

# CONTENTS

Volume Twenty-Five, Number Four



## For the Life of the World

### PUBLISHER

Dr. Lawrence R. Rast Jr.  
President

### PUBLISHER ASSISTANT

Carrie M. O'Donnell

### PRODUCTION MANAGER

Colleen M. Bartzsch

### EDITOR

Rebecca S. Ahlersmeyer

### COPY EDITOR

Trudy E. Behning

### ART DIRECTOR

Steve J. Blakey

*For the Life of the World* is published by Concordia Theological Seminary Press, 6600 N. Clinton St., Fort Wayne, Indiana 46825. No portion of this publication may be reproduced without the consent of the Editor of *For the Life of the World* by email at [SeminaryRelations@ctsfw.edu](mailto:SeminaryRelations@ctsfw.edu) or (260) 452-2150. Copyright 2021. Printed in the United States. Postage paid at Berne, Indiana.

*For the Life of the World* is mailed to all pastors and congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod in the United States and Canada and to anyone interested in the work of Concordia Theological Seminary, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

Unless otherwise noted, all Scripture verses are from the English Standard Version (ESV).

## FEATURES

### 4 Luther and Walther: Receivers of Grace By Todd A. Peperkorn

In looking at the lives of these two men, we can see the story of God's persevering love and mercy shine forth time and time again. We can also see examples about how both of them went through dark times, and how both of them needed the help and encouragement of others to bring them up out of the pit of despair.

### 7 I'm Lifting My Eyes, Oh LORD.... But for "How Long?"

By Rick Marrs

Generations of believers before the 1918 flu, even in Old Testament times, were constantly aware that epidemics or contaminations could take the life of a healthy person within days, even hours. Our ancestors knew the path of their lives was fragile. We moderns have falsely embraced the belief that the medical field will overcome our diseases, despite the fact that we know even the best medicine only delays the journey toward death. Only Jesus has overcome our death, through His cross and resurrection on a hill called Zion.

### 10 Leaning into the Lament in Our Hymnody By Matthew A. Machemer

In 1518 Martin Luther wrote, "A theology of glory calls evil good and good evil. A theology of the cross calls the thing what it actually is." In the last two years, we have been plagued by COVID, mandates, virtue signaling, tribalism, faithlessness, and uncertainty. The effect on our churches has been significant. The effect on ourselves is no less significant. While we are tempted to search for a silver lining in all of this, we know the truth. Humanity is sinful, as is God's once perfect creation.

### Also in this Issue:

What Does This Mean? .....	13
Instructor Focus: Matthew Machemer .....	14
CTSFW Events .....	16
Alumni Reunion .....	17
Called to Serve .....	18
Alumni Focus: Rev. Michael Schuermann. . . .	20
Different Gifts, Same Care .....	22
Profiles in Giving .....	24
Admission .....	26
In the Word Bible Study. ....	30

# I'm Lifting My Eyes, O LORD...But for “How Long?”

Rick Marris



Photo: Erik M. Lunsford/The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod

Hardly any of us in the United States have traveled this route through a pandemic before. Only the most elderly remember the 1918 influenza pandemic. Others, born in the 1950s or earlier, remember when the infection of polio caused constant anxiety. But now, we have all been journeying through a COVID-19 pandemic that has taken over 700,000 lives in the USA and over five million lives worldwide (as of November 2021). It has been a strange disease, affecting many people with negligible symptoms, but threatening and taking the lives of a small percentage.

The mental health implications have been ubiquitous. One journal article (*JAMA Psychiatry*, February 2021) notes that since COVID struck, emergency room consults for suicide attempts are up by 6% and drug overdoses up by 17%. Another reports that alcohol use is up by 29%, and even higher among those who were already struggling with anxiety issues prior to the pandemic (*Preventive Medicine*, April 2021). People who were excessively fearful about germs pre-COVID (e.g., those with obsessive-compulsive disorder) have become even more anxiety-stricken about leaving their homes or even having their loved ones leave their homes. Some estimates have claimed that symptoms of depression and anxiety have nearly doubled among adults (*American Journal of Health Promotion*, February 2021). Counseling agencies tell me that they have waiting lists for clients and not enough professional counselors to see them all, even with online options.

Anxiety is a normal, even healthy response to dangerous things. All other mammalian creatures have spurts of anxiety, most notably when a large predator is chasing them. Their anxiety response helps save them by splashing their blood, heart, lungs, and muscles with adrenaline and cortisol, which makes them faster and stronger and more apt to outrun or fight off the predator. God created mammals, including humans, to react this way. However, when the threat of the predator has subsided, the non-human mammals can return to a more normal life of peaceful eating and drinking along their path.

