

Faith & Fellowship

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September/October 2018
Thy Kingdom
Come



KING
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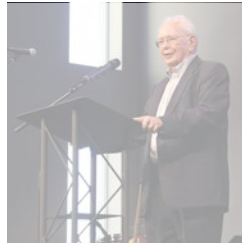
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FAITH & FELLOWSHIP
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Quiet Moments

Email prayer requests to: pray@clba.org

Idle Gifts

H.E. WISLØFF



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All God’s children have received a gift of grace. Not all have received the same gift. It is necessary therefore to ascertain which gift God has given you. The purpose of these gifts is the same for all—we are to serve God with them. Thus every Christian is a servant of God. Would that we all were happy, blessed and willing servants.

Do not neglect the gift that has been given to you. Serve the Lord with it and do not let it lie idle. It is not by accident that God gave it to you. No one will escape the temptation to neglect the gift they have received. Some are tempted to boast about it, glory in it; others to neglect it. All are sinful. The devil does his utmost to make these thoughts succeed.

He knows that if he can succeed in getting one gift out of use, he has made a servant of God useless. Misused or unused gifts of God are lost opportunities for God. You have been given a gift—use it for the honor of God.

Hans Edvard Wisløff (1902—1969) was a Norwegian theologian and writer. He was also the Bishop of the Diocese of Sør-Hålogaland from 1959 until his death in 1969.

Wisløff, H.E., Quiet Moments on the Way Home. Fergus Falls, MN: Faith & Fellowship Press, 1993.

The Die is Cast

TROY TYSDAL

There are moments in history that shape the future. Some of these moments are obvious, like the bombing of Pearl Harbor, the assassination of President Kennedy, or the terrorist attack on 9/11. If you lived through one of those moments, you understood that something had changed—from that moment on the world was going to be different.

I want to take you back to another moment that changed the world. It took place at a small river in northern Italy in the year 49 BC. The name of the river is the Rubicon. North of the Rubicon was Julius Caesar, the most powerful general in the Roman Republic. He had been stationed in Gaul, where his popularity was increasing—and so was the size of his army. South of the Rubicon a few hundred miles was the city of Rome. In Rome, Pompey and the Senate were growing fearful of Caesar's increasing power. So they sent him a message, "Disband your army and go home." Instead, Julius Caesar marched his army south, right to the edge of the Rubicon.

You see, there was an ancient Roman law that forbade any general from crossing the Rubicon with a standing army... to do so was treason. When Caesar and the 13th Legion reached the Rubicon, he turned to them and said, "We can still go home, but once we cross this river there is no turning back. There will be nothing left to do but to see this through." The legion reacted with a roar, and Caesar cried out, "The die is cast." He rallied his men, and together they crossed the Rubicon.

"The die is cast." If you have ever played dice, you have a picture of what that phrase means. It is the moment when the dice are in the air. There is no stopping them, and only God knows how they will land.

LUKE 14:31-33

Jesus said, "Suppose a king is about to go to war against another king. Won't he first sit down and consider whether he



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Julius Caesar crossing the river Rubicon/1880 Woodcarving.

is able with ten thousand men to oppose the one coming against him with twenty thousand? If he is not able, he will send a delegation while the other is still a long way off and will ask for terms of peace. In the same way, those of you who do not give up everything you have cannot be my disciples."

Our Lord Jesus Christ took on flesh and entered into enemy territory. He did not have to do that. He is all powerful. He is one with the Father and the Holy Spirit. He could have destroyed his enemy—Satan—with a single word. Instead he came to earth, lived out the gospel, and then placed that gospel in fragile jars of clay—weak, broken, seemingly insignificant people like you and me—to win back souls firmly held in the grip of Satan. We are the hands and feet of Jesus here on earth—equipped only with the gospel and the gift of faith, but that is enough. It is the power of God.

