



# Bethlehem Star

*"Connecting People to Jesus"*

*December 2019*

Dear Members and Friends,

Most of the world does important things with great fanfare, publicity, and a whole lot of noise. Our God does things differently. He hides himself in the flesh and blood of a little baby in a backwater town in a cattle stall. Then instead of announcing that God has come to dwell with us to the Emperors and priests he sends an angel chorus to shepherds in the fields. More than anything it trumpets the truth that Jesus Christ came to save prostitutes, tax collectors, the lonely, the lost, the sinners.

That means that Christmas is for me. It tells me of God's great love for me. It tells me I can put my trust in Jesus because even **"though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."**

May we take time this Christmas to ponder this great wonder and worship Him who comes to us as a child meek and mild.

*How silently, how silently the wondrous gift is giv'n  
So God imparts to human heart the blessing of His heav'n  
No ear may hear His coming But in this world of sin  
Where meek souls will receive Him still the dear Christ enters in*

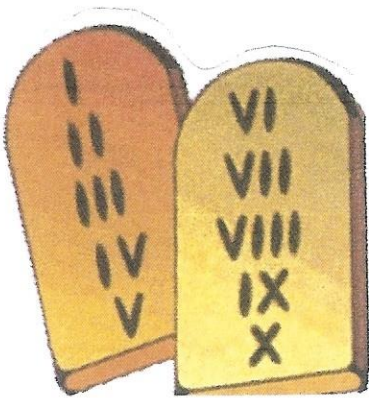
*O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us, we pray  
Cast out our sin and enter in, be born in us today  
We hear the Christmas angels, the great glad tidings tell;  
O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Immanuel!*

Yvonne and I wish you and your family a joyous Christmas and may his blessings continue throughout the coming year.



## Second Commandment

Luther's explanation: "We should fear and love God so that we do not curse, swear, use satanic arts, lie, or deceive by His name, but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks" (Luther's Small Catechism, pp. 11–12). The ESV translation of the Second Commandment reads, "**You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain**" (Ex 20:7). The term "in vain" means to empty of significance, to disrespect, to belittle. The issue of the Second Commandment is reverence.



We are an irreverent society. We like to knock people off their pedestal. We are happy to hear about the weaknesses and failures of the rich and famous. Like me, you may glance furtively at the sensational headlines on tabloids as you stand in the checkout lane. We have an obsessive need to pop everybody's bubble, to reduce everyone to our level of ordinariness. Is that also why we are so irreverent with God's name? We don't want even him considered special?

Some years ago on a trip with my wife to New England, we were amazed that we hadn't heard any swear words. We had even been on a difficult hike up a steep mountain along with a group of high school youth. Not even the teenagers had used any swear words despite the slipping, sliding, and scraping. At our last stop, we asked our hostess why there was no swearing in this part of the country. Her first response revealed what she thought of the Midwest, where we live, "Perhaps people are better educated here." (She apparently associated vulgar language with lack of culture.)

I replied, "Plenty of people with doctorates use that kind of language too." Then she guessed, "Perhaps it has to do with the Puritan background in this part of the country."

That made more sense to me. The Puritans indeed did revere God's name, and perhaps they set a standard that remains today. They feared God and would never use his sacred name casually or disrespectfully. What does the word *god* mean to you? I must admit that when people say, "O God," I don't get as upset as when they say "Christ" this and "Jesus" that. To me, apparently, the word *god* is generic. It's common to all religions and has many meanings, different for a Hindu or a Muslim or a Christian.

But the name of Jesus is different. That name is important in my personal faith. That is the name of the Son of God who became flesh and blood like me—who loved me enough to die on the cross in my place. That is the name through which I am saved and have forgiveness of sins, new life, and the assurance of eternity in heaven. Peter says, "There is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

That is the name God exalted over every name and sat at his own right hand. Paul says, "God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (Phil 2:9–11). We may not literally bow our knee or head at the name of Jesus, but do we bow spiritually? Do we humble ourselves and honor that name before the world?

