

Regarding the Gospel

The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. . . . God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe (1 Corinthians 1:18, 21).

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

Song: “Nothing but the Blood”

Growing up in Africa in the 1960s, I knew a man whose leg had been crushed by an elephant. His friends carried him to the mission hospital where, among other things, he could receive a blood transfusion to save his life. His family discouraged him from accepting blood from a stranger because that seemed foolishness to them. He chose the transfusion anyway, and he lived.

Paul tells us in today’s passage that people who do not believe in Jesus think the method God provided for salvation—Christ’s shed blood on the cross, His death, His burial, and His resurrection—is folly. But those of us who accept it by faith know it brings eternal life.

There is an even more wonderful part of the story about the African man whose life was saved by a transfusion. Though his crushed leg was unfortunately lost, he heard the gospel and received the gift of *eternal* life provided through Jesus’ blood.

Father, thank You for providing a way of salvation to those who will accept it through faith. In Jesus’ name, amen.

June 6–12. **Harriet E. Michael** is a wife, mother, and grandmother. She is active in her church and a community Bible study. She has a passion for God’s Word and prayer.

From Nothing to Something

God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong (1 Corinthians 1:27).

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

Song: “Who Am I That a King Should Bleed and Die for Me?”

On February 12, 1809, a baby was born in a one-room log cabin on Sinking Spring Farm in LaRue County, Kentucky. This child, born into poverty and with no formal education, grew up to be a man who changed history. Though self-educated, Abraham Lincoln became a lawyer and then president of the United States at a time of great national turmoil. This unassuming child grew up to become a man who impacted the trajectory of a nation and, consequently, the world.

That’s just like God, isn’t it? Taking someone who started life with so little—not even two parents beyond his first nine years, as Lincoln’s mother died then—and causing him to rise to the highest position in the land to become a person who changes history? But today’s passage reveals more to God’s plan than just lifting up the lowly.

Paul explains that God works this way so that His mercy and goodness can be put on display, revealing His character. Harking back to Jeremiah 9:23-24, Paul expresses how our hearts should respond when God lifts us up to experience His grace and goodness: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:31).

Father, help us to remember that all we have and all we are comes from You. May we boast in You alone. In Jesus’ name, amen.

God's World

He has caused his wonders to be remembered; the LORD is gracious and compassionate (Psalm 111:4).

Scripture: Psalm 111

Song: “This Is My Father’s World”

Today’s song was penned by Maltbie D. Babcock (and published after his death in 1901). One stanza reads, “This is my Father’s world: / I rest me in the thought / Of rocks and trees, of skies and seas— / His hand the wonders wrought.” Babcock’s lyrics seem to underscore the words of Psalm 111: “Great are the works of the LORD; they are pondered by all who delight in them” (v. 2).

Can you recall the last time you were captivated by something in nature? I’ve been blessed to have seen God’s world from two different continents. Having grown up in Africa, I witnessed God’s tropical world filled with canaries, parrots, lizards, chameleons, tall palm trees, and rock formations as big as mountains. As an adult I’ve observed God’s handiwork in North America, where I’ve seen the beauty of clear summer skies, crisp fall evenings when the leaves are full of color, and a winter’s day when the bright sun makes a snowy wonderland glisten.

Psalm 111 speaks of God’s glorious and majestic deeds and His great works for us to delight in and ponder. These deeds are not just manifest in God’s creation—His beautiful world—but also in the work He does in the lives of those who place their trust in Him.

Father, thank You for the beautiful world You created and for all the other ways You work in the lives of Your people still today. In Jesus’ name, amen.

What Could Be Better?

When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are now already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not made with human hands. . . . He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood (Hebrews 9:11-12).

Scripture: Hebrews 9:11-14

Song: “How Great Is Our God”

In the children’s story about the three bears, a little girl named Goldilocks enters the bears’ house while they are away. While exploring their home, Goldilocks moves from one room to another, trying out various items—porridge, chairs, beds—and searching, in each instance, for something better than the first thing she tried.