In 49 BC Julius Caesar was named dictator of the Roman Republic, and in 48 BC he defeated Pompey to end the civil war he started when he crossed the Rubicon. But Caesar's reign would be short. On March 15, 44 BC, he was murdered by a close friend and a group of assassins.

There are moments that change the world, and then there are moments that change eternity. The Bible tells us that our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ was also betrayed by a friend—by a kiss. He was crucified, dead, and buried. But unlike Julius Caesar—who would stay dead—Jesus Christ rose again, and his resurrection set in motion a kingdom so powerful that the gates of hell cannot stand against it.

Sometimes in this fallen world it looks like Satan is winning, but there are cracks in the gates of hell. God is using his Church to peel back the fingers of Satan and to set the lost free.

People of faith, there is no turning back. We have crossed the Rubicon, and the only thing left to do is to see this through. The die is cast, the road uncertain, but God knows the outcome—he knows how the die will land. The victory is guaranteed.

Rev. Troy Tysdal is Director of Communications and Prayer for the Church of the Lutheran Brethren and serves as editor in chief of Faith & Fellowship magazine.

Kingdom Secrets

ED NUGENT

John the Baptist's disciples asked of Jesus, "Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?" (Matthew 11:3) The prophet John, the one man who should have known beyond any shadow of a doubt that Jesus was the Messiah, wonders if he's been wrong all along. It's one thing for the Pharisees and other religious leaders to doubt and even reject Jesus, but John the Baptist? Didn't he see the Holy Spirit descend on Jesus like a dove when he baptized him? And didn't he hear a voice from heaven declare, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"? How could he doubt? What hope was there for anyone if even John had doubts about Jesus?

In the Gospel of Matthew, John's question is a turning point. It is the first expression of doubt, the initial hint at trouble. It would not be the last. Matthew 11 and 12 reveal a growing misunderstanding of and opposition to Jesus. Up to this point, Jesus has been teaching and healing openly, seemingly without any major troubles. But as his reputation grows, more and more people begin to take notice. The Pharisees begin to oppose and plot, while the common people flock to Jesus with great hopes and expectations for what Messiah would be and do.

In response, Jesus changes tactics. He begins to teach in a new way. A way that is designed to conceal and reveal at the same time. He now teaches the crowds almost exclusively through parables. The disciples had not yet heard Jesus teach in this way so they ask him, "Why do you speak to the people in parables?" (Matthew 13:10).

Expectations can be dangerous. Maybe never more dangerous than when they

have to do with people's hopes and dreams for what the future could look like. The crowds had expectations of victory and a return to greatness. They hoped for Israel 2.0, with no Romans and no Samaritans. They hoped for strength and prosperity. In short, they hoped for glory. Their expectations would reach a crescendo on Palm Sunday as they praised Jesus with shouts of Hosanna (which means save us), treating him like a triumphant king. But it only took five days for those shouts of praise to turn to shrieks of rage as they shouted, "Crucify him!"

Expectations can be dangerous, when you fail to live up to them.

Jesus knew that he would not live up to them. He would win by losing. He knew that the kingdom they desired was not the kingdom he would deliver. His kingdom was not of this world. He knew that, when he was "lifted up," it would be in humiliation, in defeat, in death. No glory, at least not yet. For now just a cross.

So Jesus answers his disciples' question about speaking to the people in parables with an equally mysterious answer. His response is found in Matthew 13:11-13.

"Because the knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of heaven has been given to you, but not to them. Whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what they have will be taken from them. This is why I speak to them in parables: 'Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.'"

