Encourage your parents to pray with you, have devotions, and

From the DCM (Continued)

Carla Jo Peebles

read from my word, for there you will stay connected to all the promises I have made to you.

The unbelieving world looks for strength in many places: the gym, the library, large amounts of money, or their health. Strengthen your souls in my promises that will never fail you. I have seen summers come and go for thousands of years. I see the seasons of life quickly change. I have seen the strong man grow weak and old. Your life is but an instant. Even though this world will pass away, my word never changes, and my promises will sustain you all your days. Be strong in me, for there you will find joy. This summer prepare your hearts to be with me forever.

In love, Your Heavenly Father

(Taken from Our Redeemer Lutheran Church and School, Madison Wisconsin)



Be Strong in the Lord

*Be strong in the Lord and be of good courage;
Your defender is He who is always the same.
Mount up with wings as the eagle ascending;
Victory is sure when you call on His name.
Be strong, be strong, be strong in the Lord;
And be of good courage for He is your guide.
Be strong, be strong, be strong in the Lord;
And rejoice for the victory is yours.*

*Put on the armour the Lord has provided;
Place your defense in His unfailing care.
Trust Him for He will be with you in battle,
Lighting our path to avoid every snare.
Be strong, be strong, be strong in the Lord;
And be of good courage for He is your God
Be strong, be strong, be strong in the Lord
And rejoice for the victory is yours.*

Tom Fettke & Linda Lee Johnson

The Angelus
Painting by Jean-
François Millet

The history of the painting is that it was commissioned by Thomas Gold Appleton, a wealthy Bostonian of Irish descent. The painting was possibly inspired by memories of the recent disastrous Irish potato famine, or as it is also known, The Great Hunger. There was an infestation that ruined up to one-half of the potato crop that year, and about three-quarters of the crop over the next seven years. However, Thomas ultimately declined to accept the painting and Millet was forced, in desperation of selling his painting, to alter it. That being said, he added the church in the background to market it.

Though it did not see much critical acclaim in his life time, it has gone on to be one of the more influential French works of the time, and of Christian art, overall. In 1845, Millet would comment on his work and say, "The idea for The Angelus came to me because I remembered that my grandmother, hearing the church bell ringing while we were working in the fields, always made us stop work to say the Angelus prayer for the poor departed, very religiously and with cap in hand." (The Angelus is the daily prayer common in Catholic countries)

In a vast open field, with a bright sky, a husband and wife take a moment out of their day for a daily prayer, even though it's harvest time.

From the Guest Pastor

Rev. Colin Ford

The church in the background invites the idea of bells signaling the momentary halt of the harvest, and gathering for prayer. No doubt that this scene has more impact in an agrarian society, but the takeaway is there for everyone, as well

Do you ever find yourself so caught up in the day-to-day work, or your daily activities, that you forget to pray?

We are told in the letter to the Philippians 4:4-7: *"Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*

Or, from Psalm 50:15: *"And call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me."*

Prayer life is essential to the life of a Christian, and Jean-François Millet's painting reminds us that there will always be other things going on, Harvest, sports and games, dinners, hobbies, lunch meetings, work, family and social engagements, but we are reminded to take time to pray: when times are good; when times are bad; when giving thanks; when asking for fortitude; and when seeking courage.

I hope this image of The Angelus, that is the husband and wife praying together in the midst of their harvest, reminds you to take time in prayer in your daily life.

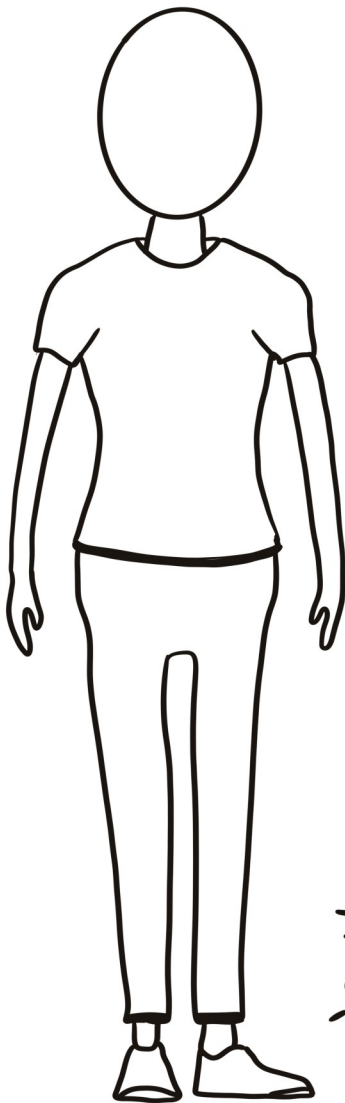


When you look at this work, what do you see? Does anything "jump out" at you? Do you hear the church bells echoing from the church in the distance? Do you hear the call to pray in your own life?