As a human mammal, I have been created with “my reason and all my senses” (*Luther’s Small Catechism*). Our reason is both a blessing and a curse since our intellect can lead us to habitually think about the dangerous things in our lives, including things that other animals cannot see or consider, like microscopic bacteria and viruses. While a wildebeest may anxiously run from a lion for a few minutes, their adrenaline, cortisol, and other neurochemicals largely return to normal after a short time. For us, these neurochemicals can stay revving up our hearts and lungs as we anxiously ponder all the dangers in

this sin-filled, groaning world, keeping us from ever feeling at peace. Other mammals can have a strong sense of fear or anxiety, but only humans truly have the capacity for phobias and anxiety disorders. I have not frequently seen the terms Coronaphobia or COVIDphobia yet (they were apparently coined in fall 2020), but I think it’s just a matter of time, especially in light of the media and governmental focus on the virus.

Generations of believers before the 1918 flu, even in Old Testament times, were constantly aware that epidemics or contaminations (e.g., typhoid, cholera, etc.) could take the life of a healthy person within days, even hours. Our ancestors knew the path of their lives was fragile. We moderns, having lived during ever-increasing life expectancy statistics, have falsely embraced the belief that the medical field will overcome our diseases, despite the fact that we know even the best medicine only delays the journey toward death. Medicines can never overcome death! Only Jesus has overcome our death, through His cross and resurrection on a hill called Zion.

Psalm 121 is a song of a pilgrim journeying to Zion:

I lift up my eyes to the hills.  
From where does my help come?  
My help comes from the LORD,  
who made heaven and earth.

For centuries, faithful pilgrims have been chanting this psalm, and the other pilgrim psalms surrounding it, to each other as they journey through all sorts of dangers in life. Psalm 122 specifies that the journey is to the temple in Jerusalem, to the peace and security within the walls of Zion. Psalm 120 expresses more distress along the journey and echoes more pleas, like a lament psalm. Jesus likely voiced these psalms on His various journeys to Jerusalem, perhaps even His last journey to His cross.

During this time of pandemic anxiety, many people are looking for a confident path, especially those who already suffer from mental disorders. They sense that science and medicine, while wondrous gifts from God, can provide only limited, temporary hope.

---

**Throughout this pandemic journey, I have directed many counselees to the lament and complaint psalms, like Psalm 13: “How long O LORD? Will you forget me forever?” Lament psalms give us the words to confidently, faithfully complain back to our Lord during times of distress. Such psalms spend the majority of their words pleading for God to look toward us, to not forget us, to listen to our pleas. They then usually end, sounding like a faithful pilgrim psalm, trusting in His unfailing love and rejoicing in His salvation.**

---

The church has an opportunity to remind believers and the “unchurched” that the ultimate Way, Truth, and Life is Jesus Christ. Research shows that more people struggling with mental disorders will approach a pastor or other church leader (25%) than they will consult with a psychiatrist or other MD (16%). Despite the media’s persistent anti-church messaging, many people still seek out the consolation of the church during times of crisis. And in the journey of this generation, the consolation and support that the church can provide is aided by a cadre of more than 50,000 professional Christian counselors who have more First Article expertise about mental illness.

Throughout this pandemic journey, I have directed many counselees to the lament and complaint psalms, like Psalm 13: “How long O LORD? Will you forget me forever?” Lament psalms give us the words to confidently, faithfully complain back to our Lord during times of distress.

Such psalms spend the majority of their words pleading for God to look toward us, to not forget us, to listen to our pleas. They then usually end, sounding like a faithful pilgrim psalm, trusting in His unfailing love and rejoicing in His salvation. Knowing that our Lord Jesus has ultimately carried all of our sins, sorrows, infirmities, and sufferings (Isaiah 53), and conquered them on His cross, may we, His Church, carry one another’s burdens (Galatians 6:2) during this pandemic journey, looking to His hill from where our help ultimately comes. 📌

*The Rev. Dr. Rick Marrs (marrsr@csl.edu) is a pastor and licensed psychologist who serves as the Professor of Practical Theology (Counseling) at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. He is also the author of Making Christian Counseling More Christ Centered (2019), a book now being used at both LCMS seminaries.*



Photo: Erik M. Lunsford/The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod