



# Resurrection

LUTHERAN CHURCH



June 2021

## A LIFE OUTDOORS

I was looking for some inspiration for this newsletter article on Wednesday, when I looked down and found it! I was wearing a t-shirt I bought at REI with the phrase, “A Life Outdoors is A Life Well-Lived,” and as we are warming up and seeing the sun more and more in the Seattle area I couldn’t agree more. After this past year with lockdowns and being inside so much over the winter, to be able to get out and enjoy the beauty of God’s Creation is such a joy.



We have great Scripture passages that remind us of the wonder of the Father’s Creation that can enhance our love of nature. Nehemiah 9:6 reminds us how the Lord has made and cares for creation to this day. As we read, “You are the Lord, you alone. You have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them; and you preserve all of them; and the host of heaven worships you.” Then thinking about Job 12:7-10, we can be reminded that God’s creatures give testimony to his provision and how he keeps us all in his hands. As we gladly recount, “But ask the beasts, and they will teach you; the birds of the heavens, and they will tell you; or the bushes of the earth, and they will teach you; and the fish of the sea will declare to you. Who among all these does not know that the hand of the Lord has done this? In his hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind.”

As we think about how Creation and time outside can bolster our spirits, we are also reminded with recent studies how many health benefits we get from time outdoors. An article from UW Medicine entitled “How Going Outside Can Benefit Your Health” by Julian Smith highlights some of these benefits:

Research shows we’re spending more and more time cooped up indoors. According to the Environmental Protection Agency, Americans spend an average of 87% of their time inside buildings. The risks aren’t limited to the effects of a sedentary lifestyle: People indoors are exposed to levels of pollutants, like cleaning products and paint, that are 2 to 5 times higher than outdoors.

Time spent in nature, on the other hand, offers a long catalog of positive effects that can be surprising. According to one study, outdoor time can reduce the risk of Type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease and preterm birth.

“We suspect that one of the routes for the physical benefits is through decreased stress and anxiety,” Lawler says. In other words, feeling better on the inside benefits the entire body. <https://rightasrain.uwmedicine.org/life/leisure/outdoor-health-benefits>

So with having physical, mental, and spiritual benefits make sure you take some time this summer to enjoy the beautiful PNW. It might just be a walk through Des Moines, or down at the Marina or through a garden bed at your retirement home. It could be an adventure out on the Olympic Peninsula. Or it might be across the nation or around the globe. But no matter where it is, give glory to the painter and sculptor of all things! Give thanks because a life outdoors is a life well-lived, especially when you do it with the Creator!

Hope to see you outside sometime this Summer,  
Pastor Matt

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## NOW I LAY ME DOWN TO SLEEP By Brad Gray

<https://www.1517.org/articles/now-i-lay-me-down-to-sleep>



Psalm 4 is one of the more fascinating compositions in the psalter. Some versions of the Bible include the title, “A Night Prayer” or “An Evening Vigil” to introduce this psalm of David. But even if your Bible doesn’t have that designation, it’s easy to see that sleep is a prevailing theme of the psalm. Throughout the eight verses of this Davidic antiphon, there are allusions to sleep that make it seem as though the king is sharing a sort of “nighttime liturgy.” Indeed, verse 8 is reminiscent of a familiar bedtime prayer you may have recited as a child:

*Now I lay me down to sleep,  
I pray the Lord my Soul to keep;  
If I should die before I ’wake,  
I pray the Lord my Soul to take.*

As one who was undoubtedly familiar with far too many sleepless nights, David communicates his learned method for getting a good night’s rest. It’s not too difficult to imagine that David’s life of running as a fugitive from the very kingdom he was anointed to rule established a number of pitiful sleeping habits. He might have even spent the rest of his life endeavoring to conquer those feelings of anxiety and insomnia. Maybe you can relate.

