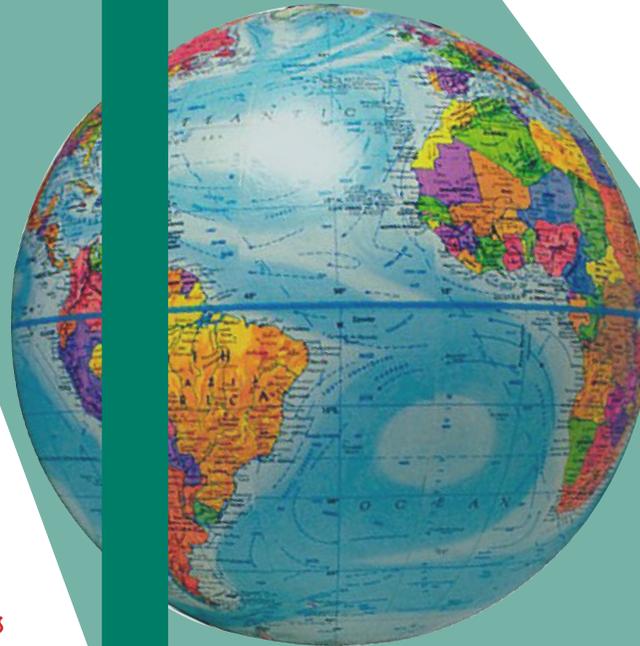


**PROCLAIM HIS NAME**  
**PROCLAIM HIS NAME**  
**PROCLAIM HIS NAME**  
**PROCLAIM HIS NAME**



"Sing to the Lord, bless His name; tell of His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the nations, His marvelous works among all the peoples! For great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised; He is to be feared above all gods."

*Psalm 96:2-4*

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### DEVOTIONS

*Jesus; Alpha and Omega*

*Father*

*Redeemer; Prince of Peace*

*Shepherd; The Lamb; Mediator*

*I Am; Wonderful Counsellor*

*Holy Spirit; Great High Priest*

*Word of Life; Resurrection of Life*

*Son of God; Son of Man; Creator*

*The Vine; Bread of Life*

*The Christ; Comforter*

*Almighty God; Saviour*

*Immanuel; King of Glory; Living Water;  
Light of the World*

*The Rock*

# Table of Contents

	<i>Page</i>		<i>Page</i>
Almighty God	4	The Christ	14
King of Glory	4	Word of Life	15
Alpha and Omega	5	The Shepherd	16
Creator	6	The Lamb	17
Redeemer	7	Living Water	18
Bread of Life	7	Resurrection of Life	19
Jesus	8	Comforter	20
Holy Spirit	9	The Rock	21
Immanuel	9	The Vine	22
Great High Priest	10	I AM	23
Prince of Peace	10	Light of the World	24
Son of God	11	Mediator	25
Son of Man	12	Father	26
Wonderful Counsellor	13	Saviour	26

## Acknowledgements

In His Word, God has given to us Names for Himself which reveal characteristics of His love and the many ways He demonstrates that love to us and to the world. “I am the Lord; that is My name” (Isaiah 42:8). We thank our God for His Word, for His Love and for sending His Son to be our Saviour.

We thank our authors for using the gift of writing to show how each Name of God gives us reason to thank and praise Him and to tell others of the message of salvation through Jesus’ death and resurrection. We thank Marion Hollinger for layout and design.

We pray that this booklet will be a blessing to you and to those with whom you share it.

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## Almighty God

In January 2008, when I was in Bangkok teaching a course for future pastors and deaconesses, the sister of the king of Thailand died. She had done many good things for the people of Thailand and she was much loved by them. One could not escape

*And I saw no temple therein; for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it.*

*Revelation 21:22*

reading about her in the English newspapers in Bangkok. One article which caught my eye dealt with the question, “Where is she now?” The article betrayed the Buddhist understanding of where the souls of good people go after death when it described the temple somewhere in the Himalayas where the king’s sister presently resides.

Every religion has its places of worship which are important to them as they worship their god. Heaven is often pictured as similar to the place where they worship. This tends to be true even for us as Christians. Our church sanctuaries can assume a place in our thinking which makes them more sacred than they ought to be. This is understandable. For it is in our worship services where we hear the Gospel of forgiveness in Christ on the basis of which heaven is open to us. It is in the Lord’s Supper that we make the connection of eating and drinking one day in Paradise. It is in the Creed that we affirm our connection with the saints who have preceded us.

Yet, St. John reminds us that in heaven there is nothing tangible such as a temple to which we can look forward. The Lord Almighty and the Lamb are our temple. Our creator God and the Lamb who was slain to atone for our offences will be the focus of our worship. If that is the case in heaven, then it should also always be the case on earth.

*Lord Jesus, You are the one whom we will worship to all eternity when we are translated into Your heavenly kingdom one day. Help us always to keep You at the centre of our worship also in this life as we live in fellowship with Your saints. Amen.*

## King of Glory

These words of rejoicing were likely shouted as the ark of the covenant was approaching the tent it was housed in or later the temple built for God by King Solomon. The ark was the symbol of God’s presence among His people so they shouted,

*Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle! Lift up your heads, O gates! And lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in. Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, He is the King of glory!*

*Psalms 24:7-10 ESV*

“Open the doors our God is coming!” The people of Israel were overjoyed that God had chosen them and was their protector, their Saviour throughout all their trials.

The ark looks forward to the coming of the Son of God, Jesus Christ who was to rule over the hearts and minds of all people. His presence among us signaled the culmination of God’s promise to many generations that He would save His people, that He would save His creation from death. He is the eternal Son of God who became one of us so that He might be our substitute in fulfilling God’s Law perfectly and dying on the cross to pay for all our wrongdoing. He did it so that we might not

be eternally separated from Him. And because of that, God the Father, “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” (Philippians 2:8-11 ESV).

Jesus is the true King of Glory who stands by the door of your heart speaking His Word of forgiveness, calling you each and every day so that the door might swing open to His eternal grace, that He might dwell in you as He did in the temple built for Him. This King will bring justice and righteousness, granting peace in all the circumstances of life. And, every day you will rejoice with shouts of thanksgiving, knowing that He has blessed you with eternity.

*Gracious King, thank you for the eternal blessings You have granted to me. Through repentance and forgiveness, daily restore me that my heart may ever receive You with great thanksgiving and joy. Amen*

# Alpha and Omega:

## “I know how it ends...”

When my son was reading the “goose bumps” books I asked him if he wasn’t at times frightened. “Sure” he answered, and I made ready to flip into “pastor mode” and tell him he didn’t need to be afraid because he was a baptized child of God. But then he said: “But when I get scared, I just flip ahead and read the ending, once I know everything turns out okay I can go back and get through the scary parts.” Not bad advice when things get tough, when times seem dark, when you wonder if you are going to make it out whole; flip ahead, read the end of the story and see how it all turns out.

*“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”*

*Revelation 1:8*

Right now the news channels are giving us continual updates on the world’s financial situation. The amount of worry and concern created is unnerving to say the least. For Christians, even when we feel like we are caught up in the worry of this age, reading the end of God’s Word reminds us it will turn out all right. As my son says, “WE WIN.” Our world would have us believe we are in ultimate control of all world events – that we are heading unwaveringly toward the crash site. But God’s Word reminds us that no matter what happens, He ultimately retains control of all things. God assures us there is not one event that takes place, whether good or bad, that He has not both foreseen and allowed for our ultimate good.

This is not the first time in history that God’s people faced frightening times. When God gave His revelation to St. John it was a dismal time for Christians. Persecution was upon them. Was it any wonder they began to be concerned about whether God was actually in control or not. In speaking to His people Jesus Himself says to us in Revelation 1:8 “I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, ‘who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.’” And then He further comments on this in verses 17-18; “When I saw Him, I fell at His feet as though dead. Then He placed His right hand on me and said: ‘Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.’”

