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## Additional Material

Missionary material is found at [prayercards.lcms.org](http://prayercards.lcms.org)  
Cover map from Google Earth © 2020 Maxar Technologies brings  
three continents into view and even now the contours of the globe,  
moving farther out from Jerusalem

# The Word of the Lord Grows

Forty Day Lent Devotions



Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage,  
and the ends of the earth your possession.

## March 23-28

Hosea 3:1-5

Daniel 1:8-21

2 Corinthians 8:1-9

Ruth 2:8-13

Matthew 15:12-28

March 23, 2020

Read Hosea 3:1-5

March 28, 2020

## Go show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another man.

God's Word recognizes an ideal of marriage. Jesus' love for His church is sung out in Ephesians 5 and the finale of Revelation. His faithfulness goes well beyond any parting of death!

When Jesus delivers teaching on divorce, He says, "Not everyone can accept this word, but only those to whom it has been given" (Matt. 19:11). Jesus allowed for divorce in cases of adultery, but Hosea had a higher call. Hosea was to buy back his wayward bride just as Jesus' blood would redeem us.

Roman soldiers returning from battle were given horns to celebrate their success. What was at first a trophy instead became a symbol of adultery. Calling the horns a cuckold's transforms the trophy into a joke on the boastful. The cuckold celebrates distant victories while at home another man plowed his field.

Cuckold jokes abound precisely because of the deep anguish of adultery. Betrayal from the one who has been closest to you can be exceedingly hard to forgive. Jokes keep us from contemplating too closely this pain.


But for a moment, brothers and sisters, we tarry over this misery. For Hosea foretells that Jesus bore this anguish. Our idolatries are adulteries again and again, against One who entrusts Himself entirely to us, who loves us more deeply than we have loved. Let us consider this weight, for He who has been forgiven much can love much (Luke 7:47).

To evangelize, some preach; some travel far; some learn new languages; but we all evangelize by forgiving. Hosea forgave what many feel they cannot. In Christ, under the power of His cross, knowing what He has forgiven, we can forgive powerfully.

- Rev. Daniel Guagenti

We pray

Lord, open our eyes to Your great forgiveness and love, that we may love and forgive greatly in return. In Jesus' Name. Amen..



### Pray for

REV. DR. JOHN AND MELINDA BOMBARO  
THEOLOGICAL EDUCATOR  
SERVING THE LORD IN LATVIA



Rev. Dr. John and Melinda Bombaro serve the Lord through The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) as missionaries in Latvia, based in Riga. John serves as assistant to the regional director of the Eurasia region in the area of theological education. In this role, he works to plant an English-speaking congregation in Riga. He teaches Lutheran theology and mentors seminary students in a Bachelor of Divinity program at Riga Luther Academy (the Latvian Ev. Luth. Church's seminary). He assists in the re-accreditation of the seminary, not only as a Latvian seminary but also as an English-speaking seminary accredited throughout the European Union. He builds confessional and strategic relations between regional

partner churches and synods. With Melinda's help, John also coordinates conferences around Eurasia for pastors and other church workers.

John's hometown is Stratford, N.J. He received bachelor's degrees from Rutgers University and Columbia International University. He then received his master's degree in theology from the University of Edinburgh and his doctorate (Ph.D.) degree from King's College, University of London. He also has an advanced diploma in theology from the Westfield House and Cambridge Divinity School, England, and his Master of Divinity from Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Ind. Before serving in Latvia, John was the senior pastor at Grace Lutheran Church, San Diego, Calif. He also is a member of the United States Navy Reserves and is active duty working at the Pentagon with the Marine Corps.

Melinda's hometown is Meadow Lake, Saskatchewan, Canada. She received a degree from Canadian Bible College and a certificate in Scotch-Irish Studies from the University of Edinburgh. She worked at an investment company and a biotechnology company before becoming a missionary.

John and Melinda enjoy family games, camping, hiking, cycling, bonfires, football and reading, all with their four beautiful children - Sophia, Marie, Anna and Luca.

Pray for John, Melinda and their children as they serve in Latvia. Ask God to strengthen them as they adjust to the language and culture of this region. Pray for the children's successes at school in Riga. Ask God to give Melinda opportunities to connect with women, particularly mothers with school-aged children, and share the Gospel with them. Pray the Bombaro family is given wisdom and boldness as they proclaim and present Christ as Lord and Savior. Pray also for a return to true biblical Christianity within the region. Pray that they may have a significant role in helping with this return and with inspiring seminarians and pastors to do the same in their spheres of influence.

• **BIRTHDAYS:** John - Nov. 17, Melinda - Oct. 1, Sophia - May 21, Marie - Aug. 12, Anna - May 28, Luca - March 9

• **ANNIVERSARY:** March 18

• **HOME DISTRICT:** Pacific Southwest

- **Pray daily for John and Melinda** — and how you can support and tell others about their ministry. Visit [lcms.org/bombaro](https://lcms.org/bombaro)
- **Learn about LCMS international work** at [international.lcms.org](https://international.lcms.org)
- **Support and adopt an international worker.** Call 888-930-4438.



March 27, 2020

Read Matthew 15:12-28

## **But He did not answer her a word.**

Matthew 15 begins with the Pharisees and scribes complaining about the disciples and how they didn't keep all the customs of Israel. In response, Jesus speaks to how sin, not breaking cultural customs, actually defiles a person. He leaves the Jewish lands and heads towards Tyre. There, Jesus comes across a Canaanite woman from that region, and when she begs Him for help, Jesus is silent.

Jesus's silence poses a question for the disciples. What sort of Jesus do you want? Do you want the Jesus who has love and compassion for all, or do you want the Jesus who just follows our local cultural customs? Because if you were a "good" Jewish man following the traditions of the elders, you wouldn't dare talk to a foreign woman. Or if you had, you'd be brusque and rude. So do you like the role that Jesus plays here, disciples?

