

Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path. Psalm 119:105

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Called To Be Ready For Christ's Return

Editorial

From

THE IMPERATIVE: KNOWING THE POWER IN A NAME AND BEYOND

by Fran Moredo

There is great power in a name. Names create an identity and it is how we are known by those around us. So what's in a name? A lot, especially when it comes to God and His character.

Learning to know God by His names opens up the door to a more profound relationship with him. It creates deeper understanding, trust and intimacy. The Old Testament is replete with evocative names used for God. These are names with special meanings and purposes attached.

The idea for this issue is to extol God especially during this pandemic by elucidating who God is through His Old Testament names. These compelling and potent names are listed. Challenge yourself and memorize them!

In addition, we pray you will be encouraged with the testimonies. Being quarantined these past months was tough, causing many people to succumb to despair. Some of our frontline brethren shared their experiences and how they have cried to the Lord exemplifying Psalm 91:1-2, *“He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord, ‘My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.’”* God's protection comes in the form of peace and strength in the middle of anguish. Other times, God's protection comes as an ending because He sees something more on the horizon that we cannot see.

Spend time relishing, reviewing these names and what they mean to you. Doing so makes your relationship with God deeper while making you also become a stronger beacon of hope to those around you. Most importantly, it widens your perspective, especially in these trying times just like how the “sons of Issachar, men who understood the times...” were described in 1Chronicles 12:32.

This understanding becomes more urgent and necessary when we study our 24th Anniversary passage, 1 Peter, 4:7-11. The first part proclaims: *“The end of all things is near;...”* **We are “to understand the truth about the times, endeavor to grasp the implications of the times and not to wait passively but actively.”**

As we wait for the Lord, will you be considered as someone *“who understood the times”* or are you oblivious of the times?

Fear Turned Into Trust

by Raffy Ragos

This Covid-19 crisis has brought so much FEAR to the world. Many are afraid of being infected, dying or losing their jobs and businesses. For a frontliner like me, the fear of being infected was overshadowed by the fear of bringing it home to my family. My expression of love when I go home might turn into a way of transmitting a highly contagious disease. It will be unbearable to see them becoming sick because of me. If only I could just stay home... I, however, cannot say no to my sworn profession to serve and my desire to help others. The Word of God encouraged me to fulfill my duty and not be disheartened.

Psalm 23:6 says, *“Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for You are with me; Your rod and Your staff they comfort me.”* This is a great encouragement during this time of uncertainty. For those who know God and His Word, this is powerful to inspire a frightened heart. I am continually protected by God's rod and staff. This makes me more dependent on God's power and not on my own ability to protect myself and my family. **Yes, being at home is safe, but nothing is safer than being in the presence of God. He is in control of every situation happening right now.**

No one knows when this crisis will end or if I will not be infected by the virus but He knows. My life is in His hands. I can make every effort to safeguard myself but ultimately He is the One who will protect me. For those who do not know God, may their fear drive them to know Him. May their fear not vanish until they realize that they have no one to depend on except God who is sovereign over all. We might not fully understand His wisdom but we can TRUST Him.

Darkness Into the Light

TESTIMONIES OF OUR BRETHREN

Be Still

by Julie Sagun

As a punong barangay for three terms, now a Kagawad and a barangay frontliner, I could say that the Lord indeed prepared me for the pandemic we are facing now. COVID-19 is a horrifying disease causing deaths, unfortunately, many among whom are health workers. Medical practitioners strived long and hard to get their licenses to fulfill their duty to save lives, but now, serve even at the cost of theirs. Frontliners also include police officers, food suppliers, local government units and support agencies. We need to perform our duties during the Enhanced Community Quarantine.

Being a senior citizen belonging to the high-risk group, I wish I could stay at home. I am afraid that this virus will affect me and my family. However, I lean on God's word and truth in Psalms 46:10, "*Be still and know that I am God.*" **The truth that He is my God yesterday, today and forever is sufficient enough for me to hold on.**

He is my help and strength in every agonizing trial I have encountered. Praise God for He was with me when I encountered court proceedings; when I thought I could no longer recover from the loss of a great sum of money for my house construction and throughout many other trials. He is my Omniscient God, the God who knows all my difficulties. Ps 9:10 says, "*Those who know Your Name will trust in You for You Lord, have never forsaken those who seek You.*" No matter what happens, I am secure. This encourages me to continue reporting for duty, even spending two hours walking to and from the barangay.

While barangay officials now receive more negative comments and less commendations for our sacrifices, I believe that we should not complain. I am very thankful to God and to my Church in instructing me to serve the Lord with gladness in my heart (Ps 32:11). I rejoice that I have the opportunity to help those who are in need.