What? Isn't clarity the whole point of teaching? Does Jesus really mean to imply that he's hiding the truth rather than revealing it? Robert Capon has

a wonderful insight regarding Jesus' answer. He writes that Jesus was simply *describing* what happens when different people hear the parables. Think of the Parable of the Sower, with the different soils. One hears and believes, another hears and believes for a time, while another hears and couldn't care less. Capon writes:

"The descriptive interpretation is the one borne out by the Gospel history: those who had a grip, by faith, that the mystery was ultimately *Jesus himself* were able to find the Crucifixion/Resurrection the source of ever greater understanding; those who didn't, on the other hand, found it nothing but a colossal unintelligibility."¹

So in response to the growing misunderstanding of his message and what he had come to do, Jesus presents a series of rapid-fire parables about the kingdom of heaven. Each one anticipating and answering misunderstandings about the kingdom:

"Jesus, why do some believe and some not?" "*Because all soil isn't the same.*"

"Jesus, why can't we separate the good from the bad?" "*Because the wheat and the weeds are growing together, and you'd do a lousy job of telling the difference.*"

"Jesus, why does your kingdom look small and insignificant?" "*Because that's how it starts. The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed; it will grow to become great. It's like yeast, invisible, and yet in time it will work its way throughout the dough.*"

Are we all that different from the first people who heard these parables? Have our expectations of glory set us up for spiritual disappointment? What if the Christian life in this world looks more like Good Friday than it does Easter Sunday? What if that's the way it's supposed to be? I love the celebration of Christ's resurrection. It gives me hope. But my life has much more in common with Good Friday than it does with Easter Sunday. Jesus has had his resurrection, but you and I are still waiting for ours. So we are called daily to pick up our cross and follow Jesus.

These parables are meant for us. They call us to repentance and faith. They expose our expectations of glory, call us out from building our own kingdoms, and invite us to believe that Jesus is building his kingdom in and through us.

For now it is a kingdom of faith, for who hopes for what he already has? But the King is coming, and his kingdom is coming with him in all of its fullness and glory.

You who have ears, hear.

Rev. Ed Nugent is the Preaching and Teaching Pastor at Our Redeemer's Lutheran Brethren Church in Minot, North Dakota.

Sources

1. Robert Ferrar Capon, (2002) *Kingdom, Grace, Judgment—Paradox, Outrage, and Vindication in the Parables of Jesus* (p.58)

Watch the video:
www.clba.org/bc18-sermons



Rev. Ed Nugent speaking on June 9, 2018 at the Biennial Convention.





Chaplain, Colonel Michael H. Heuer, USAF (Retired) speaking on June 11, 2018 at the Biennial Convention.

Dramatic Farming: The Weedy Truth

MICHAEL HEUER

Matthew 13 contains more of Jesus' parables than any other chapter in the New Testament. The Greek word for "parable" is *parabole*, from two smaller words: the preposition *para*, meaning "alongside," and *bole*, which is related to the verb *ballo*, meaning "to throw or cast." So a parable is a story Jesus told using the common things of his day which he "threw alongside" a spiritual truth to illustrate that truth for those who would understand.

All eight parables in Matthew 13 are kingdom parables, teaching about the nature of God's kingdom, which means his ruling over his people. This kingdom

or rule has two aspects: a present spiritual aspect in which God rules over those who become subjects of the kingdom in this age, and a future aspect in which God's people enter the visible eternal kingdom on the Last Day at the end of this age.

The first farmer parable in Matthew 13, The Parable of the Sower (13:3-8, 18-23), deals with the present spiritual aspect of God's kingdom in which God's Word creates saving faith in the hearts of some of those who hear the Word. The second farmer parable in Matthew 13, the Parable of the Wheat and Tares (13:24-30, 36-43), mainly focuses on the future—the visible Last Day aspect of the kingdom. It points specifically to the judgment, purging out

the goats from the sheep and the tares from the wheat, separating those who are not subjects of the King from those who belong to God's kingdom.

In the Parable of the Sower all the seed was good seed, while the kinds of soil differed. But the Parable of the Wheat and Tares describes different kinds of seed, some good (the wheat seed) and some harmful (the tares). The tares described here were most likely a kind of darnel weed, whose scientific name is *Lolium temulentum*. Until these respective plants mature and the ears of the plants become visible, they look so similar that some have referred to the darnel weed as "false wheat."