Throughout Jesus life and ministry, people had conflicting ideas of who He really was and what He was about. These opinions and ideas didn’t cease after Jesus’ Ascension. There was even a group suggesting He was created and therefore was not God as The Father was God. The implication being – how can this Jesus be of any real help to us when He is a creation like us and not really in control. Jesus own words declare Him to be one with the God who was, who is, and who shall be. He is the I AM (YHWH) who is Lord of all. And because He is Lord of all – all things exhilarating and frightening – good and bad – find their source and meaning in Him.

No matter where we find ourselves within the unfolding plot of our world’s drama (or even in our own personal dramas), we need to remember and be comforted by the fact that the entire story is contained within the twin bookends of God’s Alpha and Omega. Like the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet, all things are enclosed and encompassed by God’s eternal immutable presence. We are not left to our own devices, we are not abandoned and alone like a ship without a pilot. God has always been with His people guiding and directing their days and He continues to be with us – guiding and directing our days. Even times when we attempt to grab the wheel and steer for ourselves do not change God’s love, concern, and care for us.

So open the book – look at the first words of Genesis where God introduces you to Himself with the words “In the beginning God...” then flip through to the end where you read “The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you. Amen.” and remember that your entire existence is framed by none other than God – who is the Alpha and the Omega – the beginning and the end. We don’t know what tomorrow or the next day will bring, but we do know what the end of days will bring, They will bring us Christ, and He will bring us home. Amen.

***Father, we praise and thank You for being our Alpha and Omega, for giving us the comfort of knowing that all things are in Your hands and because of Your love, we can live without fear putting our trust in You. In Jesus’ Name we pray. Amen***

## Creator

If one aspect or attribute of Christ is contested or denied then all of God's Word, His action in History and in the lives of people, His headship of the Universe, the Church, any kind of communication between God and humankind has to be

**For in Him (Christ) the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily.**

*Colossians 2:9*

contested and denied as well. Either someone accepts the attributes of Jesus, His divine majesty, acknowledging Him as the Creator God, Lord and Saviour and inheriting eternal salvation, or deny it all and end up losing salvation. Jesus says, "Whoever acknowledges Me before men, I will also acknowledge him before My Father in heaven. But whoever disowns Me before men, I will disown him before My Father in heaven" (Matthew 10:32-33).

Holy Scripture speaks abundantly about Jesus as Creator, in Whom all power and majesty abides: "For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him. And He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. And He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything He might be preeminent" (Colossians 1:16-18).

Being Jesus, Himself the Creator and having the fullness of the Deity dwell in Him, His words are really true, infallible and reliable always. His miracles testify of His power and majesty. He is truly divine, Creator of the whole universe. He is the Sustainer of all things, visible and invisible. His death on the cross and His victorious resurrection completely fulfilled all requirements needed for our salvation and accomplished our salvation in full. There is nothing missing, nothing left to be done.

Because of what Jesus did for us our sins are forgiven and we are reconciled to the Father. He is the Reconciler and has claimed us to the Father by the work that only God the Creator was able to do. He is the Head of the Church and the Provider for all our needs – spiritual, physical and emotional. His days have no end.

It is comforting to know and to believe in Jesus Christ as the Creator, to follow Him and to bear witness to His love and salvation for all. May the Holy Spirit lead and strengthen you to acknowledge Him, to call upon Him and to confess, "My Lord and my God." Amen.

***"In the beginning, O Lord, You laid the foundations of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands" (Hebrews 1:10). I praise You, Creator and Saviour, for stooping down into this sinful world and to redeem me a sinner. In Jesus' name, Amen.***

Beautiful Saviour, King of creation,  
Son of God and Son of Man!  
Truly I'd love Thee,  
Truly I'd serve Thee,  
Light of my soul, my joy, my crown.

Fair are the meadows,  
Fair are the woodlands,  
Robed in flow'rs of blooming Spring;  
Jesus is fairer,  
Jesus is purer,  
He makes our sorrowing spirit sing.



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## Redeemer

The book of Hosea is probably one of the clearest pictures of redemption that we see in the bible. It follows the life of the prophet Hosea whom God calls to marry an adulterous woman named Gomer. God tells Hosea to love her through everything...

*In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that He lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding..*

*Ephesians 1:7-8*

even through her unfaithfulness. He uses this as an illustration to the Israelites to show them that they are also unfaithful to God in their relationship with Him. God says to Hosea, "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes" (reference?).

How often do we fall in our faith? Do we have any similarities to Gomer or the Israelites?

In fact, we have a lot in common with them. That's why God sent Jesus to save us. He has redeemed us from all of that unfaithfulness and sin that's in our lives. God sent Jesus to take our place so that we can live eternally with Him instead of going to hell. He is our great Redeemer who has lavished us with the greatest gift ever. How wonderful it is to be a loved child of God!

*Dear Jesus, You came to earth to redeem all mankind, to forgive us while we were yet sinners. We praise and thank You for Your unending love shown to us by Your sacrifice on the cross. Help us Lord to be faithful to You and when we stray, bring us back to Your loving arms. In Your Name we pray. Amen.*

Oh for a thousand tongues to sing  
My great Redeemer's praise,  
The glories of my God and King,  
The triumphs of His grace!



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## Bread of Life

Already twenty-first century Canadians know how essential bread is and can readily appreciate the impact of the image of Jesus as the Bread of Life. The image is even clearer if Jesus' own cultural references are included in the picture. When Jesus

*Then Jesus declared, "I am the Bread of Life. He who comes to Me will never go hungry.*

*John 6:35a*

said, "I am the Bread of Life" His Jewish hearers' collective memory easily brought to mind the unleavened bread of the Exodus, the manna of the wilderness, and the bread of the presence in the Temple. With Jesus' "I am the Bread of Life" we can recognize all that

meaning and yet even more!

He took bread saying "This is my Body" This Christ, your Christ, was once born in the House of bread (Bethlehem) to sustain you forever. In exchange for the sin we offer, He offers Himself, the Bread of Life, forgiving and renewing. That is why we hear those wonderful words when we receive the Host, that small wafer of bread: *Take eat, This is the true body of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ given unto death for you; May this true Body of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ strengthen, comfort and preserve you in the true Faith unto life everlasting. AMEN!*

The Father has given every congregation this Bread to offer. Every congregation has received the gift of Holy Communion to feed the hungry, nourish the malnourished by offering the nourishment and strength of Jesus, to forgive any sin or sinner in the moment of need and throughout each believer's life until the day, when satisfied completely we will hunger no more. Indeed the Lord is great and greatly to be praised!

*Father in Heaven, thank you for the Bread of Life. Lead me by Your Holy Spirit to Holy Communion to partake of Your Holy presence to be brought out of the wilderness of my weakness and wandering. Bread of Heaven, feed me 'til I want no more. Amen.*

# Jesus

**B**y the time we were expecting our fourth child, my wife and I had almost run out of names we liked. As teachers, there were many names we scratched off our list because they reminded us of former students. Then there were family names we scratched off as being just too “old world” for us. Trendy names sound kind of neat but without a doubt would have our children plotting revenge as soon as they were able.

*“How Sweet the Name of Jesus Sounds...”*

*#524 Lutheran Service Book*

It struck me somewhere through this process that our culture tends to choose names based upon the aesthetic sound of them rather than upon the meaning of the name itself. I even went so far as to suggest to my wife that we name our child “Loved by his Father.” But she vetoed “Babafemi” on the grounds that it sounded uncommon and strange, the kids would tease him and the school would never spell it right on his diploma.