Anxiety Into Joy

by Moses De Leon

The COVID-19 pandemic brought fear and anxiety in our lives. My wife and I are in the medical field and the possibility of acquiring the virus is high. This truth drove us to our knees. We cried to the Lord for mercy and protection. He reminded us of His promise that He will not leave nor forsake His children. The word of God has equipped us that no matter what challenges we encounter, He is always there to protect us and give us strength. The Lord uses this circumstance to strengthen the bond we have in Him and to know Him better.

The Lord used a lot of people to encourage us. Despite the discrimination we had experienced, since people thought that all nurses and medical workers are carriers of the virus, God did not allow us to be distracted but to remain focused on our mission.

Last April 27, 2020, we had our swab test. On May 2, 2020, we heard the best negative result in our lives because our test was negative. All glory and praise to God alone for this good news! Our hearts were filled with great joy. **He took care of all our anxieties and replaced them with joy and thanksgiving.** How sovereign our God is! We already know that we are victorious in this battle because of our Lord Christ Jesus. We thank God for our families, friends and church brethren who tirelessly interceded for us. We thank God for all the countless blessings He poured upon us.

Front liners, heroes of the present generation—just one of the descriptions for health workers. These are flattering but God has purposely placed us in these jobs knowing that His name will be glorified. During these trying times, God graciously reminds us to be humble before Him, acknowledging that we are mere sinners and are nothing apart from our Savior. We savor more our precious salvation and the redemption of our sins.

Filipinos are used to tropical storms – we know what to do and what to expect. Usually we take refuge in our homes and wait for the storm to pass. So it is in our lives as we go through the storms of trials and difficulties. We are currently in one right now as a human race, trying to cope and adjust to what COVID-19 has done to our world and individual lives.

Pandemic and personal problems have collided, bringing with them physical, emotional and spiritual trials. In the midst of all these, where do we turn to find the calmness that we need to think clearly and live sensibly? As believers, we turn to the Word of God and take refuge in the Truths that reveal and expose to us who God is and the character of God that helps us in our time of distress.

One of the ways that the Word does this is by teaching us about the Names of God that reveal His nature and character. One of those names is “The Lord Most High”, Jehovah Elyon or Jehovah Eloheenu.

For us to gain comfort from this name we will look at Psalm 57:2, “*I will cry to God Most High, To God who accomplishes all things for me.*” This Psalm was written by David during the time that he was being hunted down by King Saul. As David fled, he takes refuge in a cave and while in hiding he writes this Psalm because he realizes that more than the security of the cave, God is the Sovereign One who is the true refuge of his heart and life.

It is in that realization that he cries out to God Most High, a name that means elevated and sovereign in power over all things. From this verse we can learn two lessons that can help us during these uncertain times. We learn to realize God's power and recognize God's purpose.

WE MUST REALIZE

“I will cry to God Most High...” why did David cry out to God? He realized two things in the midst of his

circumstances. First, he could not do anything to change it, that is why he cried out. He neither had the strength nor the power. Second, he realized that there is someone who controls all the circumstances in his life and in the course of the world.

That is why he cries out to “*God Most High*”. Looking beyond his circumstances he realizes that God is the Sovereign and Powerful One and that he can ask God for help and strength.

Like David, have you asked God for strength during these trying and difficult times? Realize that God's Power is available to His children, all we need to do is cry out to him and depend on Him.

WE MUST RECOGNIZE GOD'S PURPOSE

“...*To God who accomplishes all things for me.*” Since God is in control then He is the One who will see us through. As David realizes God's power as the Sovereign God, he recognizes that God is the one who is at work. It is a very personal statement that recognizes the intimate relationship that God has with His children.

In other words, we're not crying out to a distant God who doesn't care about us. As a matter of fact, He is so concerned for us that in His sovereignty it is He who will accomplish all things for us. What will He accomplish? He will accomplish His will and purpose for our lives.

OUR PEACE IN THE PANDEMIC

Brethren, our peace during this time is not found in changing our circumstances – it is in realizing that God is the Most High who is in control of all things and in recognizing that He is using His power over all circumstances to accomplish His will for us and His creation. What we need to do is to TRUST in the Lord Most High.

THE LORD MOST HIGH

*Jehovah Elyon
or Jehovah Eloheenu*

by Ptr. Tabs De Jesus

We live in a world filled with difficulties and sufferings. Some use this as an argument for not believing in God. They say, "If God truly exists, why is there so much evil and suffering?" This does not negate the existence of a good and loving God. The real question is, knowing that sin, evil and suffering exist, do we turn away from God, live in despair and hopelessness?

In the midst of disasters, wars, famines, and diseases, like the pandemic of COVID-19 that we are experiencing, some might say like the people in Isaiah's time, "...*My way is hidden from the Lord; my cause is disregarded by my God...*" (Isaiah 40:27, NIV). Why did God allow this situation? Was He busy running the affairs of the world that He seemed to have forgotten His people?

God as Sovereign Creator sees and knows all things even before they came to be. He has not left the world to run its own course. In reproving the people, God, through Isaiah, brought them back to the very foundation of things: "*Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom*" (Isaiah 40:28, NIV). Earlier, He already said, "*To whom will you compare me? Or who is my equal?*" says the Holy One. "*Lift your eyes and look to the heavens: Who created all these?*" (Isaiah 40:25-26, NIV).

God wants the people to acknowledge His power in creation. Their life comes from Him. Even in the most difficult circumstances, He is rightly to be honored: "*The One forming light and creating darkness, causing well-being and creating calamity; I am the Lord who does all these*" (Isaiah 45:7, NASU).

Look at the world and see the evidence of His omnipotence: "*The heavens are telling of the glory of God and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands*" (Psalm 19:1). He manifests His sovereignty upholding those that come to Him as their only refuge.

A story is told of a little girl whose faith in God may teach us a lesson. The lamp had just been put out, and

the little girl was rather afraid of the dark. But presently she saw the bright moon out of her window, and she asked her mother, "Is the moon God's light?" "Yes, Ethel," the mother replied; "the moon and stars are all God's lights." "Will God blow out His light and go to sleep too?" she asked again. "No, my child," replied the mother, "God's lights are always burning." "Well, mamma," said Ethel, "while God's awake, I'm not afraid."

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Believers face severe trials but are encouraged by the unshakeable reality of God's sovereignty. They overcome fear because they know that God is their "*refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble...*" (Psalm 46:1).

How should this affect our lives especially now?

First, it invites us to a deeper appreciation of Him as our only true living God. We owe our lives to Him. We should bow in reverent worship and reflect upon His benevolence instead of complaining.

Second, it encourages us to seek His peace and comfort when trials and temptations come. A strong grasp of God's sovereignty places us in the most secure position. Nothing happens in our lives that will not redound to His glory and our highest good!

Third, it emboldens us in our gospel proclamation. God knows those He has chosen from eternity past. He is able to call, justify and glorify them.

Whatever happens, we can testify of what He has done – to speak of Christ and His death on the cross!

Lastly, it inspires hope and confidence for the future. The Lord's purposes will be fulfilled. He will put an end to all suffering and evil. He will vanquish sin and deal with wickedness.

Indeed, God stands victorious and governs the world according to His purpose and will. He will vindicate the honor that is due His name as Sovereign Lord of All Creation, and all people will render Him praise!



Beholding Our
Sovereign
CREATOR

by Ptr. Ence Ragos



GOD IS OUR HEALER AND PROVIDER

Jehovah Rapha & Jehovah Jireh

by Ptr. Rene Ely

In these desperate times of sickness and lack of provisions, we must remind ourselves that we are under the mercy of God and not of this pandemic. God remains as our Healer and Provider whether there is a covid-19 crisis or not. His care and provisions are steadfast to those who call upon Him: *“The eyes of all look to You and You give them their food at the proper time. You open Your hand and satisfy the desires of every living thing...those who seek the LORD lack no good thing”* (Psalm 145:15-16, 34:10b).

Our testimonies as Christians to the trustworthiness of God as our Healer and Provider, through the Gospel, make an impact on a world that does not know Him especially amid the reality of many getting infected, losing their lives, with more losing jobs and businesses.

THE BIBLE DESCRIBES GOD AS JEHOVAH-RAPHA WHICH MEANS “GOD WHO HEALS.”

To understand this name for God, we need to go back to the story where we first hear this name. In Exodus 15:26, God promised Moses and the Israelites that if they would obey Him, He would prevent the same kind of diseases and plagues that He brought upon the Egyptians. He would heal them and be their Jehovah Rapha, *“I am the Lord, who heals you”* (v.26).

When we understand that God is Jehovah-Rapha, we recognize that no healing happens apart from Him. God created our bodies and can heal sickness, though nowhere in Scripture does He promise to always heal our bodies. **Only God can provide true and lasting healing in every aspect of our being – physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual.**

Christ our Jehovah-Rapha in the flesh, made clear that the most important healing we need is spiritual. We were born with spiritual sickness caused by sin (Jeremiah 17:9) and the only cure is Jesus Christ and His finished work on the Cross (Isaiah 53:5, 1 Peter 2:24). For we all have sinned and fall under God's judgment (Romans 3:23; 6:23). God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross in our place to pay the price for our sins,

reconciling us to God and filling us with the Holy Spirit. This grants an eternal inheritance in heaven with Him for those who will come to Him in repentance and faith (2 Corinthians 5:18-21, 1 Corinthians 15:3).

As people desperately plead to God for the healing of their bodies, let us pray that the gospel will be proclaimed to them and seek the most important healing – the healing of their souls as they respond to the gospel. This is the kind of healing that Jesus our Jehovah Rapha desires more than anything.

THE BIBLE DESCRIBES GOD AS JEHOVAH-JIREH WHICH MEANS “THE LORD WILL PROVIDE.”

This name for God go back to the Old Testament. In Genesis 22:1-14, Jehovah-Jireh was a place in the land of Moriah where Abraham took his son to be offered as a burnt offering. Abraham named the place Jehovah Jireh after God provided a ram to sacrifice in place of Isaac.

The Lord is the same provider we have today. **Everything that we have comes from the gracious hand of the God who understands our needs and cares for us.**

Our Lord Jesus reiterated the truth that God cares and faithfully provides (Matthew 6:25-33). He showed the extent of God's provision when He said that God cares even for the smallest things in His creation by clothing and feeding them, and keeping His eye on them. If we are in Christ, we are God's precious children so we should not worry about His provision. Our great Jehovah Jireh will give and always at His right time. He will provide the new jobs, the reopening of businesses, and the daily provisions of our family. He will provide the needed strength to trust Him, the patience in waiting, and the joyful endurance to be steadfast.

LET US BE GRATEFUL TO GOD FOR HIS PRICELESS PROVISION OF SALVATION AND OUR SPIRITUAL HEALING THROUGH THE GOSPEL! JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S PERFECT ANSWER AND COMPLETE PROVISION FOR MAN'S DEEPEST QUESTIONS AND THE FULFILLMENT OF HIS DEEPEST NEEDS.

Jehovah Tsidkenu and Jehovah M'Kaddesh

by Ptr. Renato Jose Ydel

These names of God – Jehovah Tsidkenu (The Lord our Righteousness) and Jehovah M'Kaddesh (The Lord our Sanctifier) bear His character and reminds us believers of who He is, what He has done and what is expected of us.

WHO HE IS

God's name Jehovah-Tsidkenu appears in Jeremiah's prophecy of a "righteous Branch" and a "King" who is to appear; "and this is his name whereby he shall be called, Jehovah our Righteousness" (Jeremiah 23:5,6). Jehovah Himself is perfectly righteous. As an El-Tsadik — a righteous God, there is none to compare with Him, says Isaiah (Isaiah 45:21). Tsadik — righteous and right is He (Deuteronomy 32:4). His righteousness is an everlasting righteousness and His testimonies are righteous forever (Psalm 119:142,144). Righteousness and justice are the very foundation of His throne (Psalm 89:14; 97:2). Therefore, in all His dealings He is righteous.

His name Jehovah-M'Kaddesh is found in

Leviticus 20:8 "Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be holy: for I am Jehovah your God.... I am Jehovah which sanctify you" (Leviticus 20:7-8 ASV). Its primary meaning is to set apart or separate, as rendered by the words "sanctify" or "hallow" equivalent to the word "holy". As the Holy One, Jehovah is apart from and above all else in the universe. "Jehovah he is God; there is none else beside him" (Deuteronomy 4:35 ASV) and His holiness constitutes His fullness and perfection.

WHAT HE HAS DONE

By ourselves, we cannot produce righteousness and holiness. For our righteousness are filthy rags before God (Isaiah 64:6) and the Scripture declares that "there is none righteous no not one." (Romans 3:10). What we could not do for ourselves, Christ did for us. We were made righteous, holy and acceptable to God when He paid the penalty for our sins in His death for us upon the cross. "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might

become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:21 NIV). Peter said, "Because Christ also suffered for sins once, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God; being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the Spirit" (1 Peter 3:18, ASV). And Paul declared, "it is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God — that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption" (1 Corinthians 1:30 NIV). This is something we believers should always be thankful for everyday of our lives.

WHAT IS EXPECTED OF US

God indwelt us through His Holy Spirit producing righteousness and holiness in us. We must submit to His will so that we may enjoy His work in us. This crisis that has led to lockdowns is the perfect opportunity. **If we see Him who is upright in all His ways, we will not question His purposes but rather see it as His righteous decree and, through it, begin to see areas in our lives that need sanctification.** In a time when you struggle with problems and want to complain, He may be sanctifying you in the area of submission to

authorities, to rules and regulations set by the government. He is probably producing righteousness in you in the way you manage what was entrusted to you – money, business, your family or people under your authority.

He may be sanctifying you by slowing you down to see the areas which you are neglecting. It may be in the area of relationships with your loved ones that need fixing, or the most important relationship that has been struggling for a long time because of your preoccupations – your relationship with God.

Have you been growing in righteousness and holiness in this time? Or are you still the same person, not even growing at all in maturity because you are just too preoccupied with yourself? If God's righteousness and holiness are not exemplified in your life, repent and renew your mind for our God who is also rich in mercy and grace will sanctify you to be conformed to His character for His name's sake and for His glory. Remember He is Jehovah Tsidkenu and Jehovah M'Kaddesh.

The Lord also will be a stronghold for the oppressed, a stronghold in times of trouble; and those who know Your name will put their trust in You, for You, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You.” (Psalm 9:9-10)

These are the comforting words of King David who had gone through many challenges and who was placed in many difficult and life-threatening situations but who found refuge in the Name of God. We can see from his verse his testimony that: “...those who know Your name will put their trust in You, for You, O Lord, have not forsaken those who seek You.”

David perfectly understood that God's promise is as good as His name! God's name represents His character. **In today's world where we are perplexed by many unsettling and disturbing problems, calamities and tragedies, there is nowhere else to seek our peace but from the God who is not only the Source of Peace but who also promises to give His peace.** He is our Yahweh Shalom and our Yahweh Shammah!

THE MEANING OF HIS NAME

To better understand the promise of His name, let us consider how the Lord revealed it to the original recipients of that promise.

The title Jehovah Shalom, which also means “The Lord is Peace,” is first used in the book of Judges when the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon at Ophrah. The book of Judges describes a very dark age in Israel, given that in those days there was no king in Israel and everyone did what was right in their own eyes. It was a time of turning away from the Lord which resulted in Israel's invasion, devastation and desolation.

It was in this period of uncertainty and fear that the angel of the Lord appeared to Gideon commissioning him to lead the Israelites and deliver them from their tormentors. It was this time that Gideon erected an altar to proclaim that the Lord is Peace! (Judges 6:24)

The title Jehovah Shammah, which also means “The Lord is there,” is found in the Book of Ezekiel. For the Israelites, it seemed that Israel's 70 years of exile meant that God had already abandoned His people. The departure of the glory of God in the early chapters of this book, the destruction of the temple and their suffering at the hands of Babylonians may have convinced them of this idea. But the vision of Ezekiel was a great assurance for the Israelites that God would never forsake His people. The future city which was named as Yahweh Shammah (Ezekiel 48:35) provided comfort to the Israelites in the time of their exile.

Notice in these two accounts, the Lord did not immediately change their situation to confirm His

*Finding Peace in God
and in His Presence*

Resting in His Name: Yahweh Shalom and Yahweh Shammah

by Ptr. Jonathan Satuito

promise. Gideon still had to battle with the Midianites and Israel still needed to wait for the fulfillment of Ezekiel's vision. However, knowing who God was, they acknowledged that the promise is as good as done. Again, His promise was as good as His name!

THE ASSURANCE & COMFORT IN HIS NAME

For believers today, the uncertainties that we face every day, the consequences of this pandemic, the dangers from within and without, the never ending problems that come our way and even the overwhelming anxieties can never rob us of His promises if only we know how to appropriate them. How? The secret is prayer and obedience to His Word! We can see this from Paul's instruction to the believers in Philippi in Philippians 4:5-9. Paul was comforting the suffering Christians in saying that prayer could calm them of their anxieties (v. 6) because the Lord is near (v. 5)! At the same time, if they would continue in their obedience to God's Word, the God of Peace would be with them (v. 9)!

May these truths encourage us to continually rest in His name and find our peace in God and in His presence! Shalom (Romans 15:33)!

In this COVID19 crisis, people search for answers to their fears and problems. Many are confused, discouraged, insecure, and even hopeless because of the uncertainties this crisis has brought to our country and to the world. It is during times like this that God's revelation of Himself as Shepherd proves to be a hope-giving blessing to His people. God cares, my dear friends. You may not fully comprehend it, but His compassion and kindness come to those who trust Him. He is the good and faithful Shepherd.

This truth is excellently articulated in Psalm 23, a psalm by David which Spurgeon described as the "nightingale of the whole Psalms." It is a picture of God's loving care toward His people.

How does God as Shepherd care for us, His flock?

First, our Shepherd provides. *"He makes us lie down in green pastures. He leads us beside still waters"* (v. 2). Food is a basic need. David used the shepherd's provision of food to illustrate the care and love of our Great Shepherd. God knows what is best for us. He leads us to sufficient and safe pasture.

Second, our Shepherd purifies. *"He restores my soul. He guides me in the paths of righteousness for His sake"* (v.3). "Restore" means to return or to repair. Spiritually, it speaks of repentance. In John 10:11, Jesus declared that He is the good Shepherd who lays down His life for His flock. He gave up His life to rescue us. Furthermore, the Lord continues to sanctify us everyday. God makes use of crisis to strengthen our faith and purify our motives. He ordains all things for our good and for His glory.

