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Mt Olive Lutheran Church
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Easter 5: Jägermeister

Grace and peace be unto you through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

My time in training at Fort Jackson is quickly coming to an end, which means my time with you is coming to an end, too. And so I've had to ask myself the question, what do I want to leave you with? What gift can I give you?

And the best answer I can come up with is what we'll be covering in today's message. And today's message is not so much a "what" but a "how". Not "what" to think but "how" to think. I want to lay out today for you a "how" to look at the Bible and "how" to look at life. This is the "how" that I use every day and in every sermon. So if you feel that God has been using me to touch your heart these last several months, listen up as I lift up the hood, so to speak, and bring you along on this journey.

You've probably noticed that today's sermon title is Jägermeister, but, honestly, it has nothing to do with alcohol besides the fact that it's a well-known word and, well, catchy. Instead, I want you to pay attention to what the word *jägermeister* itself actually means. First, what language is it? ... That's right, German. And it consists of actually two words in German, *jäger*, and *meister*. Now *meister* sounds like an English word—what word is it? What does *meister* mean in English? ... That's right, "master." Ok, so what about *jäger*? Does anyone know what *jäger* means? ... That's right, "hunter." So a Jägermeister is a *master hunter*.

By the end of the sermon today, my goal is to turn you into a *master hunter*, ferreting out what God wants you to know for your life today from the truth of his eternal word. And it will be something of a hunt, because a lot of the times it's not immediately obvious—you have to *hunt* for it.

So how are we going to hunt? What are we looking for? What is the big idea?

Here it is: Everything in the Bible either *shows us how much we need Jesus*, or it *shows us how much Jesus meets our needs*.

That's it. It's that simple. Let me repeat that: *Everything in the Bible either shows us how much we need Jesus, or it shows us how much Jesus meets our needs.*

That's it. Anywhere in the Bible, every book, every chapter, every verse shows us one of those two things.

Let us illustrate. Let us turn to our first passage for today, Psalm 148. Take a look at just two verses, 4 and 5:

⁴ *Praise him, you highest heavens, and you waters above the heavens!*

⁵ *Let them praise the name of the LORD! For he commanded and they were created.*

Now take a look at the end of verse 5. What has God done? ... That's right, he created. What did he create? ... That's right, verse 4 describes how God made the "highest heavens," the "waters above the heavens." It's basically quoting Genesis 1:1, right? "In the beginning God created the—you got it, the heavens—and the earth.

In other words, who is responsible for all this stuff? Who is responsible for our life and the world we live in? ... That's right, God.

So you need to ask, what if God stepped away? What if God neglected creation? So you see, this shows us how much we need Jesus. Remember how Jesus told the winds and the waves to be still? Do you remember how Jesus would raise the dead? We need Jesus' help with this physical world, with our physical bodies, or we would snuff out, just like that.

Now of course here in Psalm 148 the Lord is in fact sustaining his creation; if not, we would not have life or breath to praise him! The fragility of this physical world shows us how much we need Jesus, and the fact that we can notice this physical world means Jesus is in fact taking care of those needs.

Let's take another verse from Psalm 148, verse 14:

¹⁴ *He has raised up a horn for his people, praise for all his saints,
for the people of Israel who are near to him.*

Praise the LORD!

Now the key word here is "horn". "Horn" means something like a strongpoint, or refuge.

Some years ago, I read an article on the country of Bangladesh. As you may recall, Bangladesh is the country that occupies the delta of the Ganges River, next to India. It's like if Louisiana—the delta of the Mississippi River—were its own country. Now just as Louisiana is prone to flooding from the river and from hurricanes, so also Bangladesh is hyper-vulnerable to the same thing. As a result, the government has built thousands of shelters high up on poles. Imagine a concrete bunker, but on telephone pilings 10, 20, sometimes 30 feet up in the air. Now are you getting the idea of what a “horn” is—the place you cling to when everything goes to pot.

So let me ask you, what is the ultimate “horn” God has raised up for his people? Or should I say *who* is the ultimate horn? *Who* has God established as The One who is always safe, always there to help, no matter how bad it gets?

Yes, Jesus! Jesus is stronger than any threat or challenge or danger. That includes spiritual danger—despair, temptations, hurt and most of all our own sinful flesh. Did not Jesus say, “Come unto me, you who are heavily laden, and I will give you rest”? Come unto me, when you are weighed down with worries and concerns, guilt and doubt, just the weariness of a situation that never seems to get better.

So you see, Psalm 148:14 is really talking about Jesus. Jesus is THE horn.