The name Jesus Christ sounds so common in our English language. Most of us have heard it a million times. We’ve heard it used in prayer, in praise in giving thanks and in times of worship. We may also have heard it used casually without thought, perhaps even used inappropriately. I wonder how it sounded to Joseph’s ears on the night the angels spoke with him in a dream: “But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins’” (Matthew 1:20-21).

No matter how it sounded, the meaning behind this name was clear for Joseph for the angels gave the reason for this name; “you are to give Him the name Jesus, because He will save His people from their sins.” The name Jesus comes from the Hebrew *Jeshua*, or *Joshua*, or again *Jehoshua* which literally meant Salvation or Yahweh’s (the LORD’s) Salvation. Jesus was the one whom God Himself sent to save His people. He was salvation personified.

For centuries the Jews had awaited their Messiah or “anointed one.” Anointing was a custom used to designate one chosen by God – set apart to fulfill a special role. According to Old Testament Law those who were to fill the office of prophet, priest or king would be anointed with oil as a sign that they were chosen of God. At His baptism Jesus took His place among sinners – though He Himself was without sin. Through the water and the Word of God from the heavens, Jesus was chosen – anointed as Prophet, Priest and King – all in one. As Prophet Jesus brought us the Word of His Father – Words that called us to return to God as the prophets did of old. As Priest, Jesus offered the sacrifice that would take our sins from us (His own life on the cross) as King, Jesus reigns over all things until that last day when He will gather His own to Himself.

The Greek word for the Hebrew *Messiah* is *Christos*. The Followers of Jesus and the evangelists referred often to Jesus in the Gospels as Jesus the Christ so that there would be no mistaking Him and His role among us. He was truly the one chosen/anointed by God to save His people. For centuries after His resurrection the followers of this Christ became known as Christians – taking His name upon them as a people who have received His Words of Life – who were purchased by His sacrifice and who live within His Kingdom. The words of the old hymn speak wonderfully of the comfort of knowing Jesus’ name – that He was the one chosen by God to save His people.

How sweet the Name of Jesus sounds In a believer’s ear!

It soothes his sorrows, heals his wounds, And drives away his fear.

And especially the fourth verse:

By Thee my prayers acceptance gain, Although with sin defiled;  
Satan accuses me in vain, And I am owned a child.

***Father, may the name of Jesus continue to bring us comfort and assurance of the Your love – until the day when all knees shall bend and every tongue confess His name – that He is Lord of all. In His Name we pray. Amen.***

## Holy Spirit

When Samuel anointed the young David to become the next king of Israel, “the spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David” and, “departed from Saul” (1 Samuel 16:13-14).

David knew well that the Holy Spirit made him a capable king and it was God’s withdrawal of His Holy Spirit that signalled the end for Saul. So when David later wrote Psalm 51 after his heinous sins of adultery and murder, his plea for God not to take His Holy Spirit from him was a serious cry for forgiveness and mercy.

*Create in me a clean heart,  
O God, and renew a right  
spirit within me. Cast  
me not away from Your  
presence, and take not Your  
Holy Spirit from me.*

*Psalm 51:10-11*

The Holy Spirit is the presence and enabling power of God. Paul says without the Holy Spirit we cannot confess Jesus as Lord (1 Corinthians 12:3) and so he pleads with Christians not to “grieve the Holy Spirit of God with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption” (Ephesians 4:30). Without God’s gift of the Holy Spirit, we cannot become or remain Christians just as David could not be the king of Israel.

Many religions and philosophies have the idea of some innate divinity in man, a divine spark trapped within us that we need to release to realize our full potential as humans. From this point of view, the only kind of saviour you need is a spiritual guide that will show you how to unleash your potential.

How different that is from the biblical concept of the Holy Spirit! The Holy Spirit is not something innate within us. It is the gift of God. It is God’s presence within us, given as a result of the redemption we have in Jesus, and for the purpose of teaching us Jesus’ word and of transforming us in the image of Christ.

*O Lord, thank you for giving us Your Holy Spirit that we may confess Jesus as Lord. Never take Your Spirit from us. Transform us and renew our minds so that we never grieve Your Holy Spirit. Amen.*

## Immanuel

Have you ever sat down with someone for a good conversation and had the sense that though they are there physically, they’re not really with you in spirit. I find myself doing it at times. It’s disappointing for someone who invests

*Behold, the virgin shall  
conceive and bear a son,  
and they shall call His  
name Immanuel (which  
means, God with us).*

*Matthew 1:23 ESV*

time in you to realize you are in essence not even considering them at all because you have ‘better’ things to think about. It leaves one feeling cold about the daydreamer and rather ticked off. This is not the case with God, our Father, our Creator, who took it upon Himself to make sure that He was not at all removed from us. He is not at all like the watchmaker who winds up the clocks and walks away or just watches us do our thing from a distance. No, in fact, He is so involved and with us that He became one of us. “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us.” God cared so much about us that He willingly humbled Himself, being born to a virgin, growing up like any other child, tempted throughout His life, ultimately dying for the sake of His creation, you and me, and then rising again from the dead so that we too might rise from the dead.

But, our Creator is still with us, He has not just come and gone again. He comes to us through His Word to bring His forgiveness to us, to be there with us at all times sharing His greatest desire for us, that we might be with Him for all time, overcoming death and sharing in His life. In it we hear the story of how much we are loved by God, who has not abandoned us, but rather invested Himself completely for our sake that we might become as He is.

And, if He has given so much already, we can be assured that He is and will be with us at all times and in all places bring us His peace.

*Immanuel, You have come to us with  
grace and truth and shown us the way to  
eternal life. May the eternal peace which  
You bought for us at great price stir us up  
in faith and trust knowing that You are  
always with us. Amen*

## Great High Priest

**W**e've all heard the word 'priest' but I suspect that few of us truly understand the biblical concept of a priest. That's because a priest was a man who officiated in the tabernacle or temple and offered various animal and food sacrifices to God.

*Since, then, we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast to our confession.*

*Hebrews 4:14*

And with the exception of certain immigrants, who of us have ever offered an animal sacrifice? Do we even need a priest? The Bible says, "without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins" (Hebrews 9:22). So maybe we do need a priest, one of the elite group of men appointed by God to make sacrifices. The situation is similar to that of prescription drugs. Only a licensed doctor can prescribe a drug for you and only a pharmacist can dispense it. You cannot self-diagnose, self-prescribe and buy what you want!

So a priest is a mediator. He stands between us and God to appease God's anger and gain His favour for us. Hebrews calls Jesus our Great High Priest because He made a permanent, once for all, sacrifice for all people. Only He could provide the life for that sacrifice—His own—and only He was authorized to make it. "But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God, waiting from that time until His enemies should be made a footstool for His feet. For by a single offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified (Hebrews 10:12-14).

Therefore, to call Jesus our Great High Priest is to make a confession of confidence. We count on the fact that Jesus has made us acceptable to God. He is our permanent representative before God and urges us to approach God in the "full assurance of faith," and to "hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering" (Hebrews 10:22-23).

Great High Priest. That's one powerful name of our powerful God and Saviour. Count on Him!

***Father, we thank You for making Jesus our Great High Priest. Keep us ever mindful that He alone was able to make a sacrifice for us. Always give us thankful hearts and courage to confess His name. Amen.***

## Prince of Peace

**W**hen we turn on the 6:00 p.m. News, all we see is disaster... war, murder, crime. One thing the News is good at is showing all of the sin in the world. Christ came to this world to establish peace among all the chaos.

*Peace I leave with you; My peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.*

*John 14:27*

In this passage, we learn that His gift of peace is one of much greater value than any other gift we could ever imagine to receive in this world. When we reflect on the birth of Christ it exemplifies peace in the midst of chaos. A census was being taken and people were panicked and scared. In the middle of all this craziness, in a meek manger, God sends His beloved Son to the world. He creates a bit of peace among the craziness.