[According to a 2001 study](#), approximately 20% of U.S. adults admitted that they were sleep-deprived. Two decades later and that number has [doubled comfortably](#) (1). Not getting enough sleep is so commonplace that when we do get a healthy amount we are often surprised. If you consider what has occurred within the last twenty years, it’s little wonder there has been such a dramatic spike in sleep-deprivation. Our world has witnessed an abundance of engineering advancements since the beginning of the 21st-century, with the “unholy trinity” of technology, social media, and 24-hour headline news emerging as prevailing sources of addiction and distraction. Life in 2021 has seemingly gotten hairier, even as it makes us want to pull our hair out.

What is it, though, that makes bedtime so fraught with anxiety? Perhaps it is because as we crawl in bed at night we are experiencing the first inkling of silence in the last twenty-four hours. As you lay there after a day’s worth of calling friends, emailing coworkers, conversing with family, and disciplining your kids, there is almost a loud quiet to the witching hours. Such is when all the worries, concerns, fears, and misgivings we were too distracted to think about earlier in the day come descending on our thoughts. The more we fight wakefulness, the heavier the stresses and strains of life become. The pressures of existence seem to intensify, resulting in an overflowing stress that is hard to silence. Such is why David aims to situate his heart (and head) in the adamant truths of God prior to bedtime.

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Israel’s king was not immune to those claustrophobic fears and feelings coming for him just before bedtime ([Ps 4:1](#)). When he expresses that God “[enlarged](#) him in his distress,” he suggests that God’s very presence relieves his oppression, bringing his mind to a spacious place. In contrast to the worries that were closing in on him, as though he were in a narrow gorge, God’s listening ear ushers him into a wide-open pasture. And this isn’t the first time David has requested God’s relieving presence. The essence of David’s cry is, “You’ve led me out before, do it again!” The past mercies of God serve as ample ground for the king’s present assurance of mercy. There were many around him who were enticing him to doubt such truths, however. These “sons of men” imposed a series of dubious questions which made David pause (“Selah”) to consider them ([Ps 4:2](#)). The disputation of verse 6 is one that rings true even our own day. “Who will show us something good?” the skeptics opine. “Who can show us anything good?” “Where’s the good news?” Perhaps you have asked similar questions recently. Maybe it is inquiries like these that have caused the majority of your sleepless nights. Looking at the state of the world, we, too, might be given to wonder where the “good” is.

The headlines do a good job at making it close to impossible to see anything good. Our moment is brimming with injustice, fear, violence, scandal, pandemic, and death. To be sure, I'm not saying you need to turn off the news. I'm just saying the amount of time you spend watching the news shouldn't even come close to the amount of time you spend in the Word. When the bulk of what we are being told about this world and this life comes from news anchors and analysts, we will have a very jaded outlook on the future. However, if we make God's own words about this world, and what his plans are for it our first resort, our viewpoint will be much different.

In response to this scarcity of anything good, many turn to the useless comforts of life "under the sun" to find some semblance of solace and peace. In David's context, those who were vying for some good news had turned to worthless lies for the answers ([Ps 4:2](#)). The earth's empty and false consolations are nothing more than temporary distractions. They are like broken cisterns which cannot hold any water, unable to provide the rest we so desperately seek. The fact of the matter is, we will always end up on a quest for goodness if we are looking for it among the slums of worthlessness and emptiness.

In direct response to the longing for something good, however, David pleads for the visible light of God's countenance to shine down. "Let the light of your face shine on us, Lord" ([Ps 4:6](#)). This light is none other than a prefiguration of Christ himself. He is the Word incarnate, God's glory embodied, the face of the Father in the form of flesh ([John 1:1, 14; 2 Cor 4:6](#)). The Face of God "shining down" is an infinitely better sign of God's goodness than any amount of earthly abundance we could ever amass. "The Face," says Rev. Alexander Maclaren, "brings light in darkness, gladness in want, enlargement in straights, safety in peril, and any and every good that any and every man needs" (2). Such is David's anthem:

"Many are asking, 'Who can show us anything good?' Let the light of your face shine on us, Lord. You have put more joy in my heart than they have when their grain and new wine abound. I will both lie down and sleep in peace, for you alone, Lord, make me live in safety" ([Ps 4:6-8](#)).