The woman knows. She has faith. She isn't interested in custom or her rank or status. Call me a little dog; that's fine! That's great, in fact, because I'm Your little dog, Jesus, and You will make sure I get fed! With joy, knowing that she understands and that her faithfulness has taught the disciples a lesson that the Pharisees and scribes had forgotten, Jesus heals her daughter.

Instead of worrying about where we fit in society, or our social standing, or what everyone thinks about us, our focus is to be upon this: Christ Jesus blesses and redeems us. We are not saved by what the world thinks of us, or by what we do, or what anyone thinks of us. We are saved by Christ alone.

- Rev. Eric Brown

We pray

Defend us, O LORD, from worrying about what the world thinks of us. Help us to focus upon all the good blessings of body and soul that we receive from Your generous hands. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Read Daniel 1:8-21

March 24, 2020

## **Thus Daniel continued until the first year of King Cyrus.**

Daniel is one of the most famous prophets in the Bible; most people are familiar with his ordeal in the lion's den. Many, though, are not aware that the only qualification Daniel had for being chosen for his position in the king's service was that he was a good-looking boy who had an aptitude to learn. Despite the fact that he had been kidnapped from his family and made an indentured servant to a foreign power, Daniel submitted to the new authorities. He strove to learn and excel under his masters. At the same time, Daniel kept faith with the One True God. He regularly prayed openly towards Jerusalem, even when it was a crime to do so.

Daniel is an excellent example of how a Christian serves faithfully in the world. When the king's anger was aroused against the Magi for failing to interpret a dream, Daniel did not hesitate to request an audience before the king. He trusted that the Lord would provide and did not fear to put his life on the line for his fellow Magi. The Lord did provide, as he shared with Daniel both the king's dream and its interpretation.

While we have no promise that the Lord will always provide in such a spectacular fashion, we can trust that He is our ever-present help in time of need. Daniel understood that, as a child of God, he was called to serve his earthly lord and care for his fellow Magi. Everyone one of us, like Daniel, has the privilege to bring the Word of God to the people with whom we work and live every day. Like Daniel, we share God's love through our various callings. We are in the world to serve our neighbor in love, as God has served and loved us through His Son.

- Rev. William G. Sabol

We pray

Prayer: Lord, You are the Light of the World. Help me to shine forth Your love to all whom I encounter, that by Your grace, they may come to know You as their Lord and Savior. Amen.

March 25, 2020

Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-9

## **Yet for your sake He became poor.**

What do you expect to learn when you read the letters of the apostles? There is much to be learned from them about Christ and His sacrifice. Paul, Peter, James and John write about our conduct as Christians among each other and in the world. The letters also contain much that is useful for sharing the faith. Did you realize that many of the letters are also fundraising appeals?

Romans, for example, was written in part to generate support for mission work in Spain (Rom. 15:24). The letter to the Philippians has a strong fundraising component (Phil. 4:18). The same is true of today's reading from 2 Corinthians. Paul urges the Corinthians to remain generous—and holds up the churches in Macedonia as an example for them to follow.

The mission of the church relies on the generosity of Christians. What we have received from the Lord physically, we share with the Church on account of what Christ has given us spiritually. Missionaries need to eat, sleep somewhere, get from place to place, and provide for their families. Without generous donors, missionaries cannot proclaim the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to those who have not yet heard.

Paul motivates the Corinthians with a reminder of what Christ has done for them. Our rich Lord took on the poverty of our sin so that His riches might become ours. For all eternity, Christ bears in His body the wounds that saved us. Should we not, then, also be willing to sacrifice so that others, too, may live? Jesus showed us grace—undeserved kindness. Mission work is the most beautiful passing on of that grace to others.

We strive, as Christians, to excel in faith, in speech and in knowledge. Let us also strive for generosity, so that the love we have for Christ might be shown to be genuine and not merely self-serving.

- Rev. Charles St-Onge

We pray

Father, cause the same love that You have for us to live in our hearts by the power of Your Spirit, whom You sent forth from Your Son. Amen.

Read Ruth 2:8-13

March 26, 2020

## **The LORD repay you for what you have done, and a full reward be given you by the LORD!**

What kind of reward do we deserve for our acts of mercy? Some say, "One good turn deserves another," meaning that when we do a favor for someone, this earns us a favor in return. Reading the story of Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz, you might think the acts of mercy being done here earn the mercy of God: a favor earned by a favor.

But this is not the full story. The error is to think that God's mercy only comes after everyone else has been merciful—as though God were rewarding Ruth, Naomi, and Boaz for being nice to each other. Actually, God's act of mercy comes first.

The story begins in tragedy. Naomi's husband and two sons die. But God takes care of Naomi by giving her Ruth, the faithful daughter-in-law. When Ruth travels with Naomi back to Israel, God is at work. When Naomi and Ruth arrive in Israel, God provides Boaz to take care of them. Again, God is at work through Boaz. In God's greatest act of mercy, He provides a child to Ruth and Boaz, who would be an ancestor to Jesus (see Matthew 1:5.)

Looking at the entire story, we see God at work the whole way—not merely rewarding good works, but using the compassion of Ruth for Naomi, and the compassion of Boaz for Ruth, as His own acts of mercy for each of them. Their acts of mercy are really God's acts of mercy.

When you do good for the people you care about, God is at work. And when others do good for you, God is at work. The favor is already done, the reward is already given.

- Rev. Jonathan Mueller

We pray

Merciful Father, You serve us through the acts of mercy done by the people around us. Help us to see You at work in their mercy to us, and our mercy for others. In Jesus' Name, Amen.