When we believe in Christ's promise of eternal life, the 6:00 p.m. News does not "shut off," but instead we have an understanding of the peace Christ brings in the middle of all the destruction. We learn to deal with the chaos by remembering the message of Christ's love and forgiveness, looking for opportunities to share the Good News and treat others the way Christ would have treated them because of the wonderful gift of the gospel. Everyone needs a little peace in their lives.

***During times of frenzy and destruction, help us to be able to see the peace in our lives that you have given us. And more importantly, help us be able to share the Prince of Peace with others. We are so thankful for Your Son, Lord Heavenly Father. Amen.***

- Jesus, King most wonderful!
  - Conqueror renowned!
  - Source of peace ineffable,
- In whom all joys are found.



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# Son of God

Holy Scripture calls Jesus true Son of God and true Son of Man. Jesus attributes both titles to Himself: “And He said to him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man’”

*Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven.*

*Matthew 16:16-17*

(John 1:51) and “Truly, truly, I say to you, an hour is coming, and is now here, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God, and those who hear will live” (John 5:25) and so do His followers. For these the title Son of God is a confession prompted by the Holy Spirit, the acknowledgment for salvation. Simon Peter replied, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus answered him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven” (Matthew 16:16-17). The

Devil and Jesus’ enemies also acknowledge Him as Son of God and Son of Man: “When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, ‘Truly this was the Son of God!’” (Matthew 27:54). “And whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and cried out, ‘You are the Son of God’” (Mark 3:11). For these it is a sign of condemnation and eternal separation from Him.

As the true Son of God, Jesus displays His divine majesty and power. Exalted above all gods He is the Ruler of the universe. To His name all creatures will bow on the last day and acknowledge Him as God and Lord – either for their salvation or for their condemnation. As the true Son of Man Jesus displays His human nature. Born of a virgin He became a servant, identified Himself with us, emptied Himself of His majesty and might, humbled Himself and became obedient to His Father, endured suffering and death in order to save us.

Christians do not believe or worship a mere man called Jesus – we do believe, follow, worship and confess the God-Man called

Jesus Christ. A mere human being sacrificing himself and dying for us on the cross could not have raised on the third day nor brought us any benefit, would not have had the power to save us and give us victory over sin, death and hell. It is the God-Man Jesus Christ who died for us and rose victoriously so that we may die no more. True Son of God and true Son of Man Jesus reveals Himself to us as the great “I AM”: “Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, ‘I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life’” (John 8:12). “Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water’” (John 7:38).

May the Holy Spirit strengthen our faith in Jesus our Saviour, Lord and King, encourage and make us able to carry on our lives in witness of His compassion for all. Amen.

*Dear Lord God: I thank You for having left Your glory, reached out and identified Yourself with me in my sins to save me and give me eternal life, through Jesus Christ, Your Son, my Saviour. Amen.*

Son of God, eternal Saviour,  
 Source of life and truth and grace,  
 Word made flesh, whose birth among us  
 Hallows all our human race:  
 By Your praying, by Your willing  
 That Your people should be one,  
 Grant, O grant our hope’s fruition:  
 Here on earth Your will be done.



#842 LSB, v.4; Text: Public Domain

# Son of Man

Jesus' divine and human attributes continue to be a controversial issue for many. He continues to be the One about Whom people raise questions – either affirming or denying His divinity, either believing or rejecting Him as Saviour. To deny

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.*

and reject Jesus is something human beings are able to do, as the Scripture says, “The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14). The Holy Spirit alone,

*John 1:14*

through the Word, gives spiritual knowledge and understanding about Jesus, for no one can

acknowledge Him as Lord if not by the Holy Spirit. “Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, ‘Jesus be cursed,’ and no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 12:3). The way we know and believe or do not believe who Jesus is, will determine our destiny in eternity – either with or without Him.

After Jesus had calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee, the disciples asked in amazement, “What kind of man is this? Even the winds and the waves obey Him” Matthew 8:27)! He is true God and true Man, the Great I Am, the Eternal, as he reveals Himself to us in some selected passages of the Gospel of John:

- “I tell you the truth,” Jesus answered, “before Abraham was born, I am” (8:58)!
- “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows Me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.... While I am in the world, I am the light of the world” (8:12; 9:5).
- “I am the gate for the sheep.... Whoever enters through Me will be saved.... “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep.... I am the good shepherd; I know My sheep and My sheep know me” (10:7, 9, 11, 14).

- “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?” (11:25-26)
- “I am the Way and the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me.” (14:6)
- “I am the true vine, and My Father is the gardener . . . I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in Me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from Me you can do nothing.” (15:1, 5)

May these passages shine light in your life and shed blessings of faith, spiritual strength and salvation in believing and confessing who Jesus truly is. Amen.

***Lord Jesus, as I meditate on Your Word help me overcome my unbelief that I may trust in You, rejoice and proclaim You as my Saviour. Amen.***

Once in royal David's city  
 Stood a lowly cattle shed,  
 Where a mother laid her baby  
 In a manger for His bed:  
 Mary was that mother mild,  
 Jesus Christ her little child.

He came down to earth from heaven,  
 Who is God and Lord of all,  
 And His shelter was a stable,  
 And His cradle was a stall;  
 With the poor and mean and lowly  
 Lived on earth our Saviour holy.



#376 LSB, vs. 1-2; Text: Public Domain

# Wonderful Counsellor

A counsellor is one who gives advice, especially on personal problems. People make use of counsellors when struggling with issues in families, marriages, finances, school, work, or such. A counsellor who helps us resolve or handle our problems

*For to us a Child is born,  
to us a Son is given; and  
the government shall be  
upon His shoulder, and  
His name shall be called  
Wonderful Counsellor,  
Mighty God, Everlasting  
Father, Prince of Peace.*

successfully is exceptional, distinguished, wonderful.

A wonderful counsellor is someone who listens carefully to the concerns and issues that people deal with in their lives. A wonderful counsellor is someone who can be trusted with the most intimate concerns of the heart. The prophet Isaiah predicted that the Christ, when he comes into the world, will be called “Wonderful Counsellor” (Isaiah 9:6). The Messiah listens to the worries and cares of people. The Messiah advises the inhabitants of earth on the most serious of personal problems, that is, how to reverse the devastating effects of sin.

His counsel will not be found in what people do but in what the Christ will do for them. Later in his writings Isaiah describes the Wonderful Counsellor as the Suffering Servant who gives His life for the sins of the world. The Messiah’s counsel on how to enter the kingdom of God is based on faith not works.

Martin Luther, in his *Lectures on Isaiah*, wrote, “the kingdom of Christ is beyond grasp, reason, and experience...and lest we come short in the matter of faith, He gives us counsel, that is, the Word.” The Christ comes to counsel us today in various ways. One of these ways is enfleshed in the Holy Scriptures so that we might have faith, be strengthened in faith, and live in faith. Also the “Wonderful Counsellor” listens to our confession then counsels us in the voice of the pastor as the proclamation of forgiveness reverses the affect of sin. The “Wonderful Counsellor” counsels us in the bread and wine as he feeds us with His own body and blood to counter the impact of sin. The “Wonderful Counsellor” counsels us with his words of blessing as we go

into the world to worship him with our lives. Jesus Christ is the “Wonderful Counsellor” who knows all about you and your personal problems and provides a resolution for them and a strength to handle all of them. “This also comes from the Lord of hosts; He is wonderful in counsel and excellent in wisdom” (Isaiah 28:29 ESV).

*Lord Christ, to You all praise and glory is given for You have done so much for me. Your counsel to my life has been wonderful. I pray that You will continue to guide me through Your Word and counsel my life in the Divine Service so I may live to Your glory and one day join the heavenly chorus of praise. Amen.*

“Come unto Me, ye weary,  
And I will give you rest.”  
O blessed voice of Jesus,  
Which comes to hearts oppressed!  
It tells of benediction,  
Of pardon, grace and peace,  
Of joy that hath no ending,  
Of love that cannot cease.