Despite all the horrors of life that swirl around us, we can sleep the sleep of the righteous because we have been made righteous.

The promise of God's countenance implanted a deep-seated joy in his heart that was impervious to the interminable tremblings and troubles of the world around him. "Faith in God," comments Martin Luther, "or the light of the countenance of God, gladdens the heart, and diffuses throughout the inward man a solid and true joy, while it produces a peace on account of sins forgiven, and gives the man a sure confidence in God even in the midst of sufferings" (3). Such constitutes the better Word in which you and I find our comfort. We not only have the promise of God's light, we have the Person of it. We have the good news that this Face has not only "shined down on us," but has visited us. And more than that, has died for us. The Face of God was beaten and bruised for the remission of sins. This psalm evokes the scene of the Golgotha's cross, where similar "sons of men" shamefully mocked God's glory and cried out for something good, even as Goodness in the flesh bled out for them. Jesus, therefore, is God's goodness countenanced to us, condescended for us. He comes to take our death, destroy our sin, and win our righteousness.

Despite all the horrors of life that swirl around us, we can sleep the sleep of the righteous because we have *made* righteous. Without any involvement on our part, the God of our righteousness declares us righteous ([Ps 4:1-3; 2 Cor 5:21](#)). Accordingly, the same Lord who authors our righteousness sustains our lives and our worlds, even while we sleep. To the One who redeemed us without any collaborative involvement, we are free to resign control over our lives. With David, we can "both lie down and sleep in peace" precisely because God doesn't ultimately need us to keep the world in motion. "In thus lying down," writes Philip Bennett Power, "he voluntarily gave up guardianship of himself; he resigned himself into the hands of another; he did so completely, for in the absence of all care he slept; there was here a perfect trust" (4).

Thus, in sleep, God disrupts our distraction and our distress to remind us that we can rest safely and soundly in the assurance that nothing is beyond his sovereign reach ([Ps 127:1-2](#)). Nothing is outside of his purview. He has no blindspots. He notices the ever hungry sparrow, our balding heads, and all our restless nights. He's aware of it all ([Matt 10:26-31](#)). When we finally close our eyes and fall asleep, he doesn't. His Spirit comes close to whisper, "Don't worry, I'll keep an eye on the universe." His evangel remains, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" ([Matt 11:28](#)). Sinner, you are free. You can sleep.

### ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTOR

Brad Gray is the senior pastor of Stonington Baptist Church in Paxinos, Pennsylvania ([www.stoningtonbaptist.org](http://www.stoningtonbaptist.org)), where he lives and serves with his wife Natalie, daughter Lydia, and son Braxton. He is currently pursuing an M.Div. from Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He blogs regularly at [graceupongrace.net](http://graceupongrace.net) and hosts a podcast, "Ministry Minded."



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**VOTERS MEETING**

## **SPRING VOTERS' MEETING NEXT SUNDAY AT 11:45 AM IN PERSON AND ON YOUTUBE**

A reminder that the Spring Voters' Meeting will be next Sunday at 11:45 am after the 10am service. We will be voting on Council Members for 2021-2022 and learning more about CRU Say Yes Ministry Ideas here at RLC. The link for the meeting on YouTube will be sent out earlier that week. Please let us know if you have any questions.

### **SIGN UP FOR A YOUTUBE ACCOUNT!**

For those who will be attending the meeting via YouTube please sign up for a YouTube account so you will be able to type out comments during the meeting. An email was sent out and will be sent out again with instructions on how to do this.

### **LADIES OF RLC-PLEASE FILL OUT THE EMAIL SURVEY**

Our sister Joan Thomas is working toward starting the Women's Bible Study up again on Tuesday Mornings in early July. Please fill out the survey that was emailed out to help us gauge interest and comfort for it at this time.

### **JUNE 20TH DOUBLEHEADER SUNDAY 8:30 & 10:30 AM NOTE THE NEW TIME FOR EARLY SERVICE!**

Mark your calendars for June's Doubleheader Sunday, which will be on June 20th. **Also make a note of the new time of 8:30 am we are trying out for early service for the Summer!**

