

The Wonder of Christ

- ☆ amazing love (vv.1-6)
- ☆ amazing power (vv.6-10)

In the name of Jesus, whose Name is Wonderful, may God fill you with His Wonder today:

Some folks can't give God any kind of credit. To them, if God exists at all, why does he allow suffering? Some who believe in God as the Creator, still criticize why God even created a world where suffering could exist. Why not just make heaven in the first place? And yet, God created paradise in Eden and put Adam and Eve there. How long before they rebelled and trashed that perfect paradise?

My friends, I tremble here. Who am I to question God? Wasn't your life complicated enough before COVID? Medical, insurance, mechanical, church-school-housing questions before? Try tax laws past age 65! Dear family of God, my mind and heart, my whole life needs God to be God, my God.

Human hypocrisy is baffling. Our music is all about trouble and heartache, no matter what style is pounding your ears. Our movies are 99% trouble...until the very end – if there's a happy ending at all. Dark stories, teen wolves, witches, the underworld. Humanity produces drama, distress – not heaven!

Into this world stepped God's own Son to be Jesus, the Deliverer. God planned from all eternity to take on Himself the worst of human suffering. How can anyone criticize that? Jesus came healing and restoring – as prophesied all the centuries before. The blind would see, the deaf would hear, the mute would speak, the lame would *“leap like a deer.”* (Isaiah 35:4-7 EHV¹) Behold! **The Wonder of Christ...**

☆ amazing love (vv.1-6)

One of our favorite preachers points out ² our human problem. We can only see less than a fraction of 1% of what's happening now. 99.9% of what's coming is completely hidden, and that itty bitty fraction is blurred at best. Who could have known how the life of that little baby would unfold? His parents were no doubt excited when he was born, but as the time came for the toddler to start toddling, he had no strength in his legs and ankles. Everything buckled. Imagine Mom on one side, Dad on the other, holding his little hands, but his legs only drag along. No muscles, no memory, no coordination. They loved him, cared for him, as long as they lived. But eventually, they passed away. Nothing was left for their son but a few friends to carry him every day up to the temple, which King Herod began building about the time he was born. Everyone knew him as the beggar at the gate called *“Beautiful.”*

About three years before our story, the crippled beggar, 36 or 37, heard the temple courts ringing with the voice of a rabbi from Nazareth. Whenever He spoke, people came running. They hung on His every word. One gate lead out of the Kidron Valley between the columns of Solomon's Portico, across the Court of the Gentiles, to the Beautiful Gate into the temple itself. On the steps he could listen to Jesus of Nazareth telling everyone how God's **amazing love** created all things. When suffering came into this world because of man's sin, **amazing love** sent Jesus to say, *“The Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”* (Luke 19:10) How his heart must have thrilled to think, “That's me! I'm lost. Jesus came for me!” But then the mobs, the noise, the news of crucifixion. Deep, dark sadness. What else to do but go on begging? Some said the Rabbi had risen from the dead, claimed to have seen Him. But who could believe that even if they wanted to? Roman soldiers always made sure the crucified died and stayed dead.

¹ EHV ~ Evangelical Heritage Version (<http://wartburgproject.org>) © 2019. NPH: 800-662-6022, Amazon-Kindle, LOGOS.

² Pastor Don Patterson - <https://www.areasonforhope.net> .

Maybe you and I could sit with him for a while. “Before God we are beggars, all.” (Martin Luther) You try so hard to be kind and loving, but come up short with those you love. You want to provide and protect, but sickness and heartache still come to your door and cripple your hopes and dreams. You try not to look back in guilt – *If only I had not....If only I could have....* What’s the use. You try to forgive and forget and move on, but the memories keep crippling. Some say you’re too hard on yourself; others find more hard hearted criticism for you. And now a shadow falls over you. What’s this now?

You can’t even look up. Just stretch out your hand. Maybe someone will give you something. Maybe a “stimulus payment,” but the last one was spent so fast. Maybe a refund; don’t spend it all in one place! Maybe someone will drop a lottery ticket in your lap. What help is money if you still can’t walk?

You finally look up to see the source of the shadow. Two men are smiling down at you with **amazing love** in their eyes, but no money in hand. You recognize them as two followers of Jesus who was crucified. Why such joy in their eyes? Why such hope? The older one smiles at the younger, then looks back at you with **amazing love** in his words: **“Silver and gold I do not have, but what I have I will give you. In the name of Jesus Christ the Nazarene, get up and walk!”**

☆ **amazing power** (vv.6-10)

Something is happening in your legs and ankles. Something you’ve never felt before as if the sun is shining in your knees and thighs. And then the strong right hand of fisherman Peter reaches down for your right hand. **Amazing power** is surging through your muscles as he lifts you up. This is not human power. No power or strength of man could give the **amazing power** that sets you up on your feet for the first time in your forty years of living. You never had the view from this high up. But you’re not tottering, off balance, tumbling down as anyone would expect. This **amazing power** makes your feet so happy, you can’t stand still. Suddenly you’re **“walking and jumping and praising God.”** You don’t know it, but someday the children will sing songs about you **“walking and leaping and praising God. Walking and leaping and praising God. In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk!”** No one can keep you down now. You’re up inside the temple courts praising **The Wonder of Christ**.

Everyone sees you **“walking and praising God.”** They recognize you **“as the one who used to sit begging for money at the Beautiful Gate of the temple.”** They’re **filled with wonder and amazement** at what’s happened to you. Who can help praising God now? Will you ever stop?

It was all predicted, seven centuries before by Isaiah the prophet. Speaking by the **amazing power** of the Holy Spirit in prophecy, Isaiah called us all to rise up from the steps of our depression, out of the dark swamps of guilt: **“...fearful heart: Be strong. Do not be afraid. Look! Your God will come with vengeance. With God’s own retribution, he will come and save you. ⁵...the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will be unplugged. ⁶The crippled will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the mute will sing for joy. Waters will flow in the wilderness, and streams in the wasteland. ⁷The burning sand will become a pool, and in the thirsty ground there will be springs of water.”** (35:4-7a)

Maybe you feel wretched like John Newton, slave trader terrified at God’s **vengeance** in a storm, nearly lost at sea. **Amazing Grace** finds you *lost*, now *found*; *blind*, but now you *see*! Maybe your childhood was dreadful like James Montgomery whose missionary parents died, leaving him orphaned at school. But **The Wonder of Christ** keeps calling you to rise up and walk to God’s temple, in love to worship Him who touches your lips, unlooses your tongue with praise that flows from God’s peace in the **amazing love** of Christ in your soul. Maybe you’re as blind as Fanny Crosby, whose eyes of faith could see God’s glory in the *purser, and higher, and greater...wonder...when Jesus we see*. God’s hand is reaching out through this **amazing** Word today. *Reach me out Thy gracious hand, While I of Thy strength receive. Hoping against hope, I stand. Dying, and behold I live!* (TLH 345:3) As the world stumbles in darkness and hearts tremble, **The Wonder of Christ** is more wonderful than ever. May **The Wonder of Christ** make our hearts **“sing for joy”** – in wilderness streams of **amazing love and power**. Amen.