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CHERYL HOLT, PIXABAY

Baby Jesus Surely Cried

Essay by Marla Burnie



Several months ago, practicing for an evening of Christmas caroling up at the nursing home, the words to “Away In A Manger” all but literally jumped off the page at me, begging me to wonder — did the infant King refrain from crying altogether, as suggested to us in this beloved hymn? Not only that, but why it is that as a society we seem to believe only quiet children are good ones?

If God came to earth as one of us, yet without the stain of original sin, would not our Lord and Savior of necessity been everything any baby — every baby — is? By definition, an infant is vulnerable to hunger and thirst, needing someone to keep him warm and dry, needing not only physical comfort but furthermore affection from those entrusted with his care. Would Jesus not have expressed those legitimate needs in the only way available to him, constrained as he was by human flesh?

I, for one, believe that he very much would have cried at times. How could it have been otherwise? Babies cry. Tiny, and intentionally as vulnerable as the rest of us upon his incarnation as the Babe of Bethlehem, Jesus surely would have cried when cold, hungry or simply just perhaps wanting his mother to hold him, or Joseph to talk to him in a male’s deeper, more gravelly voice.


Now as we approach Easter, I find myself once again thinking about this, all the more convinced that I am indeed onto something here. Take time to read the three synoptic Gospels and you will find in Gethsemane a by now very grown-up Jesus, still limiting himself to that which is common of all human flesh — crying out to his Father with dread. No polite, half-hearted prayers here, my friend! Luke tells us that the tears Jesus cried that day were like drops of blood. Perhaps this is simply figurative speech. Perhaps not, though. There is a known medical condition known as hematuria, seen in instances of

“Eloi, eloi, lama sabachtani?” “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46 NIV). Have words more poignant than these ever been voiced?

extreme distress that causes blood vessels to enlarge so much as to cause them to leak blood into one’s tears.

Then having been ministered to by angels, and strengthened to do the most important thing the Father sent him to earth to do, Jesus again sets us the example that it is perfectly all right to be honest about our feelings, crying out with his last strength from upon the cross just prior to his dying for our sins. Why such depth of emotion? Because in that moment he had for the first, last, and only time experienced the worst desolation possible: Not being able to experience communion with the Source of his life and ours.

“Eloi, eloi, lama sabachtani?” “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46 NIV). Have words more poignant than these ever been voiced? Life on this planet, while filled with many wonderful things, is nonetheless broken. We get sick. Loved ones die. Sometimes we wonder how we are going to find money for both food and rent at the same time. It would appear that only once we find ourselves in heaven, enveloped by the unveiled presence of our God and King, that the need for us to cry is at last put to rest once and for all (Revelation 21:4).

As long as we find ourselves this side of perfection restored, we will always have need for the reminder of God’s calming presence in our lives, and whenever we fail to perceive it, be that but for a moment or for a lengthier period of time, we will find ourselves crying out for it — for him. 

The author, Marla Burnie, lives in Dauphin, Manitoba.

Journey Through the Psalms

Mini Bible Study Installment



PSALM 15

O Lord, who shall sojourn in your tent? Who shall dwell on your holy hill? He who walks blamelessly and does what is right and speaks truth in his heart; who does not slander with his tongue and does no evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend; in whose eyes a vile person is despised, but who honors those who fear the Lord; who swears to his own hurt and does not change; who does not put out his money at interest and does not take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things shall never be moved.

“For it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God” (Matthew 19:24). When this passage appears in the lectionary, pastors scramble. Fearful of offending their biggest donors or worried about being perceived as political, they begin talking about a gate in Jerusalem where camels had to kneel to enter, and this gate was called the Eye of the Needle. “It’s about humility!” they insist. Except — no historical record of this gate exists. Jesus is simply describing the impossible. Wealth won’t get you into heaven, even if it means you can afford to keep ritual cleanliness and truly rest on the Sabbath.

In today’s Psalm, the Psalmist describes those invited to dwell alongside the Lord. They do no evil, never gossip, don’t prioritize money. They walk upright. They’re blameless. And they do not exist — not in our pews, amongst our clergy, or anywhere else — outside the person of Jesus Christ.

When we attempt to soften texts and coddle our self-righteousness by inventing gates or clinging to the one box of Psalm 15 we can check on our best days, we’re doing more than dodging conviction. We’re missing out on the truth of God’s impossible goodness and grace. It is Christ who walks blamelessly, refrains from slander, and upholds his neighbor over his purse. It is Christ who dwells with the Father upon his holy hill. It is Christ who advocates for us there, and it is through his right-


eousness and not our own that we are welcomed into his kingdom. We may find ourselves on our knees, but it’s in thanksgiving for our salvation.

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Read the Psalm and reflect upon the following questions provided for personal devotions or in a short Bible study session with group discussion.

1. Have you ever attempted to soften God’s word to soothe your self-righteousness? Why?
2. What about Psalm 15 convicts you? What will you do with this conviction?
3. How does Christ fulfill the image of the righteous in this Psalm? Why is this good news?
4. How is this Psalm (and Matthew 19, for that matter!) good news for the wealthy, the gossip, the liar, the sinner? How is it good news for you?

PRAYER

Holy Father, you sent your beloved son from your tent of righteousness into our lives of wickedness. Help us to repent with humility and strive to walk in your ways. We give you thanks for assuring our salvation through the words and deeds of Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen. 