Better is a comparative word, an adjective that means “more excellent or effective.” The Bible uses this word in the book of Hebrews about a dozen times. In fact, Hebrews could almost be called The Book of Better-Thans. For example, today’s passage tells us that Jesus Christ is the better sacrifice—the more excellent and effective sacrifice—than the animal sacrifices God required in the Old Testament for making atonement for sin.

In an incomplete, outward way, the blood of animals could sanctify those who offered them, but the blood of Christ cleanses inwardly and completely. Jesus is the better, more perfect sacrifice, whose blood removes our sin entirely!

Father, You loved us so much, You willingly offered Your Son as a sacrifice to atone for our sins. Thank You for this better way You have provided through His blood. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Loving and Faithful

All the ways of the LORD are loving and faithful toward those who keep the demands of his covenant (Psalm 25:10).

Scripture: Psalm 25:1-11

Song: “Reckless Love”

My parents married on June 14, 1953. They stayed married for 66 years until my mother's unexpected passing on August 12, 2019. Not every day of all those years was perfect. There were surely times when they disappointed each other or even hurt one another. Yet they stayed together, and as you might expect, my father loves my mother still.

Love is strong. One of the things that makes it that way is that love provides a special way of seeing the other person, the beloved. Whenever my parents found themselves at odds, they didn't remain fixated on whatever may have hurt them. Instead, they looked at each other through the eyes of a committed love. By looking through that lens, they stayed faithful to their marriage covenant.

God's love is so much greater than we will ever be capable of in our human relationships. And amazingly, God makes us the object of His great love. How does He look at us when we have wronged Him through sin? Verse 7 of today's passage says He remembers us according to His love rather than according to our sin. He has made a covenant with those of us who come to Him through Jesus, and He stays faithful to that covenant. That is the greatest love possible!

Father, thank You for Your deep, abiding, and faithful love. May we reflect that love in the ways we interact with the people You have put in our lives. In Jesus' name, amen.

What Are You Hoping In?

Guard my life and rescue me . . . because my hope, LORD, is in you (Psalm 25:20-21).

Scripture: Psalm 25:12-22

Song: “He Will Hold Me Fast”

As I often do, I was volunteering in my church’s preschool Sunday school class. That particular day a little boy tugged at the back of my shirt. I turned to see what he needed. He smiled up at me and said, “You know what I want to be when I grow up?”

“What?” I asked.

In all sincerity he answered, “A humpback whale!”

I chuckled. He was just a child and did not yet have full understanding. But don’t we adults sometimes place our hopes in plans or things that we don’t fully understand and that are apt to fall through, or in people who ultimately fail us?

Today’s passage makes it clear that God is the one safe place to rest our hopes. He can relieve the troubles of our hearts, save us from our enemies, guard our lives, and rescue us. A study of Psalms and the rest of Scripture reveals so many other mighty things God has done or is able to do, providing abundant assurance that we can anchor all our hopes in Him.

Father, we look to You and place our hopes in You. Hear our prayers when we are hurting, fearful, or in need. Thank You for Your faithfulness. In Jesus’ name, amen.

Never Forgotten

Can a mother forget the baby at her breast . . . ? Though she may forget, I will not forget you! See, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands (Isaiah 49:15-16).

Scripture: Isaiah 49:1-17

Song: “Indescribable”

Some of the earliest engravings discovered were cut into shells. These have been found in Indonesia and Africa and appear to be from thousands of years ago. Later, wooden objects were engraved and even later than that, metal objects. Metal was a difficult material to engrave until humans created certain tools. We know about all these because when they were found, the words engraved on them remained. Time had not worn them away.

Young people have been known to document their love for one another by carving their initials into a tree. These crude engravings remain year after year, long after the person who carved them has grown up or even moved away. And very often the youthful affections that prompted the carving have long faded away too.

According to Isaiah 49:16, God has engraved us on the palms of His hands. I’ve sometimes wondered just what God has engraved. Is it just our names, or is the account of our entire lives recorded on His hands with such permanence that it will not wipe or wash away even through all eternity? How precious to know that God holds us so dear that He has inscribed a permanent remembrance of us on His own hands—and from a love that will never fade.

Father, thank You for always loving and being mindful of me. I bow my heart in worship to adore You right now. In Jesus’ name, amen.