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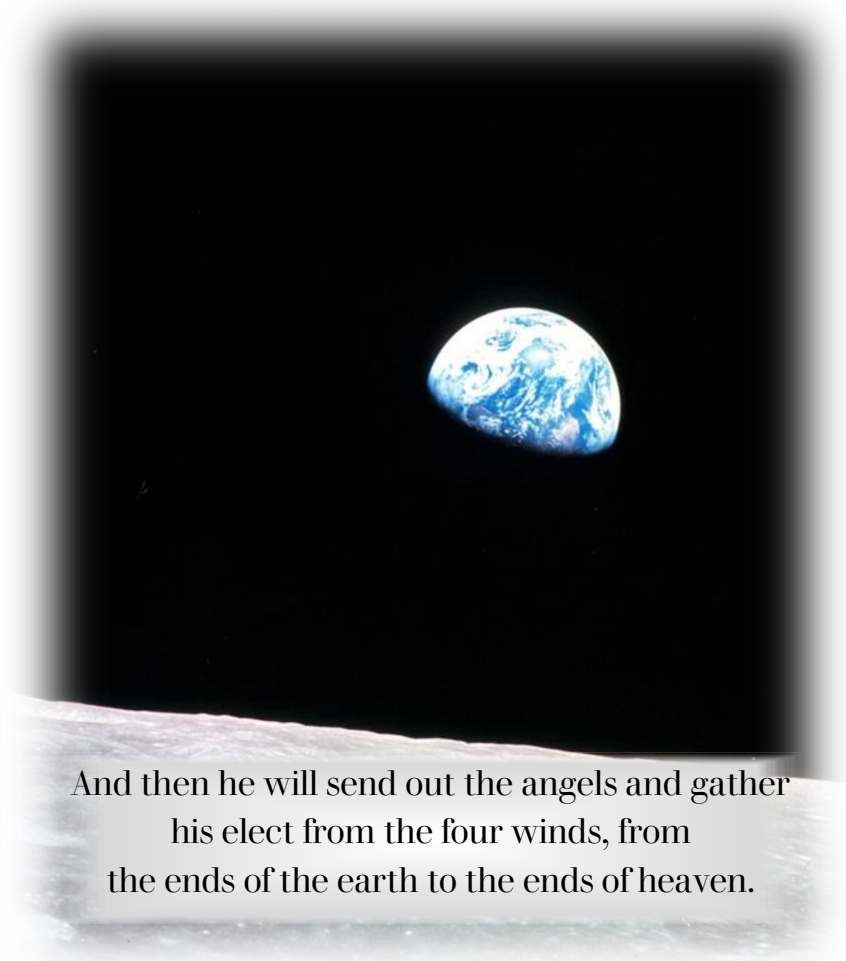
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Alena Guagenti

Additional Material

Missionary material is found at prayercards.lcms.org
Cover image, *Earthrise*, from NASA; the Apollo VIII crew entered moon orbit Christmas Eve 1968 and broadcast back to earth, ending with readings from the book of Genesis.

The Word of the Lord Grows

Forty Day Lent Devotions



And then he will send out the angels and gather
his elect from the four winds, from
the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven.

March 30 - April 4

2 Corinthians 5

Acts 6:11-15

Haggai 2:1-9

1 Timothy 2:1-8

Esther 8 3-17

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation.

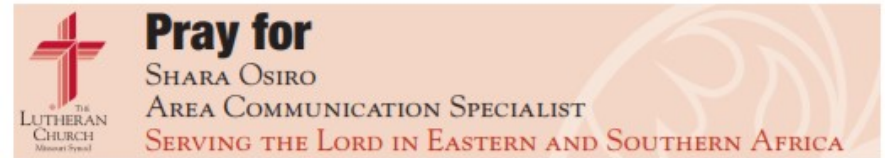
We spend a lot of time looking at people from a worldly point of view. We might see a news story about a criminal who was arrested, and we look at him in a certain way. We may see someone do something nice for someone else when they thought no one was looking, and we begin to look at that person in a certain way. Often times, people are judged in certain ways based on their outward appearance—things like age, sex, educational level, income, abilities, clothing, and so on. But when we look at people only at surface level, we are really missing some very important things.

Instead, through the power of the cross of Christ, we can look at people in ways other than their outward appearance. Through the power of Christ's empty tomb, we can see people in the light of Christ instead of the darkness of this world. When we see people as someone for whom Jesus died and rose again, we no longer regard them according to the flesh, but instead, we regard them according to the work of Christ. We see them as a brand new creation, a sinner redeemed by the love of God, through the work of Jesus.

- Rev. Benjamin Micheel

We pray

Gracious God, help us to see the world through Your eyes. Encourage us to love others the way that You have loved us first. Help us to remember that You sent Jesus to die for all people, and through His work, You have made all who believe in You a brand new creation. In Jesus' Name. Amen.



Shara Osiro serves the Lord through The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod (LCMS) in Eastern and Southern Africa, based in Kenya. As the communication specialist for Eastern and Southern Africa, she helps to share the story of what God is doing through LCMS personnel and partner churches in this part of Africa. Shara helps to generate professional, relevant, useable media from the Africa field to be used by

LCMS missionaries, the LCMS Office of International Mission, LCMS Mission Advancement, the LCMS Communications Department and partner churches. Another facet of her work is taking photographs and putting together videos of the mission work that takes place in her area.

Shara was born in St. Vincent, in the West Indies, and graduated from college with a bachelor's degree in biology. Her home congregation is Christ Lutheran Church in Phoenix, Ariz. Shara has previously served on short-term mission trips to Uganda, Rwanda, Mexico and Peru. She also served with the LCMS for two years in South Africa. She enjoys going to the movies, reading, traveling and working with kids. Her husband Michael is Kenyan and works as a software engineer.



Pray for Shara and Michael as they serve in Eastern and Southern Africa. Pray God grants them continued strength and wisdom to serve Him and to develop and nurture strong relationships with the local people. Ask God to help them be strong Christian witnesses to many people. Ask the Lord to keep Shara and Michael in good health so that they may serve to their fullest capacity. Let us thank God that Shara and Michael are serving His children in this part of the world.

• **BIRTHDAYS:** Shara – Feb. 4, Michael – March 28

• **ANNIVERSARY:** Feb. 11

• **HOME DISTRICT:** Pacific Southwest

- **Pray daily for Shara** — and how you can support and tell others about her ministry. Visit lcms.org/osiro
- **Learn about LCMS international work** at lcms.org/international
- **Support and adopt an international worker.** Call 888-930-4438.

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April 3, 2020

Read Esther 8:3-17

Many from the peoples of the country declared themselves Jews.

The account of Queen Esther is appealing because it has a strong whiff of Hollywood about it. The story comes complete with underdogs, a strong female lead and her father, a vicious bad guy who's easy to hate, tension surrounding a king, and an ending where the bad guy gets his and the good guys triumph. What's not to love about the Book of Esther?

As a Christian, quite a lot. The story of Jesus seems to be the opposite. The Messiah is spoken against by the authorities, and one of His disciples betrays Him. He ends up handed over to a kangaroo court and crucified with two thieves. His closest friends go into hiding because, like the inhabitants of Persia, they are in "fear of the Jews." True, Jesus is raised again three days later. But the select few who get to see the Lord in His glory end up also being persecuted and killed. At this point in the story, it could not be more different than in Esther's case.

Perhaps the truth lies in the contrast. The victory of the Jews in the time of Esther was limited geographically and temporally. New enemies arose, and the Jews did not fare as well against them. But in the right time, and the right place, with the right people, even the strongest enemy can be defeated.

Jesus was indeed the right person, at the right time, and in the right place. The enemies He defeated were greater than any Haman—they were death, sin and the Devil. Jesus' victory was permanent, not temporary, and valid for all people in all places. Now it is Satan who lives in fear of us. Everywhere this verdict of Good News is preached, there is gladness and joy and those who wish to join our number. The Father's edict cannot be revoked: Satan's goods have been plundered, and we, the underdogs, have won the day on account of our King.

- Rev. Charles St-Onge

We pray

Father, bless Your people and protect them from their enemies, that they may live in gladness and joy and many may choose to join our ranks.

Read Acts 16:11-15

March 31, 2020

One who heard us was a woman named Lydia... who was a worshipper of God.

Welcome to Philippi, leading city of the Macedonian district. You'll experience the imperial capital in miniature throughout this Roman colony. Caesar Augustus and Mark Antony developed it as a resort community for retired military. With the mountains around made of gold, mining drives a lucrative local economy. Meet Ms. Lydia, importer of purple textiles. From the finest foreign fabrics this independent businesswoman designs fashion statements and status symbols for the rich and famous.