Third, our Shepherd protects His flock. David confidently says, *"Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for God is with me. His rod and His staff ever comforts me"* (v. 4). The task of a keeper of flock is not only to provide for them, but also to protect them from harm. Our Shepherd protects us. How? He protects us by His presence and by His gracious discipline. His presence is His most blessed gift to us and is our strongest defense against any enemy. Paul exclaimed, *"if God is for us, who can be against us?"* (Rom. 8:31). Moreover, His loving protection is manifested through His gracious discipline. God uses many avenues for us to learn about Him and His ways. He may use blessings to test our faithfulness or He may send suffering and pain to bring us back to Him.

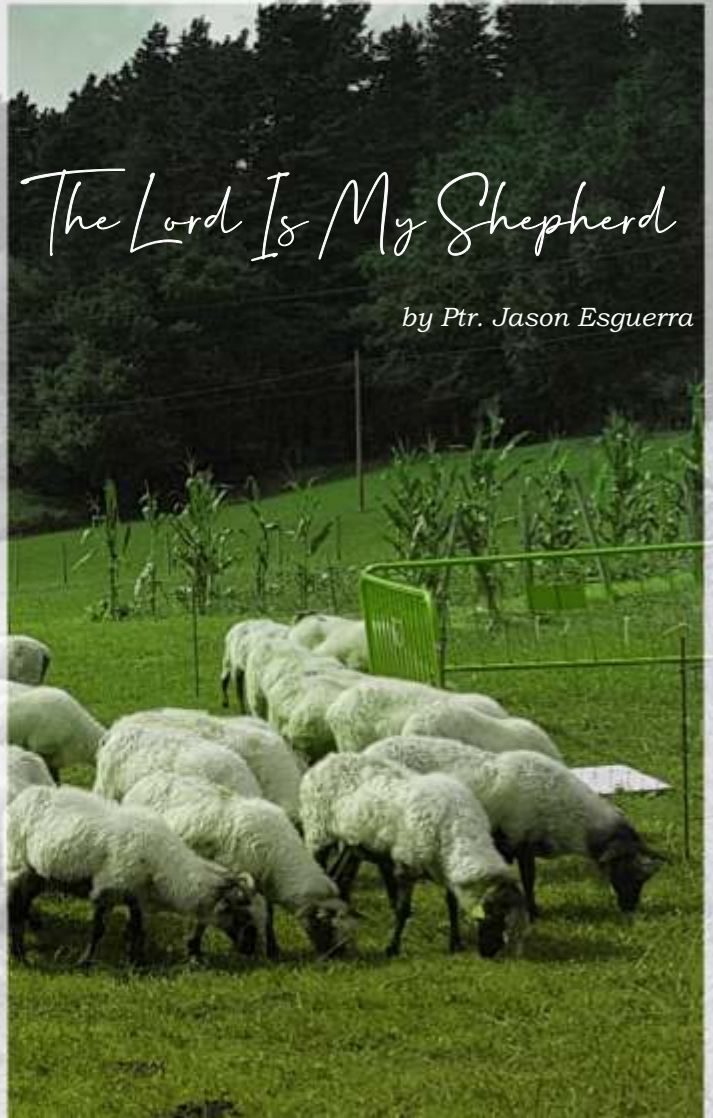
Fourth, the Lord our Shepherd grants peace. God prepares a table for His children even in the presence of their enemies (v. 5). This idea comes from the tedious and yet tender care in looking for a good grazing area for his flock. He will see to it that the grass his sheep will eat is healthy, fresh, and

safe. He makes sure that holes and pits that might endanger the flock are filled up or avoided. He removes poisonous plants from the flock's path. He carefully plans for escape routes in case of an ambush by wild animals. He ensures that His flock is at peace and out of danger. God has granted us *"peace through our Lord Jesus Christ"* (Rom. 5:1). He continues to give peace by leading us to the "banquet" of His Word through His Spirit. His Word guides and equips us against the deception and harm plotted by our enemies.

Finally, our Shepherd promises that goodness and lovingkindness will follow His flock and that they will dwell in His house forever (v.6). These words give encouragement and hope to the flock of God. "Goodness and lovingkindness (mercy)" are twin doctrines of faith. It is only because of the grace and mercy of God that we have our identity and purpose in Christ.

In this difficult time, God's gracious mercy endures in Christ as the Shepherd of our souls. He continues to provide, purify, protect and give us peace.