“And whosoever cometh,  
I will not cast him out.”  
O patient love of Jesus,  
Which drivew away our doubt,  
Which, though we be unworthy  
Of love so great and free,  
Invites us very sinners  
To come, dear Lord, to Thee!



#684 LSB, v1, 4; Text: Public Domain

# The Christ

“Christ, that’s His last name isn’t it?” That was the question this person asked me when I was in Ukraine. “So what do you think? Jesus would be His first name and Christ would be His last name right?” Last names are important because they are the

*A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham.*

names that tell us which family line we come from. That is why when you open up the first book of the New Testament the first line tells us that it is all about Jesus Christ.

*Matthew 1:1*

Actually the name Christ comes from the Greek word “*Christos*” which is a translation of the Hebrew word for Messiah. Messiah means “anointed one.” So Christ is not the last name of Jesus but rather it tells us that He, Jesus, is that anointed one. He is the one who was promised to come and save us from our sin. The title CHRIST points out that Jesus is fully God in that He is God in the flesh. This is wonderful because in Christ, God is with us. For those who believe in Jesus Christ, God is with them. That is wonderful news because no matter where you go, or what you do, or who you are with, you know that Christ is with you.

I don’t remember when I was born. I was too small and don’t remember anything when I was a baby. I don’t remember when my parents gave me a name or when I was baptized. I never had a DNA test to check if my parents are who they say they are. However, I believe my parents are mine by faith and experience. I believe that they gave me my name and that I am part of a bigger family because of what I have been told. Since my family immigrated to Canada it was many years before I saw my extended family and knew they were part of my family – until then I knew by faith. It is all about faith isn’t it.

I also believe that I am God’s child because of Jesus Christ. This Christ came as God in flesh to die for me and all who believe because He is The Messiah, The Anointed One, The

Promised Saviour. My life in Christ began when I was baptized and continues to this day because of God’s presence in my life. He holds me and He keeps me because He is THE CHRIST, The Messiah! It isn’t a last name – it is a title, which reflects who He is. May He be your Saviour, too.

*Dear God, thank you for coming to our world as Jesus Christ. Thank you that because of His life, death and resurrection we, too, can have eternal life with you because Jesus is THE CHRIST, our Christ. We pray in Jesus name. Amen.*

Christ, the life of all the living,  
 Christ, the death of death, our foe.  
 Who, Thyself for me once giving  
 To the darkest depths of woe:  
 Through Thy sufferings, death, and merit  
 Eternal life inherit.  
 Thousand, thousand thanks shall be.  
 Dearest Jesus unto Thee.



#420 LSB, v.1; Text: Public Domain

## Word of Life

Our use of language proclaims it: “Wicked” is a positive word to describe something. Our entertainment options proclaim it: Vampires, demons, witchcraft, and aliens make for bestselling books, video games, movies, and television shows. Our system

*That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we looked upon and have touched with our hands, concerning the word of life—the life was made manifest, and we have seen it, and testify to it and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was made manifest to us—that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you, too, may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.*

*1 John 1:1-3*

that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life” (Philippians 2:14-16a).

of laws proclaims it: We have many laws protecting animals, but none protecting babies in the womb. We live in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation.

All the above statements speak of darkness, but Jesus is all about light. The world around us constantly glorifies sin, but Jesus has conquered sin by paying its price, His death on the cross. The words used by our culture make death the subject of scientific study and daily entertainment, but the Bible tells us Jesus is the Word of Life.

Because of our baptism into Christ, His victory over sin becomes ours. His light shines in us. The Word of Life lives in us. We are different to the very core of our being from the people of the world. We are children of God! We long to be with our Saviour in Heaven, but because our Heavenly Father loves the world so much and desires the salvation of all people, He has placed us in this world to bear witness to that salvation which He offers. He calls us to proclaim the Word of Life to this crooked and twisted generation so obsessed with death. “Do all things without grumbling or questioning,

Where will we find the strength to do what God calls us to do? We must hold fast to Jesus, the Word of Life. Read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest Him. Let the Word of Life continually renew us in His forgiveness through the means of grace. Then, confident in our fellowship with Jesus, we can testify to the Word of Life and others will be drawn into that same eternal fellowship with Him.

***O Word of Life, give me strength to hold fast to You today. O Word of Life, be on my lips today that I may testify to and proclaim Your salvation to this crooked and twisted generation in which You have placed me. Amen.***

The Gospel shows the Father's grace,  
Who sent His Son to save our race,  
Proclaims how Jesus lived and died  
That We might thus be justified.

May we in faith its message learn  
Nor thanklessly its blessings spurn;  
May we in faith its truth confess  
And praise the Lord, our righteousness.



#580 LSB, vs.1,6; Text: Public Domain

# The Shepherd...

All of us have heard stories about dumb sheep, but they really only have some characteristics that make them appear that way. Sheep don't hunt for food. They're prey animals so in the face of danger their main defence is to flee. Sheep are stubborn

**The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.**

*Psalm 23:1*

and get into ridiculous and preposterous dilemmas with no way out, they need a shepherd to guide them and save them from predators. Although at times we like to think

we're independent and can take care of ourselves, we need to put ourselves into this picture and admit that we, too, need someone to help us.

Psalm 23 gives us comfort and assurance as we see the many ways in which Jesus, Lord of the Universe, is our Good Shepherd. Jesus not only provides our needs, He knows what they are. He knows when our bodies and souls need nourishment...He knows when we need physical protection, and what we need to sustain our spiritual life...He knows we need comfort for our hearts and forgiveness and peace for our souls. Jesus, our Shepherd loves us beyond any love we've ever experienced and as He supplies all our needs; we can say "I shall not want."

Our Shepherd provides food for our bodies: "The eyes of all look to You, and You give them their food in due season" (Psalm 145:15) and He is the nourishment for our souls. "Jesus said to them, 'I am the Bread of Life; whoever comes to Me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in Me shall never thirst'" (John 6:35).

Our Shepherd not only leads us to the path that will save us, He is our path. Jesus said to him, "I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." As a shepherd uses his rod and staff to guide his sheep and protect them from danger, my Shepherd guides and protects me. As I experience trials, pain and fear in my life, my Shepherd is there to comfort me. He says we don't need to be afraid for He will be our guide and protection. "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" (Philippians 4:5b-7).

A shepherd who truly cares for his sheep will at times put his own life in danger to protect them. Our Good Shepherd gave up His life to protect us from the punishment we deserve because of our sin. "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23). Jesus the Shepherd left His throne in heaven and became...The Lamb...

*continued next page*

I am Jesus' little lamb,  
Ever glad at heart I am:  
For my Shepherd gently guides me,  
Knows my need and well provides me,  
Loves me ev'ry day the same,  
Even calls me by my name.

Day by day, at home away,  
Jesus is my staff and stay.  
When I hunger, Jesus feeds me,  
Into pleasant pastures leads me,  
When I thirst, He bids me go  
Where the quiet waters flow.



#740 LSB, vs. 1-2; Text: Public Domain

## ...and The Lamb

He came to the muck and mire of earth to be one with us. “Christ Jesus, who, though He was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, 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” (Philippians 2:5-8).

**Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!**

*John 1:29b*

This Lamb is the holy, perfect sacrifice God demanded. This Lamb loves us, so without complaint He suffered and died in our place. “He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.” What price would we pay for freedom – for ourselves or for someone we loved? Whatever we’d be willing to pay, it would never be sufficient. But Jesus, Lamb of God, gave His all: “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect.” And God accepted the sacrifice and raised Him from the dead: “And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power” (1 Corinthians 6:14).