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Left to Right: Wheat and Darnel.

The landowner's servants in the parable might have expected a few weeds to grow among the wheat, but they were alarmed at the huge quantity of weeds that appeared to be growing among the wheat (13:27). The more experienced landowner recognized this phenomenon as no accident but as deliberate agricultural and economic sabotage by an enemy (13:28). In fact, this kind of sabotage was prevalent enough in the ancient world that the Roman Empire actually considered it a crime and specifically prohibited the practice in Roman Law.

While most of Jesus' parables have a single main point and are often "overinterpreted" by some teachers who try to find a specific meaning for every detail, there are a few parables in which Jesus himself provides the meaning for most of the details, and this is one of those parables. In 13:36-43, our Lord interprets and applies the Parable of the Wheat and Tares. The landowner's servants in the parable were eager to tear out the weeds immediately (13:28b), just as Jesus' own disciples elsewhere wanted immediate judgment upon those who opposed them and their Rabbi (Luke 9:54). But the wise and patient landowner wanted his servants to leave the weeds alone and let them grow alongside the wheat until the final harvest. Believers and non-believers may look similar, and according to Jesus' interpretation, God and the angels are the ones who can tell the difference. The angels will weed out the tares on the Day of Judgment.

"The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the

people of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels" (Matthew 13:37-39).

No religious entities—neither the agents of the medieval Church's Crusades or Inquisition, nor the followers of the so-called Islamic State—have the right to determine who deserves to live or die based on belief or lifestyle. God's own messengers, his angels, will be the actors at the Final Judgment: They will gather "everything that causes sin," that causes people to stumble. They will also gather those who do harm, "all who do evil" (13:40-42). The angels will cast all of these into "the blazing furnace," the equivalent of the "lake of fire" in Revelation 19:20, 20:10, and 21:8. This will result in "weeping" (suggesting grief and loss) and "gnashing of teeth" (suggesting physical pain) for the lost.

In stark contrast, "the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father" (13:43). "Righteous" must refer to those who are righteous by faith, trusting in God's anointed Messiah Jesus, since in ourselves no one is righteous (Psalm 14:1-3, 53:1; Romans 3:10). Paul emphasizes that righteousness before God is the righteousness of faith, not from human good deeds. "For we maintain that a person is justified by faith apart from the works of the law" (Romans 3:28).

None of us by nature is the good seed! Pastor and author John McArthur writes:

"All good seeds were once tares; all the sons of the kingdom were once sons of the evil one. To go beyond the scope of this parable, while still using some of its figures, it could be said that the

primary purpose of the 'good seeds' in the world is to make converts of 'tares,' that they might also become sons of the kingdom" (Commentary on Matthew).

As God makes our hearts spiritually alive through the good news of Jesus' redeeming love, we can share the gospel, through which the Spirit of God creates saving faith in the hearts of those who listen, converting them from tares to wheat. Nowhere do we see this more clearly than in the Explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed, in which Martin Luther writes, "I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to him, but the Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, and sanctified and preserved me in the true faith..." (*Small Catechism*, 1529).

Chaplain, Colonel Michael H. Heuer, USAF (Retired), M.A., M.Ed., Ph.D., is the Director of Ministry to the Armed Forces for the Church of the Lutheran Brethren.

Watch the video:
www.clba.org/bc18-sermons





President Paul Larson speaking on June 12, 2018 at the Biennial Convention.

A Treasure New and Old:

When a Scribe Becomes a Disciple in the Kingdom of God

PAUL LARSON

Through a glorious string of kingdom parables and explanations, CLB Biennial Convention 2018 attendees found life and were reminded of our place in the kingdom of God. The last parable in this string is found in Matthew 13:51-52.

“‘Have you understood all these things?’ Jesus asked. ‘Yes,’ they replied. He said to them, ‘Therefore every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.’”

What does Jesus, in conclusion, want his disciples to understand? He says something very interesting: “...every

teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.”

Everyone who has ears to hear, eyes to see, hearts to perceive these parables of the kingdom... everyone who sees and receives the unveiled mystery of the gospel, of Jesus’ coming kingdom... we are changed!

Friends, this is an incredible description of transition! It’s the “right-hand turn” of identity, function, and mission. Jesus’ statement at the end of this glorious treasure-house of kingdom parables in Matthew 13 can, should, and does describe us!

“...every teacher of the law...”

These teachers were the scribes (Greek, *grammateus*) who knew the Word of God, at least the Old Testament promise. They were keepers of the words, of the grammar. Sure, there was some spiritual deadness in these highly regarded experts. Some were lifeless rule-keepers, proud in their knowledge, arrogant in their word-keeping. They were spiritual *grammar* fanatics.

But some of them kept this Word. They knew it pointed to *One* coming, to something living. When the mysteries of these parables were unlocked, they revealed Jesus, the gospel, and his kingdom. It had this *transformative* effect on the scribe!

“...every scribe who *becomes a disciple* in the kingdom of heaven...”

“‘Have you understood all these things?’ They said to him, ‘Yes.’ And he said to them, ‘Therefore every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house, who brings out of his treasure what is new and what is old.’”

Matthew 13:51-52

It’s a passive verb form of the noun for *disciple*. Not the one who *achieves* discipleship, but the one who is *made* a disciple. This is the “kingdoming” explosive potential—when a scribe becomes a disciple, a student, a follower, a practicing apprentice of Jesus in the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus says something *awesome* happens when the scribe becomes the disciple. This new disciple becomes a repository of treasure—to be shared with others!

Church of the Lutheran Brethren: May I say, “We were born for this!”

We *are* scribes become disciples in the kingdom of heaven! We must never be less than that. We must never be mere followers who are not founded on the Word, that is, mere activists or obedient moralists. And we must never be like those scribes who were content to be correct and arrogant, while silent and uncompassionate in mission and witness.

We are confessional and missionary people. Our Confession of Faith must be confessed, both to my neighbor near and an ocean away! We are people wholly restful in grace, and wholly restless in mission!

Church of the Lutheran Brethren: We were born for this. Scribes become disciples in the kingdom of heaven. A people under the Word! A missionary people!

In this Biennial Convention, our eyes were opened to a vision for mission that is ours together: Lutheran Brethren Seminary? North American Mission? Lutheran Brethren International Mission? Through this symbiotic union of mission together we do one thing: ***we make disciples.***

At a fork in the Interstate 94 freeway just west of Saint Cloud, Minnesota, there’s a curious stretch of land between

the eastbound and westbound lanes. It’s completely inaccessible by car or on foot. I’ve driven by this property many times, viewing it with the eyes of a nature lover, adventurer, agriculturist, and hunter. I’d look over and ponder, “What’s over there? What kind of trees make up the woods? What wildlife and winged creatures dwell in there? Are there water ponds or springs? Are there hills? Maybe wild berries?”

It’s just intriguing to me: on the one hand it’s pristine, reserved, untapped land. There’s a beauty in that! And on the other hand—for all the possible nature-lover enjoyment, food-producing, bird-watching, camping, hiking, exploring possibilities—it’s a mysterious avoidance of potential!

On one particular day—it was my birthday, September 30, 2014—driving west toward Fergus Falls to begin my first term as CLB President, I looked over at that pristine, reserved, untapped 80 acres of land, and thought, “It reminds me of... us (the CLB)!” And now, on every trip past this beautiful plot of earth that lacks entrance and exit ramps, I think of us.

This wonderful gift of God’s creation, who knows what is on it? It’s like Tom Sawyer’s island, Cortez’ City of Gold, the Fountain of Youth! Who knows! But we don’t know, and won’t know, because it is the “Rampless Median.” And it reminds me of us...