So why does the apostle's missionary expedition look outside the city gates? Why not preach in the marketplace or the Philipian equivalent of Athens' Areopagus? Why head here, this washroom with its dirty laundry? Why even proselytize at all in a metropolis so pagan it can't even support a proper synagogue? Why evangelize the superstitious single woman and her gullible servant girls? Why open the kingdom of heaven to sinners seeking mammon? Why incarnate the Son of God among mortals beset with what's passing away?

Because the Gospel is for treasure hunters. Because God Himself loves a treasure hunt. So the Word became flesh and Jesus took the nature of a slave. The kingdom of heaven is like treasure buried in the hills, which a man found and covered up until he sold all he had to buy the whole territory. The kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of pearls. He found one of great worth and divested Himself of His great wealth in order to double His delight by redeeming it for His own

Heavenly Father creates, redeems, and calls every human life as precious. Neither all Philippi nor our ages, appearances, or abilities can improve it. And neither Lydia nor anyone else's size, skills, sins, or circumstances can impair it.

- Rev. Michael Salemink

We pray

Lord Jesus Christ, give us Your heart for the least of these and make us Your brothers and sisters. Amen.

April 1, 2020

Read Haggai 2:1-9

**The latter glory of this house shall be greater
than the former, says the LORD of hosts.**

Practicing Judaism without a building, *the* building—the temple—seemed impossible at first. The Jews in exile learned to take it day by day. His mercies were (and are) new every morning. They prayed toward Jerusalem. They remembered the LORD. For seventy years, they didn't just survive exile. The faith of God's people came through the trial stronger, purer, wiser.

When they came back from exile, in sight of Zion, how could they allow that temple mount to be bare for a minute? But there were (and are) distractions. Don't we need to protect ourselves first? What about city walls? And roofs over our heads? And a market? And a coffee house? The temple is such a big project; we will get to it later.

Unbelievably (and totally predictably), they put off rebuilding the temple. The LORD sent Haggai to get them back to work. How satisfying could the work have been? The first temple had been built under Solomon's wealth. The new building was economized and physically inferior.

So Haggai promised the opposite of what everyone's eyes saw clearly: "The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former." It was economically impossible; the refugees were devastated financially. It was logistically impossible; they lacked the manpower. Except nothing is impossible for God.

We are that latter temple. Haggai foresaw the gracious glory given to the brothers and sisters, now baptized into the body of Christ. Christ's resurrected body is the temple raised in three days, beaming with a glory that has defeated death. When we come out of exile, we will have work ahead of us to rebuild, but the Lord provides. He gives all we need, including refined faith.

- Rev. Daniel Guagenti

We pray

Give us joy in suffering, knowing that suffering produces endurance and character and hope, full of the love You pour into our hearts. Amen.

Read 1 Timothy 2:1-8

April 2, 2020

**This is good, and pleases God our Savior,
who wants all men to be saved.**

In 1947, the University of Chicago scientists who were part of the Manhattan Project to create the first atomic weapons came up with what's referred to as "The Doomsday Clock." It's an imaginary clock that is ticking down to midnight, indicating the imminent danger of a nuclear apocalypse. Each year the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists' Science and Security Board works with its sponsors to determine what they consider to be the level of danger and set the clock to indicate it. This year the minute hand was moved closer than ever. It's now set at 100 seconds to midnight. The goal of the warning is to help foster peace.

I'm not sure how much the clock actually helps to achieve that goal. However, you have to laud the desire for peace.

On Good Friday, the clock ticked down. We hear, "At the sixth hour darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour" (Mark 15:33). Then we hear, "With a loud cry, Jesus breathed His last" (Mark 15:37). However, Jesus had just opened the doors to heaven and eternal salvation. At that moment Jesus Himself achieved perfect peace between God and man. Jesus fulfilled the Law in our place and paid the debt for our sin.

Today, this Good News of our salvation is being spread here at home and around the world. It's shared in an increasingly hostile world. Therefore, the apostle encourages us to pray "for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness" (1 Tim. 2:2). We pray for peace so that the spread of the Gospel may not be hindered. We do this, not in fear of an apocalypse, but in the joyful assurance and anticipation of our Savior's return.

- Rev. David Tannahill

We pray

Heavenly Father, bless our leaders and all who are in authority. Watch over them, protect them, and guide them in the path of peace. Amen.