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STEFAN SCHWEIHOFFER, PIXABAY

Threefold Prayer

Essay by Stephanie Freund



A large teardrop-shaped solar prism hangs in a window in my home. On sunny days when the light shines, I see myriad rainbows dancing all over my walls and ceiling. When the colors are revealed, I am reminded of what is always present, though invisible, until the light shines through. God's grace is always present, dancing over, around, in and through us. We see it when the light of Christ shines through.

GOD'S REIGN OF GRACE IN SOVEREIGNTY

Luther reflected, "I am seeking and thirsting for nothing else than a gracious God." God reigns in grace as the psalmist reflects in Psalm 8: "O Lord, our Lord, how majestic is your name in all the earth!" Psalm 139 reflects, "Where can I go from your spirit? Where can I flee from your presence?"

My Father, in all of life's seasons, pour your pardoning love into my heart. King of my heart, command me to trust you, and not to fear, but to pray without ceasing. Your omnipotence, omnipresence, and omniscience give peace to my heart. Father, you own it. You build it. My future is carefully held in your almighty hands.

GOD'S RAIN OF GRACE IN ABUNDANCE

Luther writes, "Whoever wishes to enjoy Christ's grace- and no one is excluded- let him come and receive it from Him. You will never drain this fountain of living water; it will never run dry."

Psalm 23 reminds me, "You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies, you anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows." The rain of God's grace in my life is constant, yet at times I do not see it or often I take it for granted. I see the promise in creation, especially in the spring and summer.

In this season of long sunlit days and abun-

dant rain, you show me how you care for this earth. After the cold and barren winter, the fields and forests burst in vegetation. Birdsong and flowers, blue sky and lakes brim with life. Your abundant grace pours out like rain everywhere; a reminder that your mercy is indiscriminate, overflowing and constant. There is a wonder in every living thing, from spider to rainbow, to earthworm to bumblebee. Give me eyes and ears to see it, notice it, watch it. So too in the seasons of my life, reveal to me your grace in abundance, and let me give thanks to you, dear Lord.

GOD'S REIN OF GRACE IN HARDSHIP

Luther, in deep despair, turned to Psalm 46. From that Psalm Luther wrote his famous hymn "A Mighty Fortress." Psalm 46 begins, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." In times of hardship, whether physical, mental or spiritual, God will rein me in by grace and bring me back to his sure and steadfast promises.

Jesus, place your gentle yoke upon me, and bind me to you. I know you intimately in prayer, and your rein is easy, your burden light. I am joined to you in baptism, and you have promised to be with me all the days of my life. In trials, I know the perfecting, polishing refiner's fire has a purpose. I trust the crafting of the Potter's hand, the Good Shepherd who supplies all my needs, I confidently abide in the presence of you, the Almighty. My faith holds not in what I reason or see, but instead what I cannot understand, or see, trusting confidently in the promises you have given to me.

In the infinite myriads of grace, God reigns in purple sovereignty, God rains in green abundance, God reins in blue hope through hardships. Each light shines in the brilliant light of Easter's morning. 

Stephanie Freund of Vining, Minnesota, is a wife, mother, grandmother, and church musician.

Journey Through the Psalms

Mini Bible Study Installment



PSALM 19:7-9, 14

The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul;
the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple;
the precepts of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart;
the commandment of the Lord is pure, enlightening the eyes;
the fear of the Lord is clean, enduring forever;
the rules of the Lord are true, and righteous altogether.
Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

I have heard preachers describe the law of the Lord as a hammer, intended to crush us to smithereens so that we can truly appreciate the soothing balm of grace, or as an executioner, calling us to the gallows so that Christ may offer us our reprieve. I have, on occasion, watched earnest seminarians search through a text for the law so that they may be sure to carefully cut it out of their preaching so “only grace remains.” One school of thought seems to view the law as a weapon to be wielded by human hands, and the other seems offended by its existence. Rarely have I heard the law, instructions, and precepts of God spoken about with the love and wisdom of the psalmist.

Psalm 19 begins with the reminder that each twinkling star and each sunrise is creation testifying to the strength and care of its creator. Even without words, their rising and setting show their obedience to God, and their beauty lights up the world as a result. Obedience to the law gives us the opportunity to do the same. When, for a moment, we are able to embrace the sweetness of God’s instructions, our obedience testifies to the will of God. We see a break in sin and witness what it is like to treat our Lord, ourselves, our neighbor, and all of creation with the intention they deserve. Violence is not the law. Violence is our disobedience. This is why the psalmist prays earnestly that our faults be corrected, so that we may forever be a testimony as bright as the star of heaven. His meditations were found acceptable, and the Lord answered by offering his own righteousness, so that though we are a broken people bound to break a

beautiful law, we are mended with the precious grace of Christ, and even our brokenness becomes testimony to the will of God: that all his people will rise again with the Son into eternal life everlasting.

FOR REFLECTION AND DISCUSSION

Read the psalm and reflect upon the following questions provided for your own personal devotions or in a short Bible study session.

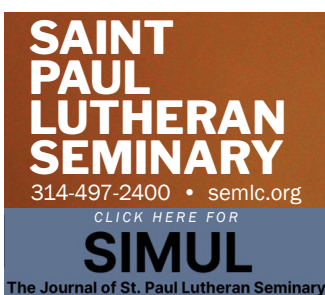
1. How does creation testify to God the Creator? How can we acknowledge this without elevating the created world past God himself?
2. How do you tend to view the law? As executioner? As no longer relevant? As a treasure?
3. How is the law sweet? How does it show us God’s will for us? How is that beautiful?
4. This psalm reminds us that our obedience testifies to God’s majesty. In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul reminds us that in our weakness we testify to God’s majesty. How do these ideas exist in harmony with one another?

PRAYER

O Lord, you have given us a law sweeter than honey. Encourage in us obedience, and when we are weak to sin allow us to fix us our eyes on the treasure of your grace. 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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"I give you this charge: preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke, and encourage — with great patience and careful instruction." — 2 Timothy 4:1b-2

With this passage from the letter to Timothy as the foundation of discussion and prayer, St. Paul Lutheran Seminary was formed early in the summer of 2011.

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The good news that sinners have been reconciled to God through the life, death, and resurrection of

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Rev. Jon Jensen is the coordinator for SPLS, serving since the start in 2011. He also serves a small congregation in rural Georgia.

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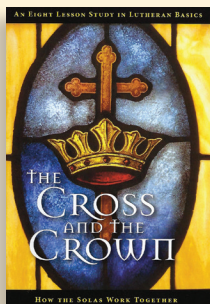
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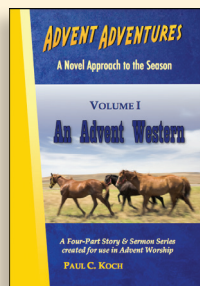


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... AND A GAME

Try this word search based on the words in the word bank, all from Psalm 19. Reading Connections Online in your browser? [Play this word search online.](#)

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

Psalm
choirmaster
David
heavens

declare
glory
God
proclaims

handiwork
pours
speech
reveals

knowledge
voice
heard
bridegroom

chamber
strong
course
eyes
fear
clean
enduring
forever
rules
true
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