“...every scribe who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old.” Scribes who become disciples have come into possession of a treasure, and it is *not* our treasure to hoard.

In effect, when we truly hear, see, and believe these parables of the

kingdom, these mysteries of Jesus, it’s as if we become “parables of the kingdom” ourselves. In us and through us, the treasure of Jesus—his gospel, his kingdom—is unlocked and unveiled to be brought out and shared with others!

We become living parables, kingdom translators! In terms of the parables of Matthew 13, we are the fruit of the scattered seed, we are the chosen kernels of wheat among the weeds, the *keeper* of fish in a net drawn up from humanity on the Last Day! We are the treasure, the pearl pointing to its seeker/sacrificer/owner, the birds who nest and rest in the shade of this great gospel tree!

Oh, CLB, we are a missionary people! We have this precious gift to share. We must not “hole up” in safe isolation. Let us make entrance ramps for people to come find what we have, and exit ramps to take what we have to others!

Rev. Paul Larson is President of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren.



Watch the video:
www.clba.org/bc18-lifting-our-eyes

2018 Biennial Convention

ROY HEGGLAND

<p>\$584,099 Received through 8/25/18</p>	<p>21%</p>	<p>\$2,825,000 2018-19 Contribution Goal</p>
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The CLB Fiscal Year Ends April 30, 2019

The theme of the 2018 Church of the Lutheran Brethren Biennial Convention was “King me.” I remember when I learned to play checkers. What a relief it was to get a stone (piece) to the other side of the board and yell, “King me!” As a result, the stone operated very differently from all of the other “common” stones. The other stones could only move in one direction, and even then, their moves were restricted. The “kinged” stone on the other hand, could move in any direction without restriction. With this freedom of movement, the kinged stone could make a big difference in the game. It was playing in a different realm than the other stones.



Voyagerix/Stock

When the kingdom of God comes to us through his Son Jesus, we are in a sense “Kinged.” No longer do we move in one direction trying to avoid destruction, hoping we make it to the other side to be “Kinged.” No longer are we living in the frantic belief that the unidirectional game we have been playing is all that there is, so we need to make the most of it for ourselves. Now we know that life is much more than a game. Now we are citizens of a different realm where life is not measured in years. We are free to measure life in terms of eternity.

Since our time on earth is short, and our mission here as his children is so important, we can afford to let go of those dreams we had for our earthly lives, knowing that their fulfillment in eternity will be much greater. In fact, as we engage in the mission of the Church to

be the hands and feet of Jesus, as Christ is made real to those *stones* still playing the game, we enter into the biggest and best dream of all—that souls of incomparable worth are “Kinged” by the King.

As a Church, we have been asked by our King to allow him to transform our dreams for this life so that we can participate in that larger dream of “making disciples of all nations....” What a privilege to be part of that mission! What a joy to know that our Father is rejoicing over each lost soul that is “Kinged”—receiving a crown of eternal life!

Some of us can go and preach and teach the message of the King. All of us can give our gifts to send and support those who are willing and able to go. All of us can pray that God would open doors and hearts to the gospel.

“How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they

have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent?” (Romans 10:14-15a).

“And 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 Corinthians 9:8, ESV).

Roy Heggland is Associate for Biblical Stewardship for the Church of the Lutheran Brethren.

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Japanese Ministries: A Model For Outreach

SUE OLSON

From this article I hope you take away these two things. First: Learn how God is using Japanese Ministries in Seattle, so that you can support it in prayer and offerings. Second: Recognize the opportunities all around you in your daily life where God wants to use you to increase his kingdom with your God-given personality, skills and experiences.

Think of an hour-glass shape. That's a good picture of how Japanese Ministries works. The wide open top of the hour glass is where we look for the needs of the larger group of Japanese people around us, and how we can meet that need. It might be for English conversation, cooking classes, parenting classes, food and fun activities that help them to acclimate to life in Seattle, etc.