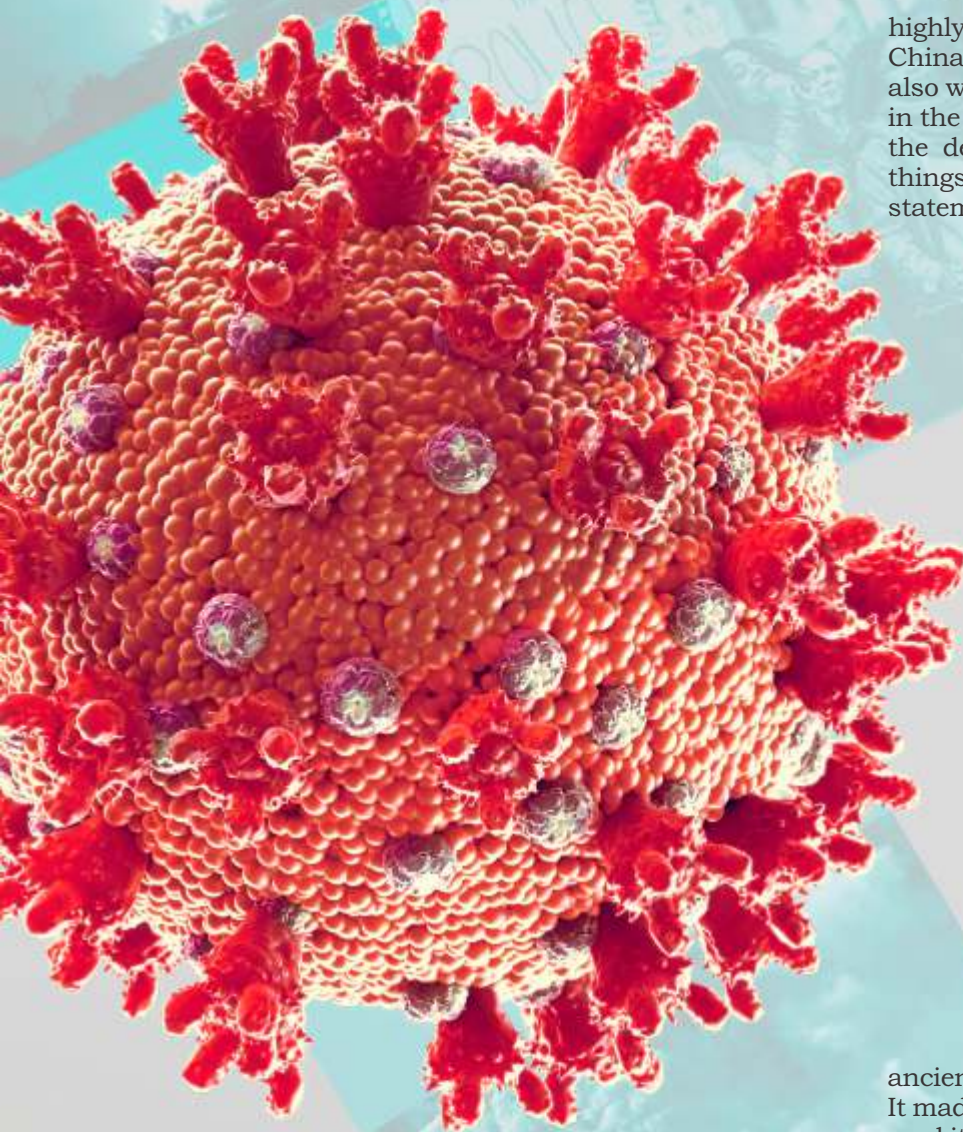
I pray that the rich truths in Psalm 23 will be our motivation and encouragement to persevere in the faith. Our Lord is our great and gracious Shepherd, therefore we shall not want.



The end of all things is at hand; therefore be self-controlled and sober-minded for the sake of your prayers. Above all, keep loving one another earnestly, since love covers a multitude of sins. Show hospitality to one another without grumbling. 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.

I Peter 4:7-11 ESV

Called To Be Ready For Christ's Return



highly civilized nation like the U.S., the worsening China issue not only in the West Philippine Sea but also within our society, the continuing threat of war in the Middle East involving Israel and her enemies, the degeneration of moral values, among several things – how many have actually given this statement more serious thought?

But the more important issue to consider is this: how ready are you for *“the end”*? (this will be defined in our anniversary sermon series) How prepared are we even as a church? What does God expect from us as we await Christ's return?

This statement also pushes us to reconsider our priorities. When we take seriously the reality of this statement, many things we have deemed important or necessary suddenly are no longer so. It makes us realize what truly are important in our lives, especially as believers.

Tragically, many believers today either have not given this statement the serious consideration it deserves or have completely failed to read or understand the signs of the times. Many live as though Christ's return is not imminent at all. There are even those who have completely abandoned this Scriptural truth because it has taken so long to happen. This brings before us in greater urgency the profound need to cling to God's Word to see things from His eyes and to know how we are to live and prepare.