Growing up in Chicago, I heard four-letter words everywhere. My wife's father, a conservative Missouri Synod pastor, did not consider those words swearing. That language was not sinful, not a misuse of the name of God, it was just coarse and vulgar according to our culture. He got much more upset when we said "Gee," or "Gee wiz." These are shorthand for "Jesus" and "Jesus Christ." This man deeply revered the name of his Savior and resented anyone using that sacred name flippantly.

The Second Commandment confronts us with a personal question: how deeply do we revere our Savior? There is a liturgical custom that each time the name of Jesus is mentioned in worship—in a Gospel reading, hymn, or prayer—all worshipers should slightly bow their heads. I don't personally follow that practice, though I do bow my head whenever the name of the triune God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, is mentioned.

A Jew never says *Yahweh*, the name God told to Moses at the burning bush, meaning "I am who I am" (Ex 3:14). When those letters appear in Hebrew text, a Jewish worshiper will avoid saying the sounds. He will switch to *Adonai*, another name for God in the Old Testament, but will never say *Yahweh*, the real name of God. That would be sacrilegious and irreverent.

Do you feel that way about the name of Jesus? Do you count it a privilege that you know this name and all it means for our life and salvation? How would your life be different if you did not know this name? Paul says, "Whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him" (Col 3:17). Luther includes that thanks in his explanation of the Second Commandment: "We should fear and love God so that we do not curse, swear, use satanic arts, lie, or deceive by His name, but call upon it in every trouble, pray, praise, and give thanks."

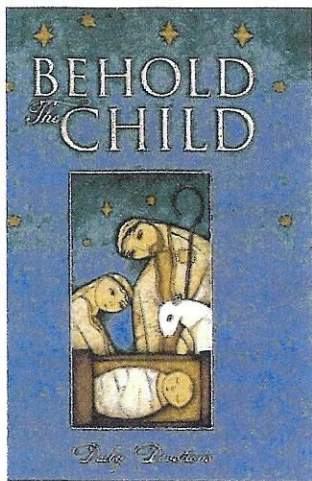
Hold high the name. When you hear the name *Jesus*, do you think of him on the cross, going through hell in your place? Do you honor his name by praying? Do you think of him rising on Easter and going to prepare a place for you at his side for all eternity? Do you honor his name by rejoicing?

Each time you come to worship, do you relish the opportunity to join with fellow disciples to fall at Jesus' feet and hear his words of hope and direction? Do you honor his name by listening? Do you look forward to every opportunity to come to his Table and receive his body and blood through the bread and wine, to fill yourself with his love and forgiveness? Do you honor his name by coming?

Hold high the name! The next time I hear Jesus' name misused, I pray that God's Spirit will embolden me to say, "You know, that's the name of my best friend and Savior."

**WHEN WE HONOR GOD'S NAME, WE HONOR GOD HIMSELF, WHO DIED TO SAVE US FROM OUR SIN.**





This Advent/Christmas season we will be following the theme "Behold The Child." Advent is a season of preparation to receive Jesus into our hearts and lives. Advent has the dual theme of preparing to receive God hidden under the flesh and blood of a child in a manger and also preparing to receive God at the end of all time coming on the clouds in great power and glory. Christmas celebrates the grace of God given in a child who will live a perfect life, suffer a cruel death and then rise in victory over sin death and the power of the Devil.

Behold the Child celebrates Jesus as both God and man. I pray that the daily devotions will help you focus on the joy of God's great gift to us at Christmas. Thirty seven days of devotion guide you from December 1 through Epiphany (January 6). Each devotion connects with the corresponding sermon series drawing you closer to your Savior, the blessed Child.



Please consider helping out the homeless by bringing supplies for the health kits. All items are welcome, especially needed are toothpaste and deodorant. Please put donated items in the box in the narthex. Kits are shared with the Salvation Army and the students at Eisenhower High School.