We take advantage of opportunities to be welcomed onto the local college campus where we can invite the entire Japanese student group, an average of about fifty students yearly. We network with other groups and churches in the city who are also reaching out to the Japanese community, relying heavily on our faithful team of volunteers, most of whom are from Rock of Ages LBC. We hold large events every other Thursday for students, as well as Tuesdays for the women and children. There, we always take the opportunity to invite them to Sunday morning worship in Japanese at church, and to bilingual Bible Studies and BBQ's at our home. A student-hosted Saturday evening event called "JxJ" (Japanese for Jesus) is where they hear

Japanese Christians' testimonies, sing songs, play games and of course there's more FOOD! It's all about giving them every opportunity to meet their needs, meet Christians, hear the Word and have a very good time doing it.

This is where the hour glass narrows. Out of the larger number, maybe ten to fifteen people start to show interest in coming to church and to our home regularly for Bible Studies. Almost every year several accept Jesus. Then they are discipled, and finally introduced to a church in Japan. This is where the hour glass widens out again as they return to Japan now as believers—who otherwise might never have heard the gospel—to influence their world for Christ.

So, has your mind wandered a bit toward who might already be in your everyday circle of influence? Or, maybe how you might have to step out of your circle a bit and into someone else's? Stop and look around you. Put your phone in your pocket or purse and engage with the person standing next to you. One of the Japanese students told me that this is what they like about America: people talk to them, and ask how they are, and seem to really mean it! That's so contrary to what they experience in Japan. Will you be one of those people? It could change a life for eternity.

Sue Olson is a member of Rock of Ages Lutheran Brethren Church in Seattle, Washington.

*Questions? Email: rogernsueolson@msn.com
Send Support: www.therocklbc.org*



In Appreciation of Dr. Boe

JOEL EGGE

The distinguished Dean of the Lutheran Brethren Seminary, Dr. Eugene Boe, has a new title. It is Research Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology. LBS President David Veum announced that Dr. Boe will continue teaching classes, lecturing at the invitation of congregations, and, hopefully, begin publishing material he has developed over his 35 years at LBS.

Speaking on behalf of the Church, we are thankful that Dr. Boe sees the seminary faculty as servants of the Church. As the Apostle Paul stated his call, "...what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake" (2 Corinthians 4:5). Eugene embodies this calling in contrast to the many who view a seminary as an independent theological academy. In other words—and this is very important to congregations and clergy—Dr. Boe sees himself as a churchman, a Minister of the Gospel, called to a teaching responsibility. As a servant of the Body of Christ, he maintains close contact with congregational life.

Guided by his conviction that the Scriptures are inspired by God, Dr. Boe has anchored his pastoral students in God's Word. For example, he not only taught the doctrinal positions of the Church, but also the Scriptural basis for her doctrine. He insisted his students base their theology on sound exegesis of the Bible. In his instruction of apologetics, defending the Christian faith, Dr. Boe required his students to connect with and share Christ's message with non-believers. Thus, students learned to articulate God's Word accurately with co-learners in class, and conversationally with non-believers in coffee shops.

Professor Boe loves the academic world, but he sees himself, and his seminary colleagues, as people of the congregation. Therefore, he responds to the Church's calls for research and theological essays on issues facing the larger Church while also accepting invitations to teach and preach at area



Dr. Eugene Boe preparing for a lecture.

conferences on themes suggested by local planning committees. He is enthusiastic about theological forums but equally so to participate in Bible studies.

His love for and valuing of the variety of people in Christ's body motivates him to lead future Ministers of the Gospel to be shaped by the Lord and his Word as they live openly with "their" people. He is known for saying, "We *get* to do this!"

I know Eugene "Gene" Boe would emphasize the leadership roles President Veum and the seminary family played in the following achievements, but all these occurred during Gene's service.