HAPPY Mother's DAY!

My mom is amazing because:

Draw your mom
a special picture of her
favorite thing!



This is
my mom



My mom's name is _____ but I call her _____!

You are the _____

mom in the whole _____!

I love you more than _____

and _____ and I think

you're funny when _____.

Thank you for always _____.

[My favorite thing to do with my mom is:]

Love you always, _____!

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THIS IS SO SAD

"I speak the truth in Christ - I am not lying, my conscience confirms it through the Holy Spirit - I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my people, those of my own race." (Romans 9:1-3)

"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it." (Matthew 7:13-14)

A few years ago, there was a bad accident here in Huntsville in which a young woman was trapped inside her damaged vehicle. When her vehicle caught on fire, passers-by desperately tried to free her, but to no avail. Before the emergency crew with the Jaws of Life could get there to cut her out, her car was engulfed in flames.

This accident haunted me for days. I felt so sorry for the young woman. Those last minutes of her life must have been awful.



As sad as this accident was, it doesn't begin to compare with the eternal suffering of

From the Elder

Rick Hilst

Hell. Most Christians don't like to think about Hell, don't like to think about anyone in endless pain, and those that do often downplay how awful Hell and eternal damnation will be. Some describe it as eternal separation from God, which it will be, but don't talk about the endless torment, the agony of the lake of fire, the weeping and gnashing of teeth.

On Judgment Day, everyone who has ever lived will come before our Lord to be judged. If a person is a believer who has trusted in Jesus for his salvation, his sins will be covered by Christ's blood, and he will be placed at God's right hand along with the other sheep, from whence they will proceed into Heaven. If he is not a believer and is not covered by Jesus' blood, then he will be found guilty and sentenced, along with the other goats, to spend eternity in the burning pit reserved for Satan and the other evil angels.

This will be a terrible day, especially for the unbelievers sentenced to eternal damnation, but also for the believers, who will watch many of their family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, and other acquaintances sentenced to an eternity of torment. How awful, how horrible, how heart-wrenching it will be to see (if not seeing, at least knowing) the fate of dearly loved ones as they are cast into the lake of despair and eternal suffering.

Paul knew how bad eternal

damnation would be for the unbelieving Jews, being familiar with Scripture and having been given, like John, a glimpse into Heaven. His empathy for them was such that, were it possible, he was willing to forfeit his own salvation if they could be saved and spared this punishment. This is the heart of a true evangelist; he cared more for other people, and for their future, than for himself.

Because He deeply, deeply loved us, Jesus Christ, the Son of God the Father and second person of the Holy Trinity, humiliated Himself by taking on manhood, by suffering and dying on the cross, by bearing the just punishment for our wrongdoings, the righteous wrath of the Father for our sins, so that we could be spared this horrific fate. Jesus Christ died for all, so that all could be saved, so that all could avoid the terrible fate of eternal damnation, so that all could enter into an eternity of bliss in Heaven.

You show me the
PATH OF LIFE.
In your presence there is
FULLNESS OF JOY ...
Psalm 16:11, 88:8



However, the path that leads to Heaven is narrow and few are saved. On the other hand, the road that leads to Hell is wide and many will traverse it.

This means that there will be many more people sentenced to eternal damnation than eternal bliss. The result will be that all believers will likely know many people, many people who they deeply care about, who will face this terrible future.

If you appreciate how truly evil our sins are, and how much God detests the sins that we commit, then you might wonder why everybody doesn't have to pay the ultimate penalty for their own transgressions, why some are saved. By our sense of right and wrong, we believe that people should get the justice they deserve. Fortunately, God has a more forgiving heart than we do, and He has given us a way out, a way that doesn't lead to eternal punishment.

God loves us. He has undergone the ultimate humiliation, the ultimate sacrifice necessary for our salvation. He did this because He wants us, all of us, to be saved. However, He does not coerce us to believe in Him. He comes to us through His Word, through His sacraments, and we have the choice to reject Him. As the parable of the Sower and the Seed declares, some reject Him because the devil comes and immediately snatches away the Word, others reject Him because, although they initially receive the Word with joy, they have no root and their faith withers, yet others reject Him because the cares and concerns of this world eventually choke away their faith.

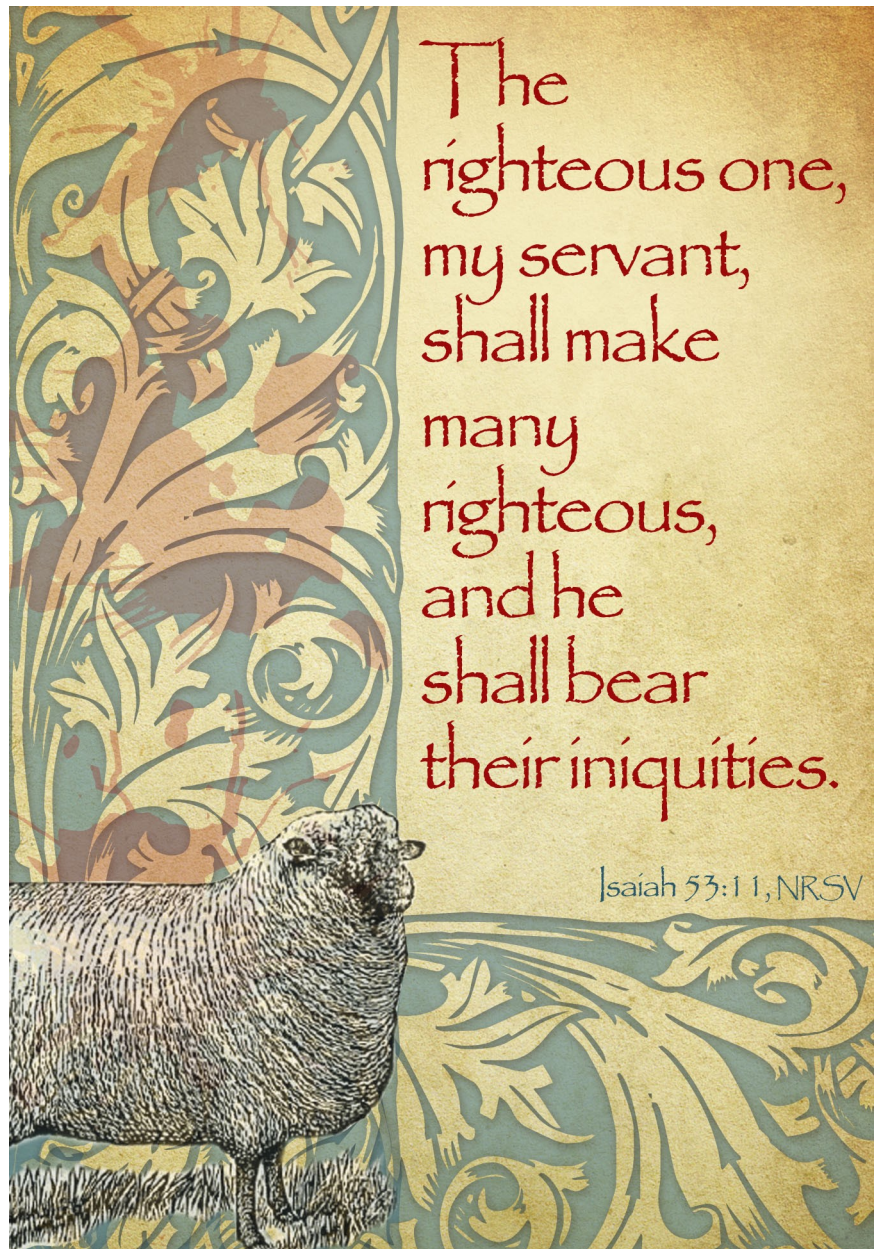
What is going to happen, and the Bible is clear on this topic, is that there will be a huge number of people, including many who consider themselves to be Christians, who will be sentenced to eternal damnation,

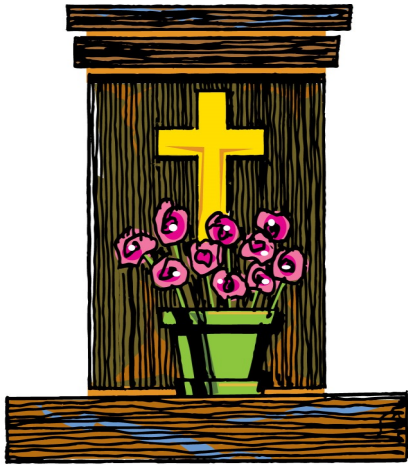
From the Elder (Continued)

Rick Hilst

to a never-ending existence within the lake of fire. How unimaginably awful this is going to be! My heart breaks whenever I contemplate the future of people I care deeply about, people that I'm pretty sure are on that wide path to Hell.

The bottom line is that Judgment Day will indeed be a terribly sad, heartbreaking day for all Christians. Fortunately, God has promised to wipe away all our tears, tears I think that will be shed for all those lost forever.





FROM THE
Pulpit

Our Pastors Who Serve

May, 2023

May 7 - Rev. James Garnett

May 14 - Rev. Keith Enko

May 21 - Rev. Doug DeWitt

May 28 - Rev. Gary Nagy

June, 2023

June 4 - Rev. James Garnett

June 11 - Rev. Keith Enko

June 18 - Rev. Doug DeWitt

June 25 - Rev. Gary Nagy

MAY

Birthdays & Anniversaries

Toni Hypes	05/02	Elizabeth Charnock	05/12
Anna Peebles	05/03	Kathy Kiehl	05/13
Crissi Patterson	05/03	Janet Smith	05/14
Philip Fraley	05/05	Jonathan Stoddart	05/17
Colin Ford	05/07	Rick Hilst	05/19
Debbie Fraley	05/09	Shane Charnock	05/19
Hawley Cheney	05/09	Jean Shaver	05/20
Jason Maas	05/09	Andrew Langefeld	05/20
		Patrick Hurst	05/21

Harvey & Betty Fischer	May 2	(53 years)
Rob & Ellen Rosson	May 2	(25 years)
Greg & Olivia Yates	May 18	(5 years)
Jimmy & Sharon Damron	May 25	(40 years)
Philip & Debbie Fraley	May 29	(41 years)
Bob & Vanda Beamer	May 31	(42 years)

Missional Outreach Schedule

HHR - May 3, 17, 31 - 10:15 AM Regency - May 11, 25 - 12:30 PM

Opening & Welcome

Songs 1 and 2

OT Reading

Songs 3 and 4

NT Reading

Song 5 and 6

Gospel

Song 7

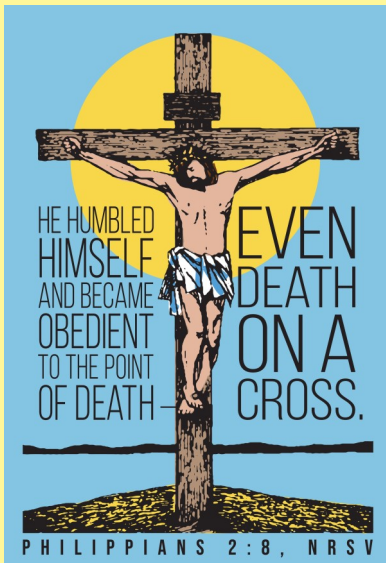
Message

Song 8 & Benediction Song

HUMBLE SECURE

In a world that honors nearly everything but humility, the words in 1 Peter 5:6-7 may easily be dismissed as foolish:

“⁶Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. ⁷Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.”



But the unbelievable possibility is shown to be truth: As God humbled Himself by taking on human flesh, suffering and dying - all for the sake of a world that turned its back on Him - humility took on new importance.

We often worry about our position and status, hoping to get proper recognition for what we do. But Peter advises us to remember that God’s recognition counts more than human praise. God is able and willing to bless us according to His timing. Humbly obey God regardless of present circumstances, and in His got time - either in this life or in the next - He will lift us up.

From Stewardship

Bobbie Scroggins

Carrying our worries, stresses and daily struggles ourselves shows that we have not trusted God fully with our lives. It takes humility, however, to recognize that God cares, to admit our needs and to let others in God’s family help us. Sometimes we think that struggles caused by our own sin and foolishness are not God’s concern. But when we turn to God in repentance, He will bear the weight even of these struggles. Letting God have our anxieties calls for action, not passivity. Don’t submit to circumstances, but to the Lord, who controls circumstances.

We stand in our sinful pride and selfish ambition and rail against that humility. But our humble Lord stands quietly, pointing out that as much as we may want to think we are capable and self-sufficient, we can do nothing apart from God. It is in this place of recognizing our weakness and inability to save ourselves that we can see how much God has done and continues to do for us.

1 Peter 5:8-9: *“⁸Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. ⁹Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.”*



Lions attack sick, young or struggling animals; they choose victims who are alone or not alert. Peter warns us to watch out for Satan when we are suffering or being persecuted. If we are feeling alone, weak, helpless and cut off from other believers, or if we are so focused on our troubles that we forget to watch for danger, those are the times we are especially vulnerable to Satan’s attacks. During times of suffering, seek other Christians for support. Keep your eyes on Christ and resist the devil. Then, says James, *“he will flee from you”* (James 4:7).



1 Peter 5:10-11: *“¹⁰And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast.” ¹¹To Him be the power forever and ever. Amen!*

When we are suffering, we often feel as though our pain will never end. Peter gave these faithful Christians the wider perspective in comparison with eternity, their suffering would last only a little while.

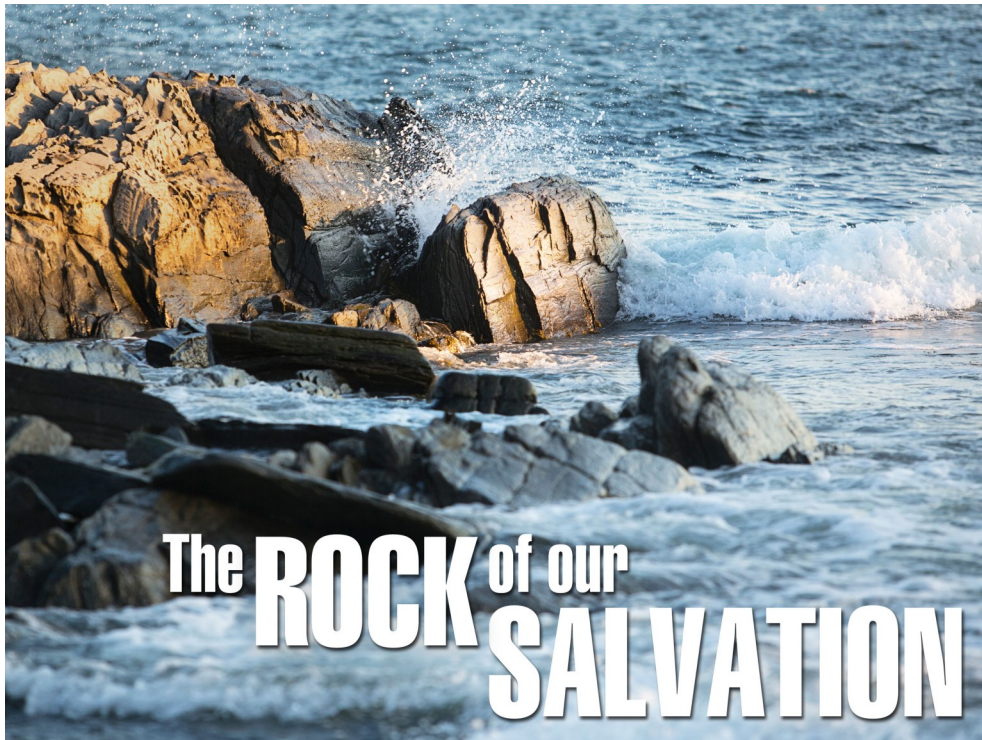
From Stewardship (Continued)

Bobbie Scroggins

Theme: Prayer for security and assurance. Wherever we are, we can trust that God will be there to answer our cries for help.

Psalm 61: *"Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer. From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I. For you have been my refuge, a strong tower against the foe. I long to dwell in your tent forever and take refuge in the shelter of your wings. For you, God, have heard my vows; you have given me the heritage of those who fear your name. Increase the days of the king's life, his years for many generations. May he be enthroned in God's presence forever; appoint your love and faithfulness to protect him. Then I will ever sing in praise of your name and fulfill my vows day after day."*

Living in this sinful world, we feel overwhelmed by suffering, heartache, fear and worry. But the Holy Spirit gives us faith to press onward, undaunted, with our eyes fixed on Christ. This is the hope and the promise of life in Christ. We are held firmly in His grasp and no one can snatch us from His hand.



Where Are We Heading?

"Thanks be to God who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ."