## Missions in Motion

### Health Kits for the Homeless

All items are needed

**especially Toothpaste & Deodorant**

Hand lotions, shampoos and kleenex should be trial size so everything fits in a gallon bag.

Toothpaste  
Hand Towels  
Hand lotion  
Band-aids  
Deoderant

Toothbrush  
Wash cloths (not white)  
Shampoo  
Combs  
small Kleenex

## Human Care News

Thank you for your help in filling the needs of  
**Love Inc, Camp Hope and Rod's House!**

We have an Angel Tree in the narthex which is sponsored by St. Michael's on Yakima Ave. The children's names and ages are on the tree. Please take one home today. The gifts need to be returned by December 15<sup>th</sup> UNWRAPPED.



Ladies come and enjoy an afternoon of fun and fellowship along with the Christmas story and Christmas carols.

**It's the LWML Christmas Party on December 8<sup>th</sup> at 2PM in the church lounge.** Bring a plate of some of your favorite goodies to share and somethings for the Union Gospel Mission. Items: cookies, coffee, sugar, jam, socks, gloves, etc.

Secret Pals will also be revealed!!

By- Archana Mala Barik, USA

## **“May Your Guidance Lead me, Not my Wisdom.”**

“Blessed is the man who makes the Lord his trust.” Psalm 40:4

In a big appliance store, a new immigrant got a job as a salesman. This man impressed the manager by doing a research work for the store in an assigned, shorter period of time. In a few days, this new employee used to experience of his senior co-worker's expressions that were not supportive to the new employee. The new employee used to check with the other salesmen in the store and would find each time that what he was doing was right not the senior salesman. Also, this man's customer service was appreciated—several customers would praise and thank him for the way he would suggest an appliance and his courteous way of dealing with them. Sometimes new customers would come to this store and would look for this new employee as recommended from their friends who had already purchased from this store. The man was inspired; on the other hand, that senior salesman couldn't take it. One day, it came to a point that just for a little thing about sale, this senior salesman yelled at this new employee and said, “The door of the store is open; you may walk out...”

This new employee got very upset and disappointed. His wife was waiting for dinner. On the dining table, this man broke up... His wife asked, “What happened?” The man told all what had been happening with him at his job, and also told the strong words he heard that day. His wife said, “We will pray... don't lose heart!” The man said, “We will go back to our country.” The wife didn't deviate from her faith in the power of prayers—she said, “No, my dear... we have immigrated through Lord's guidance, and we are not going back because of the words of a man.”

They both prayed, however their hearts were perturbed. Next day, the wife said, “You had been applying for a job in your actual field of education and work experience. Your current job is just meant to save money until you get job of your expertise. Now, let us focus on your additional education that you will take in this country.” Both husband and wife continued to pray for Lord's guidance.

This man got even a higher degree that got added to his credential. After that he applied for a job and his candidature was highly admired by the entire panel.

In contrast, that senior employee in that appliance store used to give the same behavior to any other employee who used to work efficiently. He would use his wisdom to take things in his favor, but unfortunately it couldn't last long and the fact came up to the surface.

Many times in our life, when we find we are not adequate for a task, we try to find way to become more adequate. Remember, at that time God reminds us with His serene voice that ‘I need to deepen my dependence on the Lord.’

**Prayer:** ‘Yours will be done-- this is my prayer.

My life is—in Your hand.

I am the clay and

You are the Potter;

Pick me up—

Mould and make. Amen.’

Stay encouraged!



# *Bel Canto*

## *Of Yakima*



*Singing Is Believing*  
*In The*  
*Meaning Of Christmas:*  
*A Christmas Concert*

December 14, 2019  
Saturday  
4 p.m.  
Bethlehem Lutheran Church  
801 Tieton Dr.

*Singing Is Believing Series 2019-2020*

*A freewill offering will be taken with the proceeds benefitting the  
Bel Canto Scholarship Program.*