The author of this installment, **Rev. Taylor Rister-Stempniak** of Fresno, California, is pastor of [Immanuel Lutheran Church in the community of Easton](#).

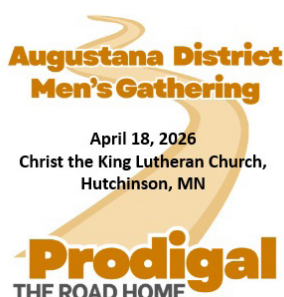
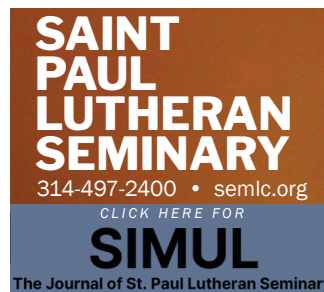
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Our hope is for our students to have godly character and wholeness so they can live righteously, to know the Scriptures in a way that they can think biblically, and have ministry skills so they can lead effectively. The Master's Institute is called to equip the heart, head, and hands of pastors and leaders for the Church to continue the ministry of Jesus empowered by the Holy Spirit.

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To learn more about The Master's Institute's mission and vision for seminary and available programs, or to apply today, visit miseseminary.com, write to info@miseseminary.com, or call at 651-765-9756.

From the day The Master's Institute began, our calling has been simple yet profound: to equip the Church, not just educate it, by creating the conditions for the Holy Spirit to form disciples of Jesus who love Him in heart, head, and hands. At MI, we are a seminary of the Church, by the Church, and for the Church, committed to spiritual formation, deep theological understanding, and practical ministry skills for all servant leaders.

In response to the growing need for leaders who can think theologically, lead faithfully, and serve effectively in congregations and ministries of all kinds, we are delighted to introduce our master of arts in Christian Leadership. Designed especially for Christian workers, key volunteers, and lay leaders who sense a calling to grow deeper in ministry, this two-year cohort-based program weaves biblical teaching with spiritual and character formation and contextual leadership training.

Rooted in Scripture and shaped by the Lutheran confessions, the MA program invites students into a rhythm of study, reflection, and practice that strengthens both understanding and application. Whether you are leading a small mission site, youth ministry, worship, outreach, or volunteer leadership, this degree seeks to cultivate faithful leaders who serve with humility, clarity of thought, and boldness of spirit.

"As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies — in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen."

1 Peter 4:10-11

Yet our measure of success isn't simply academic credit, it's the relational wholeness of communities and the flourishing of congregational life. We believe that when Christian leaders live out the Gospel for their neighbor, formed in Christlike character, grounded in God's Word, and equipped with practical skills, the Church is better positioned to proclaim the Promise of God and shepherd his people into their calling.

If you've sensed a call to deepen your theological roots and expand your leadership capacity for Christ's mission, I invite you to explore this new pathway of formation with us. **IN**

The author, Rev. Dr. Jeremy A. King, is president of [The Master's Institute Seminary](http://TheMaster'sInstituteSeminary) in White Bear Lake, Minnesota, and lead pastor of [Shepherd of the Valley Lutheran Church](http://ShepherdoftheValleyLutheranChurch) in Afton, Minnesota.

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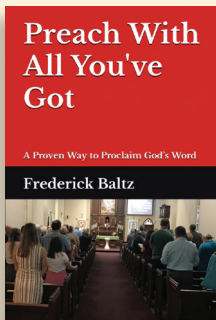
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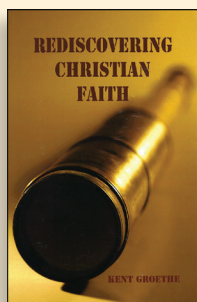
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... AND A GAME

Complete the word search, using the bold words in the text of "Jesus, Thy Blood and Righteousness" (Nicolaus Ludwig, Graf von Zinzendorf (1739), translated by John Wesley) as a word bank.

Reading this issue of Connections Online in your browser? Try [this jigsaw puzzle](#) from Rev. Mark Ryman.

F	S	D	T	G	K	P	R	E	C	I	O	U	S	Z
W	O	O	V	B	E	B	D	E	D	E	A	T	H	Y
R	I	G	H	T	E	O	U	S	N	E	S	S	S	O
B	U	S	A	A	M	W	S	L	I	O	I	H	U	J
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E	G	L	O	R	I	O	U	S	S	O	V	I	H	T
V	K	W	E	L	R	I	S	E	C	O	S	E	I	J
E	M	M	G	D	B	D	I	E	D	Z	M	L	D	G

1. **Jesus**, thy **blood** and **righteousness**,
My **beauty** are, my **glorious** dress;
Midst flaming **worlds**, in these arrayed,
With **joy** shall I lift up my **head**.

2. The **holy**, **meeek**, unspotted **Lamb**,
Who from the Father's **bosom** came,
Who **died** for me, e'en me t' **atone**,
Now for my **Lord** and **God** I own.

3. Lord, I **believe** thy **precious** blood,
Which at the **mercy** seat of God,
Forever doth for **sinner**s plead,
For me, e'en for my **soul** was shed.

4. When from the **dust** of **death** I **rise**
To claim my **mansion** in the skies,
E'en then this shall be all my **plea**,
Jesus hath **lived**, hath died for me.

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