2 Corinthians 2:14

It is not always easy to choose which road we should follow. But following Christ as Lord of our lives puts divine powers into action. Our values in Him will provide us with an inspired, yet practical goal.

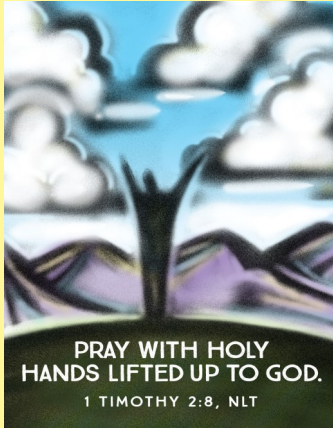
Choosing our goal and objectives with Christ will put us on the right road and will bring joy, confidence and enthusiasm into our lives.

If we walk through life in the light of God, the whole journey becomes a joyous experience. We pray, Lord Jesus, that we may, in humility, recognize Your hand in our lives. You are leading us and will never leave us.

Amen.

MAY, 2023

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1 6:00 PM - Worship	2 10:00 AM - Women's Bible Study	3 10:15 AM - HHR 6:00 PM - Choir	4	5	6
7 8:00 & 10:45 AM - Worship 9:30 AM - Bible Study/Sunday School 9:45 AM - Regency	8 6:00 PM - Worship	9 10:00 AM - Women's Bible Study 7:00 PM - Board of Directors	10 6:00 PM - Choir	11 12:30 PM - Regency	12	13 10:00 AM - LWML
14 8:00 & 10:45 AM - Worship 9:30 AM - Bible Study/Sunday School 9:45 AM - Regency	15 6:00 PM - Worship	16 10:00 AM - Women's Bible Study 6:00 PM - Board of Elders	17 10:15 AM - HHR 11:00 AM - CDC Graduation 6:00 PM - Choir	18	19	20 5:30 PM - Prayer Service
21 8:00 & 10:45 AM - Worship 9:30 AM - Bible Study/Sunday School 9:45 AM - Regency	22 6:00 PM - Worship	23 10:00 AM - Women's Bible Study	24 6:00 PM - Choir	25 12:30 PM - Regency	26	27 8:30 AM - Men's Prayer Breakfast
28 8:00 & 10:45 AM - Worship 9:30 AM - Bible Study/Sunday School 9:45 AM - Regency	29 6:00 PM - Worship	30 10:00 AM - Women's Bible Study	31 10:15 AM - HHR			



*“And Ezra blessed the Lord, the great God, and all the people answered, “Amen, Amen,” **lifting up their hands**. And they bowed their heads and worshiped the Lord **with their faces to the ground.**”* Nehemiah 8:6

*“For then you will delight yourself in the Almighty and **lift up your face to God.**”*
Job 22:26

*“Hear the voice of my pleas for mercy, when I cry to you for help, when **I lift up my hands toward your most holy sanctuary** (Heaven?).”*
Psalm 28:2

*“So I will bless you as long as I live; **in your name I will lift up my hands.**”*
Psalm 63:4

*“**Lift up your hands to the holy place and bless the Lord!**”*
Psalm 134:2

***Let us lift up our hearts and hands to God in heaven:** (As the people confessed their sins)
Lamentations 3:41*

Submitted by one special LCMS pastor:

From article in LCMS website:

Emotions do have their place, however. Our triune God created emotions just as much as He did knowledge and all other things in creation:

*“I form light and create darkness;
I make well-being and create calamity;
I am the Lord, who does all these things.”*

Isaiah 45:7

“For everything created by God is good, and nothing is to be rejected if it is received with gratitude.”

1 Timothy 4:4

God is the Creator of everything, including emotions.

Submitted by a second special LCMS pastor:

“And Moses said, “I will turn aside to see this great sight, why the bush is not burned.” When the LORD saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the bush, “Moses, Moses!” And he said, “Here I am.” Then he said, “Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.” And he said, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.” And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.”

Exodus 3:3-6

While not raising hands specifically, what special ways do we have when we enter the presence of the Most High God?

This particular appearance of God is considered by scholars to reveal that God is profoundly present in the midst of the mundane and the marvelous.

Through this Exodus event where Moses removes his shoes in front of the burning bush, I AM promises salvation so unbelievable that Moses can hardly fathom it. And yet he removes his sandals and believes.

From a third special LCMS pastor:

“When God provides music that moves the soul in a worship service, I raise my hands toward Heaven and respond with quiet clapping.”