

St. Paul's Herald

March 2026

LETTER FROM PASTOR

Though it is not currently set up, (possibly sometime this year because I have space), I have a model train layout that I enjoy as a hobby. One of the things that I like about modelling trains is that I have complete creative control. I get to design the layout how I want it to look, sound, and function. I get to decide what trains I run, what the landscape looks like, where the buildings are placed and how the railroad tracks run through it all. I even get to decide how fast or slow my trains go. It can be a neat feeling to have control of a 'miniature world' where things happen just as you want them to.

As human beings, it is natural to like to be *in control* of things. We like to be able to influence, change, or direct ourselves and our circumstances as much as possible. Unfortunately, reality makes it clear that we are not in control nearly as much as we would like. As a classroom teacher knows, one can carefully plan the days' lessons down to the smallest detail, but students, leadership, and weather can all quickly change the best laid plans. Even if we certainly realize we cannot control ever thing in our lives, we still seek to control as much as possible by: planning

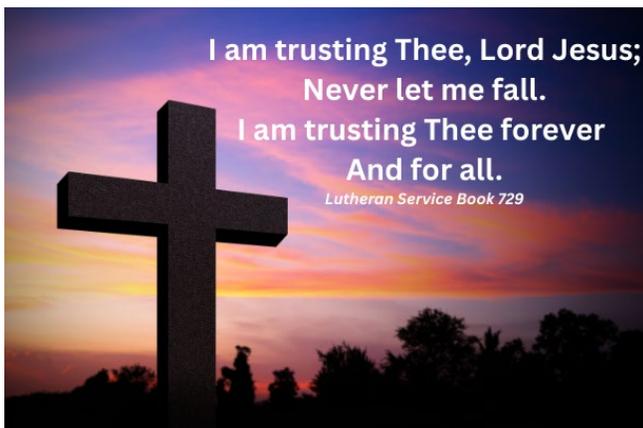
ahead; anticipating outcomes or objections; managing and/or manipulating people and circumstances in our favor; and many other intentional forms of 'commanding our ship', so-to-speak. What often happens though is that we get frustrated, overstressed, and burned out while the people around us get far less than our best. In the end, there is a significant cost to our desire for control.

From a Biblical perspective, the desire for control comes from the self-centeredness of our sinful nature. Proverbs 19:21 says "Many are the plans in the mind of a man, but it is the purpose of the Lord that will stand." God is the one who is in control of all things, knows what is best in each circumstance, and allows things to happen as they do. What He wants us to do is to trust Him. He wants us to 'place Him' in the driver seat of our lives and relinquish the controls by trusting in Him. However, instead of trusting God we want to be the driver of our own life and destiny. It is here that Jeremiah's words are so important, especially to us as Christians: "I know, Lord, that a person's way of life is not his own; no one who walks determines his own steps (Jer. 10:23 CSB)."

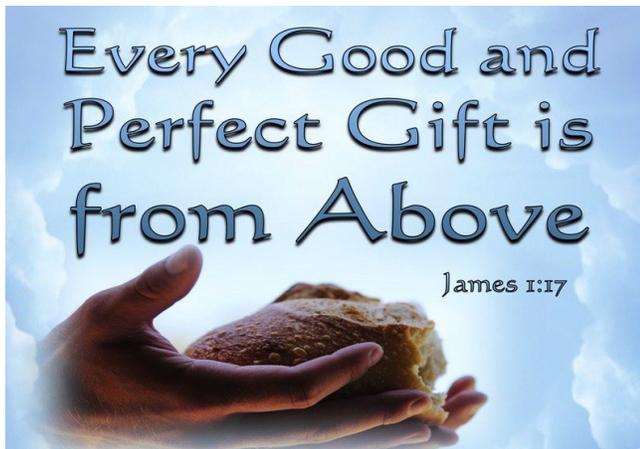
Like it or not, we are not model railroaders with control over 'our world', because we are not the creator of all things. We are however called to "trust in the Lord with all our heart and not lean on our own understanding (Prov. 3:5)." Because God is the creator, He sees everything better than we ever could. So, rather than giving into the illusion that you are in control, even in small ways throughout your day, trust the one who really is, your Heavenly Father. You will not be disappointed when you do!

In Christ,

Pastor Josh



CONNECTING TO GRACE



“It just feels like an endless circle.” Have you ever said or thought that when it comes to your life, job, or family? It just seems like you finished dealing with one crisis or conundrum and the next one is staring you down. As soon as you get room to breathe, things start piling up again. When you finally feel like you are making progress, things seem to head in the opposite direction. Worst still, this seems to happen over and over.

While such statements are a pessimistic way of looking at life, if we are honest with ourselves, even as Christians who ought to know better, it can be easy to fall into such thinking. We can tell ourselves to expect the unexpected, but there is always something that seems to catch us off guard. The reason our minds can easily stray toward negative thinking is because our minds are designed to reconcile patterns.

Pattern recognition is not a bad thing because it helps define us as a species and allows us to adapt for survival. More importantly, from a scriptural standpoint, God created us with minds to recognize patterns that He Himself set in motion. Such pattern recognition was given to us for experiencing the wonder and majesty of God’s creation and grace. The problem for us is that we regularly use our God-given ability to pick out all the brokenness

and chaos we see around us. We end up, often without realizing it, focusing our attention on the hurt, pain, and suffering in our world (and lives) rather than on the positive things that come by the grace of God (see Jam. 1:17). It just feels like an endless circle of negativity.

God however does not want us to focus on the negative, but instead to recognize and concentrate on His grace given in Jesus Christ; the one who embodies the *endless circle* of God’s grace. This endless grace is visible throughout scripture, in creation, and in our own lives. Our God-given pattern recognition skills are well-suited for identifying grace but need some fine tuning because of our sinful nature. This fine tuning comes through regular exposure to Scripture, and the training of our minds to focus on the patterns of grace that scripture attests to in our own lives.

When we read the Bible, we encounter God’s pattern of grace repeatedly, which, in turn, causes us to seek grace even more. Isaiah the prophet writes “Therefore the Lord waits to be gracious to you, and therefore he exalts himself to show mercy to you (Is. 30:18).” In 2 Corinthians 12:9, God tells the apostle Paul and each of us as well “My grace is sufficient for you for my power is made perfect in your weakness”. God is waiting to give you His all-sufficient grace that will see you through whatever you will face. He [God] “is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work (2 Cor. 9:8).” Recognize, believe, and live in God’s endless circle of grace today.