One last point before we move on. Here in Psalm 148:4-5, and 14 we see how we have a need for God to provide for all our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs. And we see how God has indeed sustained creation and provide a “horn” of refuge. So when God meets our needs, what is the proper response? What do God's people do? ... That's right, they *praise* him.

Moving on, Acts 11. Some background: Peter has just returned from the household of Cornelius. Now was Peter doing God's work, or was he up to no good?

That's right, he was going where God told him to go and doing what God told him to do. And yet, in verse 2, what response did he get from his fellow believers—the “circumcision party”? ... That's right, they *criticized* him.

Can you believe it? At Cornelius' house, Peter preached the gospel and dozens of people were baptized on the spot! That's good news, right?

And yet, *criticism!* Maybe the cynics are right. You know, “No good deed goes unpunished.” Maybe that's really true!

Now if I were in Peter's shoes, if you were in Peter's shoes, I'd bet you'd be saying, “Gee, thanks, Jesus. I do what you want and all I get is grief and gripe and moan and groan. Where are you when I need you?”

Where are you when I need you—indeed. You ever been there? You ever feel that God left you high and dry?

See how we're hinting at a deep human need here? “Hello, God! Back me up! It's about time now, God! Anytime now, ok?”

So our deep need is to know that God is going to show up, and he's going to be on our side.

Ok, so has God shown up? Has God shown that he's on our side? What's the evidence? Yes, you could point to the meal you just ate. The house you just slept in. But what is the *ultimate* way God has shown up?

Well, that's Jesus, of course. God in flesh. God dwelling among us. God in Christ as the Lamb of God, who shows us he's on our side by taking our sins upon himself and nailing them to the tree—and rising again three days later to show that all who believe in him will rise again even if they die. Hello, we're in Easter season, right?

Well, God gives Peter a spirit of patience instead of just hurt, and he patiently explains what happened and why. Now, by verse 18, what did Peter's critics say by then? ... That's right, they “fell silent” and “glorified God.”

Did God show up for Peter, and enable him to stand up to his critics? Yes. Because Peter knew how Jesus had already met his need to forgive him after he had denied Christ three times, he was able to deal gently and patiently even when his good deed had in fact not “gone unpunished”.

Oh, and when God shows up and meets our needs, what is the response? What did the people do there in verse 18? ... That's right, they “glorified God,” praised him and thanked him.

Moving on, Revelation 21:4—

⁴ He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away.

What need is being met here? God is wiping away every tear. How much do we need God? Well, we have a lot of tears, don't we? Mourning and crying and pain.

What about you? Does hardly a week go by and our prayers do not mention the passing of a loved one? Do you ever turn on the radio without hearing some bad news going on somewhere with somebody getting hurt? Does it ever end?

Maybe that's the need—does it ever end? Sometimes in the Army they have us go on “mystery runs”. “Just start running,” they say, “don't worry about how fast or how far or for how long.” Now they have in mind a certain distance and a certain speed. But you never know what it is—it could be 2 miles, or 6 or 10. It could be fast, or slow, or then fast again.

And you'd be amazed at the number of guys who drop out just yards away from what the finish is, they just never knew.

What about you? Can you make it for the long haul? Do you wonder if you have what it takes?

Well, Revelation 21 shows us how much Jesus meets our needs. There IS an end. And he will make sure you get there.

And finally, John 13:34—

³⁴ A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.

Oh, “love one another.” “As I have loved you, love one another.”

This is not an isolated command, people. What does Paul say in Ephesians 5? “Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church—laying down his life for her, sacrificing everything for her.” How are you doing with that, fellas? Are you completely selfless? Do you always put her needs first?

Maybe, if you're like me, putting her needs first IS your need. Help, Jesus! Help!

So, how does Jesus meet our need to “love one another”? It's right here: “*as I have loved you.*” See, Jesus loves us even when our love is not perfect. Jesus loves us even when our love is tired. Jesus loves us even when we don't get loved back.

Jesus fills our need for love so much that we can pull through, we can even thrive, when our love fails, or everyone else's love fails. For Jesus never fails. “As I have loved you.” As I have died and borne and risked and suffered everything for you.

Easter Christians, people! Revelation 21 is right—all “the former things have passed away.”

There's only one thing left to do. When you read your Bible—shoot, when you watch the news and talk to your mother-in-law, and pay your taxes—are you going to be honest about what you need? Are you going to get real about where Jesus needs to get real for you? Are you going to go to God in prayer and dare him to meet you where you need him?

And when God comes through for you—in the end, that's always Jesus—are you going to say, “Thank you!”?

So I hope by now you are a *jägermeister*. I hope by now you have something of an idea of how to hunt through the Scriptures and apply any and every passage to where you are at right now.

How much do we need...Jesus?

How much does Jesus meet our...needs?

Let us pray...