Through His death and triumphant resurrection, Jesus the Shepherd - Jesus the Lamb won the victory over sin, death and the devil and gives to all who believe in Him the free gift of forgiveness and eternal life. “Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:1-2).

By believing and trusting in the Lamb we now have the privilege and joy of being a lamb in the Shepherd’s fold. “And

those who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek you” (Psalm 9:10). I know that no matter what the future holds for me, my Shepherd will take care of me, and with confidence I can say, “I shall not want”!

The Lamb is back home sitting on His heavenly throne and as our Good Shepherd daily continues to feed, guide and protect our body and soul. Now He is preparing a place for us so that we can “dwell in the house of the Lord forever” (Psalm 23) and give glory and honour to the Lamb of God and Shepherd of our souls.

***Dear Jesus, we praise and thank You for being the Good Shepherd and providing for all our needs for body and soul. We thank You for being the Lamb and giving Your life so that we can receive forgiveness and life eternal. Amen.***

Paschal Lamb, by God appointed,  
All our sins on Thee were laid;  
By almighty love anointed,  
Thou has full atonement made.  
All Thy people are forgiven  
Through the virtue of Thy blood;  
Opened is the gate of heaven,  
Reconciled are we with God.



#531 LSB, v.2; Text: Public Domain

## Living Water

**W**ater is essential to all life on this planet; in fact for life to be sustained anywhere, there needs to be water. That's why NASA's Mars Rover project is so important for scientists hoping to find another link to life on earth. They hope to find traces of

*Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty forever. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."*

*John 4:13-14 ESV*

water, and, on that basis, claim that life could have developed in places other than earth. There are as many theories to our existence as there are scientists. The fact is that we seem to keep searching for sources of life other than God all the time. We also keep looking for the fountain of youth so we won't ever have to suffer death.

It all revolves around water and Jesus lets the Samaritan woman at the well know that our thirst for water will never go away. While we live and breathe we're going to have to have it to survive. He then directs her to water that will quench her thirst forever. It's the kind of water that will stop her searching for meaning in her life. It will turn her away from a life that seems to be unsatisfied (five husbands and one co-habitation) to a life of abundance. It will direct her to faith in the One True God. It will raise her up, after she has died, to eternal life.

That water is faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins. It is the trust created in us by God, which brings us to our knees, seeking the mercy of our Creator who brought life to all things. That water flows from the side of our Saviour who suffered the pains of hell on the cross for us. That water brings us, in Baptism, from the depths of sin to the abundant life of a new creature, reborn and washed clean daily through repentance. It's what makes us live out our lives as gracious people seeking to serve our neighbour.

The only living water that will have eternal effect on us is the one given to us as a free gift, drawn from wells that will never run dry. This heavenly water washes away all that separates us from our Creator, who brought us to life and keeps us from eternal death. Drink deep of the living water, our Saviour.

*Eternal Spring, grant us faith that our lives might flow freely with the grace You won for us. Wash away all our sin, restore us to Your presence that we might spring forth eternally as Your very own children. Amen.*

Lord, Your words are waters living  
When my thirsting spirit pleads.  
Lord, Your words are bread life-giving;  
On Your words my spirit feeds.  
Lord, Your words will be my light  
Through death's cold and dreary night;  
Yes, they are my sword prevailing  
And my cup of joy unfailing!



#589 LSB, vs.3; Text: Public Domain

## Resurrection of Life

What is the purpose of tombstones? They give employment to stone cutters and carvers. Groundskeepers should get time and a half for the extra work they cause. Some see them as a constant reminder of their loved one's death, keeping their grief

*[Jesus said to her,] I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me, though he shall die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" She said to Him, "Yes, Lord; I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is coming into the world.*

*John 11:25-27*

fresh and unhealed. Others use them as the place to pour out their grief and find healing. Some may even think they are great for playing hide and seek.

But they can serve a higher purpose. A tombstone can testify to our faith in Jesus, The Resurrection and the Life. Our secular culture may see a cemetery as merely a place for the dead. But look at the gravestones of Christians. Empty crosses testify to our risen Saviour. Easter lilies trumpet the proclamation of Jesus' empty tomb. Shepherd's staves remind all of the Good Shepherd who will lead His sheep home. These and many other Christian symbols carved in tombstones speak of the faith of the ones who are buried there.

"I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever." "I know that my Redeemer lives." "Forever with the Lord" These are just a few Bible verses which are commonly found on gravestones. They all tell of the hope of the resurrection and faith in the Resurrection and the Life who will raise them up on the last day.

My own favourite would be "Whoever lives and believes in Me will never die." Many people today would find the contradiction of these words on a tombstone; a reason to discount the Christian faith as foolishness. Many in Jesus' time would have thought the same. But when Jesus, claiming to be the Resurrection and the Life, said those words to a grieving sister, He asked her if she believed. The contradiction of Jesus' words and her brother's nearby grave were not too much for her. She said, "Yes Lord, I

believe..." And Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life, showed His power over death and the grave by raising Lazarus from the dead.

It couldn't hurt to plan our tombstones so that after death we can still proclaim our faith in Jesus. It is also important that we, with Martha, that grieving sister, proclaim our faith in the Resurrection and the Life every day He gives us life this side of the grave.

*O Jesus, the Resurrection and the Life, give me courage to trust in Your victory over death and the grave and to proclaim Your promise of eternal life with all of my words and actions. Amen.*

I know that my Redeemer lives;  
 What comfort this sweet sentence gives!  
 He lives, He lives, who once was dead;  
 He lives, my ever living head.  
 He lives, all glory to His name!  
 He lives, my Jesus, still the same;  
 Oh, the sweet joy this sentence gives;  
 I know that my Redeemer lives!



#461 LSB, vs. 1, 8; Text: Public Domain

# The Comforter

Every Wednesday morning a group of women from our congregation gets together and makes comforters. We call them the Knotty Ladies. My wife and I received one of these quilts and it was wonderful. The quilts are sent all over the world and are used by men, women, and children to protect them from the cold. When I googled the word 'comforter' on my computer the first meaning said: "A type of blanket to keep the user warm, especially during sleep." Did you know that the Holy Spirit is also called a Comforter?

*I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Counsellor (Comforter) to be with you forever.*

*John 14:16*

In John 14:16 Jesus tells His followers that He will have to leave them but He will send them another Counsellor (or Comforter). The Greek for this word is "paraclete" which is the name Jesus also gives to the Holy Spirit. The Greek word "paraclete" encompasses the concept of: counsellor, comforter, intercessor, advocate and helper. Just think, Jesus, in thinking of you and me, asks the Almighty God to wrap us in the blanket of His Holy Spirit. He sends us the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, who is like a blanket wrapping us in God's wonderful gracious love, reminding us we are His, He loves us and died for us so we can live with Him forever.

When I was serving as a missionary to Ukraine there were many times when I felt all alone. I did not know the language, the culture, or the people. Many times I couldn't communicate in words and yet I knew God was with me. I knew Jesus cared for me and died for me and that the Gospel was all that mattered. It was during those times I felt the presence of God as I was comforted by the Comforter. There were times when I knew He was my advocate, my intercessor, counsellor and helper but most of all He was the one who comforted me. Now when I think about the quilts our ladies make, I think about the Holy Spirit, my Comforter, as God wraps His love around me.

The next time you have a comforter wrapped around you, may you remember the Great Comforter who is always with you. He never leaves you nor forsakes you. He is with you, as Jesus promises in John 14:16, FOREVER!

*Dear God, I thank You for the many people who respond to Your Gospel by caring for others. I thank You for all who reach out and care for others and especially all our ladies who make comforters to comfort others. Thank you for Your Holy Spirit who is our Great Comforter. In Jesus' name. Amen.*

Holy Spirit, light divine,  
Shine upon this heart of mine;  
Chase the shades of night away,  
Turn the darkness into day.  
  
Holy Spirit, joy divine,  
Cheer this saddened heart of mine;  
Yield a sacred, settled peace,  
Let it grow and still increase.



#496 LSB, vs.1,4; Text: Public Domain

# The Rock

**H**e (David) said: “I love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield, and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold. I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to

be praised, and I am saved from my enemies” (Psalm 18:1-3).

*The Rock, His work is perfect, for all His ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is He.*

*Deuteronomy 32:4*

“Everyone then who hears these words of Mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. And everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.” And when Jesus finished these sayings, the crowds were astonished at his teaching, for he was teaching them as one who had authority, and not as their scribes” (Matthew 7:24-29).

During the early hours of Wednesday morning, October 8, 2008, a woman in Portland, Oregon felt her house shaking. The house had sat safely on the side of a steep hill for almost 80 years. She called her husband on the phone who told her to get out quickly. The front door was jammed, but gave way as the house began to disintegrate around her. She was riding down the hill on a slab of concrete, looking for a piece of earth that wasn’t moving, when neighbours rescued her with an extended ladder.

When Jesus talks about houses standing or falling in the midst of a great storm, He’s not referring to homes made of wood and brick; His words are directed at our lives. “Of course,” you say, “I knew that.” But do we? When our lives are ordered and we have this sense of control it’s hard to imagine it any other way. But this sense of security can suddenly be swept away by illness, the death of loved one, the loss of a job, or even a shrinking retirement plan with the plunge of world markets. Our lives

can suddenly become like houses shaken by a landslide and we, like the woman in Oregon, feel like we are sliding out of control desperately looking for something that isn’t moving—something firm and sure to take hold of us.

Jesus’ words do not minimize the storms in life, our sin, or the power of God’s Law to accuse us; they point us to the shelter He provides in the face of all that would destroy us. God did not lower a ladder that we might reach for safety when our lives and world shake out of control; with the sureness and stability of solid rock He takes hold of us. Jesus walked the rocky paths of this earth unshaken by sin. With the hardness of rock and the deepness of God’s love for us, Jesus set His face to Jerusalem and the cross to faithfully place God’s foundation of forgiveness under our feet. Jesus is the unshakeable Rock of our salvation. His life, death, and resurrection provide us with the footing to proclaim God’s faithfulness—the sure and certain hope we have in Christ Jesus, our Rock.

Moses sang about the Rock—the God of faithfulness. David lifts up the praises of the Lord, his rock, his fortress, and his deliverer. We, too, can praise God, the Rock, who faithfully provides for and takes hold of our whole lives in Christ.

***O Come, let’s sing aloud to God,  
And shout for joy to the Rock who saves.  
Let’s come before Him, giving thanks.  
With joyful songs let us praise the Lord.  
All praise to God the Father now,  
All praise to Jesus Christ the Son,  
And to the Holy Spirit praise,  
Both now and evermore. Amen.***

“O Come, Let’s Sing,” verse 1 & 4,  
*Morning Praise*, Lutheran Publishing House)

# The Vine

**A**s Canada becomes home to an increasingly widespread wine-drinking population, Jesus' choice of identification becomes easier to understand by more in this country than was perhaps true in recent previous generations. Simply put, unless the wine comes from good vine stock, it cannot be good wine. This Vine, Jesus, is so precious and unique that the gardener is God the Father. He protects it and watches over it and carefully cultivates it in optimum conditions. "I am the Vine and the Father is the gardener." God has planted this Vine with all deliberation and design: the best of the best to produce quality.

*I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser. Every branch of Mine that does not bear fruit He takes away, and every branch that does bear fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. Already you are clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the Vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.*

*John 15:1-4*

Jesus is the One called Good. There is none other more excellent than God. Whatever stems from Him as source reflects the nature of His perfection. We, His own, are the branches growing from the vine, nourished and sustained by it, having no existence apart from it, no possibility of life if separated. Jesus, Life itself, engenders life in us through His giving of Himself.

Our lifeline is found in that which He gives, and He gives Himself: His Word, His Baptism, His Body, His Blood His Death and Resurrection. What He is in full, we are in part through, with and under Him. No Jesus? no Reconciliation, no Forgiveness, no Peace, no coming to Life – no Way. All things become and come together in Him. This is the fact we live both for ourselves and for others. "I am the Vine you are the branches." Those branches do bear fruit (good vine, good branches, good fruit) Those same branches are pruned, corrected, refined and cared for in an excellent result, the measures the Father applies to us in repentance and forgiveness resulting in an

abundantly fruitful harvest: salvation and life eternal for all those who hear and believe.

Through faith we remain in Him He who is the wellspring of Life. He the Vine we the branches; He who cares for us now and forever: He promises an excellent harvest: "I tell you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it anew with you in my Father's kingdom."

*Father in Heaven, as You love Your Son, love me. By Your grace, keep me in Your loving care. By Your Holy Spirit, correct and guide and chastise and heal me to bring forth fruit. Never allow me to separate myself from you to wither and waste away. In Jesus, in whom we are one with You. Amen.*

Create in me a new heart, Lord,  
That gladly I obey Your Word.  
Let what You will be my desire,  
And with new life my soul inspire.

Grant that I only You may love  
And seek those things which are above  
Till I behold You face to face,  
O Light eternal, through Your grace.



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# I AM

“I AM” is the personal name of the singular essence of God. In most Bibles this name is listed as Lord, often making use of small capital letters to distinguish the use of the “I AM” name. To make sense of this name the story of Moses needs to be reviewed.

*And God said [to Moses],  
“Say this to the people of  
Israel, ‘I AM has sent me  
to you.’”*

*Reference ?*

Moses was called by God to lead the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. After his initial attempts Moses was frustrated with how things were going, so Moses complained to God. God responded, “I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name the Lord I did not make myself known to

them” (Exodus 6:3 ESV). The name God used, “the Lord,” was “I AM.” God uses names that revealed His actions. It should not be assumed that Abraham was unaware of the “I AM” name. In the relationship the patriarchs had with God the name revealed was centred on God as Sufficient; the Sustainer and Provider.

In Exodus God’s actions were in saving and redeeming His people from slavery in Egypt. God used the name “I AM” for He is the personal God who existed, exists, and will exist to save and redeem. Church Father Hilary of Poitiers [c. 315-367] wrote, “there is nothing more characteristic of God than to be.” God was, is, and will be, to save and redeem people. Since the Old Testament’s centre on salvation is rooted in the Exodus event the “I AM” is used throughout the Old Testament books as the personal name for the singular essence of God. This was the name by which God revealed Himself in the burning bush. God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And He said, “Say this to the people of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you’” (Exodus 3:14 ESV). The Israelites were not ignorant of this name of God, however they did not use the “I AM.” When Moses used the “I AM” name of God, Moses was recognized as the prophet through whom “I AM” would bring salvation and redeem his people.

It becomes significant that Jesus references this name to Himself in many teaching moments recorded in the Gospels. As Jesus reveals more and more of God to us, He shares with us the names for the persons existing in the singular essence of God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. “I AM” is Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who exists to save and redeem people.

*Thank you “I AM” that You exist to save and redeem me, a lost and condemned creature. Thank you “I AM” that You exist to save and redeem me, not with gold or silver, but with the holy precious blood and with the innocent suffering and death of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

Praise the God of all creation;  
Praise the Father’s boundless love.  
Praise the Lamb, our expiation,  
Priest and King enthroned above.  
Praise the Spirit of salvation,  
Him by whom our spirits live.  
Undivided adoration  
To the great Jehovah give.



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# Light of the World

You've done it before. You've just settled yourself snugly into your bed and you remember that you left the door unlocked, the light in the basement on, or forgot to feed the rabbit. So you grumble as you get out of bed and decide that turning the lights

*I am the Light of the world. Whoever follows Me will not walk in darkness but will have the Light of life.*

on is just too much of an inconvenience, which you quickly realize to be a mistake. Remember that toy car your son forgot on the stairs or that tight corner in the hallway? Ouch! Just a little light and you could have avoided the situation all together.

*John 8:12 ESV*

Walking in the dark is filled with all sorts of danger, even if it is an outside walk with clear skies and a full moon. There are things you just don't see that are likely to trip you up and cause you some injury or discomfort.

Walking in spiritual darkness is fraught with many more dangers that are not always readily apparent. For all who do not have the light of Christ shining in their lives, there is the real danger of running into obstacles that will direct them down the wrong path and get them hopelessly lost in a maze of ideas and philosophies. The end result is eternal separation from God our Creator and source of all life. Shine some light into that maze and people are able to make wiser decisions as to what is true or not.

The apostle John writes, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him was not any thing made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:1-5 ESV).

That light is Jesus Christ who exposes all the darkest areas in our lives so that we can see what is separating us from Him. His light shows us our wickedness so that we might recognize our need for His forgiveness. The light of Christ shines before us so that as we walk through the tangled network of human sin we are

able to tell the truth from the lies, illuminating the dark areas so we do not become caught in them.

The light of Christ is also in us, shining out in our lives so others might see the truth and hope of what God has done for all people through Him. In that way we are also lights to the world (Matthew 5:14-16) bringing God's grace to those who are walking in spiritual darkness.

*Light of life; shine Your radiant beams on us that we might know the truth of Your forgiveness won for us on the cross. Guide us by Your light that we might ever be faithful in this world of darkness and shine Your truth into the lives of others. Amen.*

I heard the voice of Jesus say,  
 "I am this dark world's light.  
 Look unto Me: thy morn shall rise  
 And all thy day be bright."  
 I looked to Jesus, and I found  
 In Him my star, my sun;  
 And in that light of life I'll walk  
 Till traveling days are done.



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# Mediator

The dictionary describes a mediator as someone who works with both sides in a dispute in an attempt to help them to reach an agreement. We often need or serve as mediators.

Sometimes it's simply as a parent between two children, or in a work situation between co-workers. The best mediator is one who not only understands both sides of the problem but also truly cares for both parties.

**For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus.**

*1 Timothy 2:5 NIV*

We need a mediator between us and God.

Our sin has separated us from God, and on our own we cannot approach Him for mercy: as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one" (Romans 3:10-12). But God reached out to us in love and sent His Son to die, to pay the price for our sins on the cross. Jesus, our Redeemer, is now also our Mediator. "For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf" (Hebrews 9:24).

Human mediators make mistakes, may even at times cause pain and add to the problem rather than bringing reconciliation. Our heavenly Mediator, Jesus, is perfect and His intercession between us and God always heals and brings peace for it's based on His death and resurrection. "How much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Therefore He is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred that redeems them from the transgressions committed under the first covenant" (Hebrews 9:14-15).

It's frustrating when we go to a counsellor, supervisor, parent, teacher or lawyer who is acting as our mediator but doesn't seem to understand us or our problem. It hurts when they only listen to one side of the story. Think of the relief and confidence we have with Jesus as our mediator. He understands our condition:

"Therefore He had to be made like His brothers in every respect, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because He Himself has suffered when tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted" (Hebrews 2:17-18). And He understands God's position:

"For God so loved the world, that He gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him" (John 3:16-17).

When the problem is severe, mediation is needed immediately. We have the assurance that we can go to God any time and He will always be there to listen, for our Mediator lives to bring us peace. "But He holds His priesthood permanently, because He continues forever. Consequently, He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Hebrews 7:24-25).

At times we need human mediators to help us bridge the gap. At all times we need our heavenly Mediator to bridge the gap between us, the sinner and God, the judge. Thanks be to God our Mediator closed the gap with the bridge of the cross. "But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since, therefore, we have now been justified by His blood, much more shall we be saved by Him from the wrath of God" (Romans 5:8-9).

***Dear Lord Jesus, We thank and praise You that You died and rose again so we can now receive forgiveness and eternal life. Thank you for being a mediator who understands our weakness and pleads for us to our Heavenly Father. You, Lord Jesus, have made it possible for us to approach God's throne with confidence and assurance that our prayers will be heard and answered. Amen.***

## Father

We have all heard, and some of us may have used, the expression “My father is stronger than your dad.” When faced with a problem, danger, difficulty or sadness, we naturally go to someone bigger, stronger or wiser. As a child, it was often to our father.

*So now you are not a slave, you are God’s child and God will give you the blessings He promised, because you are His child.*

*Galatians 4:7*

To recognize God as Lord is to acknowledge that He is sovereign. To accept Him as Saviour, is to accept His gift of salvation. To regard Him as Father is to go one step further.

Ideally, a father is someone in our lives who protects and provides. This is exactly what God, our Father, does. He has provided our needs. He has protected us from harm. He has provided us with a safe harbour that shelters us from the storms of life. He has adopted us. He has given us His name.

God has proven Himself as a faithful Father. Now, it falls upon us to be His trusting children. Let God give us what we need, not what we desire. Let Him fill the void others have left. Rely upon Him for encouragement. Let Him provide the comfort. God will give us the blessings He promised, all that we need, because we are His children. God, our Father, even notices the unforeseen problems and our smallest concerns.

Do you feel like you are being attacked? Are you up against a difficult situation or an imposing problem? Run to your Father and know that He is with you and will protect and provide for you. Thank Him for protecting and providing for you in every circumstance – especially the one you are facing now. Approach God as you would a loving and caring Father. There is no greater Father, than our Heavenly Father.

***God, you are Creator, Sovereign and Saviour, but we come to you as children coming to their father, who would ask their father to hold and comfort them, to provide for all that we need. We ask You for guidance and wisdom in all that we do. We thank You for all You have given us. Amen.***

## Saviour

A number of years ago, I took an express bus from Yalta to Odessa, Ukraine. Since I know no Russian, our missionary in Yalta arranged for my ticket and put me on the bus. Bishop Graefenstein was to meet my bus in Odessa. The bus would arrive at 6:00 a.m. I did not have to change buses. All went well until we arrived at our destination. Disembarking with the rest of the passengers after having had very little sleep, nothing about the Odessa bus depot seemed familiar. The bus was early so I parked myself in the waiting room.

*[God’s own purpose and grace] was now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour Jesus Christ, who has abolished death, and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel.*

*2 Timothy 1:10*

Six a.m. came – no sign of the bishop. Had I gotten off the bus too soon? 6:30 a.m. – still no sign of him. Perhaps I was in the wrong station. How would he ever find me? 7:00 a.m. came – I went outside to find a bathroom. And when I returned, the bishop was there seeking information about my bus. The person who was to have telephoned ahead from Yalta had neglected to do so. So he came to find me.

A Saviour is someone who is there to help you when you are in need. In the Holy Scriptures, God is often called Saviour. The whole history of Israel can be summarized with God saying, “They are my people,” and “so He was their Saviour” (Isaiah 63:8). And St. Paul reminds us that God’s eternal purpose and grace for His New Testament people were made evident when Jesus Christ appeared on this earth in human form. In the Old Testament God showed Himself to be the Saviour of His people by rescuing them from the slavery of Egypt, by feeding them in the wilderness, etc. But Christ is our Saviour in an even more remarkable way.

For He has abolished death and has provided everlasting joy in your presence for us.

***Lord Jesus, You are indeed our Saviour, not just from the brokenness of this world but from our last enemy, death. As we face the end of life, both for our loved ones and for ourselves, may we rest secure knowing that life everlasting is Your final gift to us. Amen.***

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