I cannot forget how one of the tribes of ancient Israel was distinctively described in the OT. It made such a strong impression on me when I first read it. I am referring to the tribe of Issachar. As the numbers of men equipped for war and loyal to David from every tribe were chronicled, that tribe was described in 1Chron 12:32: *“Of the sons of Issachar, men who understood the times....”* These *“men”* were those *“who understood the times”* – those who saw their situations from the bigger picture perspective. And because of this, they were *“men”* who were *“with knowledge of what Israel should do.”*

This is my burden for us in GLCC for our 24th anniversary, most especially in the context of the

As we enter our anniversary month, we will be studying Chapter 4 in 1 Peter, beginning with *“The end of all things is near”* (4:7a). What a sobering statement! If there was any statement that would stop you in your tracks – even for a moment, this would be it.

Upon hearing or reading such a statement, what thoughts go through your mind? In view of all the things happening today – Covid-19, the global economy collapsing, the widespread civil turmoil in a supposed

global situation today – **that we be a church that understands the times particularly from the perspective of Scripture so that we would know what we as believers should do as we prepare ourselves for our Lord's return.** This is why I felt compelled to study with you 1 Peter 4:7-11 for our 24th Anniversary passage. The whole of 1 Peter speaks of a confident hope of a sure future with our Lord that awaits us. The main context was the persecution of believers and how they were to live in the midst of it – a testimony that would glorify God through the life of Christ in the believers. And as they did so, there was an anticipation of the glorious appearing of Christ that would bring with it blessing and glory for the redeemed: “*4And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.... 10After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you*” (1Pet 5:4, 10). It is toward the anticipation of this glorious appearing of Christ that I would like to point us as a church to continue to prepare ourselves by living in the way that the Lord desires, regardless of whether we are experiencing persecution or going through a crisis that has impacted the world way beyond being a health threat.

How are we to prepare ourselves for the imminent reappearing of the Lord Jesus? How are we to live as His redeemed people so that when He finally returns He would be pleased with what He sees from us?

Our passage in 1 Peter 4:7-11 would give us a glimpse of the answers. In the first part of v. 7 we will seek to understand the truth about the times: “*The end of all things is near.*” In the rest of the passage (from vv. 7b-11), we will endeavor to grasp the implications of the times in terms of how we are to respond. You see, as we believers wait for the Lord Jesus' return, we are not to wait passively – the way we would just sit and wait at the airport for the plane we will be flying in, wherever it is we are going. Rather, we are to wait actively – being vigilant to be able to continue in the ministry of prayer and protecting our precious communion times with the Lord, guarding our relationships in love, especially our relationships with fellow saints, extending the grace of hospitality to people who we know are fellow believers in need, and using whatever God-given gifts we have received to serve one another for God's glory.

All this we will study in the pulpit, and I pray for the Lord to use this theme to continue to ready us for His return, finding us faithful when that day comes.

A very blessed 24th anniversary to us all in Guiding Light Christian Church!

by Ptr. Robbie Casas

FROM THE DOLDRUMS TO MEANINGFUL PRAYER

by Gary Estacio

At the onset of COVID-19, I've been hearing news that people were having difficulty coping. When it hit us, the scare of infection and lockdown scenario loomed. I tried to stay positive, thinking this is just like any other disaster before. I have to be physically present at work. The first days were challenging because of the lack of manpower. The situation stabilized later. As the government allowed only 50% of employees to work, my schedule changed from daily to every-other-day.

As the days passed, boredom and uncertainty set in. I tried activities I didn't usually do: reading, watching movies, fixing toys, cleaning the house, doing karaoke and recording songs. At first, they seemed fulfilling. But they became monotonous and boring. Life became an uneventful cycle. The news did not help; it only exacerbated the fear and the feeling of being in the doldrums.

One morning, I prayed to break my heart of meaninglessness. I remembered Philippians 4:11-13, “*Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.*”

The Lord quieted my heart. **I realized the key in fighting this contemptible feeling is to be more prayerful.** This is an extraordinary time requiring extraordinary action. I became more deliberate and intense in my prayer. I saw this as an opportunity for the gospel. I made gospel presentations and posted them on Facebook. He can use this situation to turn people to Him. I became convinced that He can save more people today than when things were normal. People are fearful and need Jesus more than ever. Sharing the gospel via social media made my lockdown experience purposeful. Being deliberate in prayer saved me from indifference; it made me content and resilient. God gave me the strength. All Glory to God.

The Light

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#46 Bokawkan Rd.
Purok 8, P. Burgos Barangay
Baguio City 2600
(074) 620 3993
Mobile: 0920 9509096 or 0933 8627653
glcmbaguio@gmail.com
www.guidinglightbaguio.org