Dr. Boe assumed more management responsibilities when he transitioned from Academic Dean to Dean of the Seminary. This allowed the President to give priority to congregational relations, engagement of student candidates, and denominational responsibilities.

Second, the Seminary earned full academic accreditation during Boe's tenure. This recognition of the Seminary's quality and effectiveness makes it much easier for graduates to pursue advanced degrees and apply for financial assistance.

Dr. Boe led the Seminary through in-depth curriculum reviews. Courses were re-aligned to prepare biblically-shaped servants of the Lord. Further, classes were placed online, allowing students to complete seminary programs without moving to Fergus Falls, Minnesota. This was another significant achievement and a ministry to the extended Church.

Few of us realize the vision, energy, and endurance these types of changes require.

Fourth, I need to mention the new Seminary classroom and office facility. Dr. Boe—envisioning and working with President David Veum, the Hillcrest Academy administration, and CLB executives, recommended the construction of the new building to the CLB Council of Directors in March of 2014. It passed without a negative vote!

The congregations and ministries of the CLB are appreciative of Dr. Boe's willingness to listen and learn from concerned, sometimes critical, comments. He is a student of the Church and church life. I need not tell you that he loves reading. He loves God's Word. He allows the Holy Spirit to use both suffering and Scripture in shaping his theology.

Many may be surprised that Dr. Boe was in management training for a major company when the Lord called him to prepare for the Christian ministry. In looking at his leadership as the Dean of the Seminary, one can see how the Lord integrated his corporate experience, educational achievements, congregational ministry, engagement with colleagues and students, enjoyment of people, and family encouragement in giving the Church a gifted Dean for these twenty years.

Thanks be to God!

Rev. Joel Egge served as president of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren from 2000 to 2014.

Introducing the New Dean

EUGENE BOE

July 1, 2018 marks the beginning of Dr. Brad Pribbenow's appointment to serve as the Dean of Lutheran Brethren Seminary. He was appointed to this position by the Board of LBS at their April 2018 meeting.

Just what does a Seminary Dean do? The LBS Mission Statement for this position states: "The Dean serves the Lutheran Brethren Seminary, its mission, purpose, and objectives by ensuring the academic, biblical, and theological integrity of the LBS program and by ensuring that the institutional objectives are accomplished in each of its programs of study."

Dr. Pribbenow comes to this position with an educational background both academically (Bachelor of Music Education) and professionally. He is no stranger to the world of students, having served on the InterVarsity Campus Staff for five years. He has been on the LBS faculty since 2011 (in 2018 granted a continuing call), teaching courses in Old Testament and Worship, and serving as Associate Dean in 2017-2018. He completed the Ph.D. in Biblical Studies with an emphasis in Old Testament at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. His Ph.D. dissertation is now published in revised form as *Prayerbook of Christ: Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Christological Interpretation of the Psalms* (Fortress Press, August 31, 2018). During his doctoral studies he also served as a teaching assistant.

As a graduate of LBS (M.Div., 2008) and a member of the faculty, he has familiarity with the Seminary, its heritage, its mission, and way of operating—all of which are important for the calling of Dean. Dr. Pribbenow understands and embraces the mission of the Seminary. He embraces without reservation the Church of the Lutheran Brethren's Statement of Faith and its implications for the teaching of the Seminary. He understands the various disciplines and how they integrate in the overall curriculum.

As an ordained pastor in the CLB he



Dr. Brad Pribbenow serving as Dean of Lutheran Brethren Seminary.

has familiarity with the Church, enabling him to serve as a bridge between the Seminary and the Church. He has served as Worship Arts Director (Bethesda Lutheran Brethren Church, Eau Claire, WI), Associate Pastor of Worship and Outreach (Bethel Lutheran, Fergus Falls, MN), and currently part-time Minister of Music (Bethel Lutheran, Battle Lake Campus). He has presented numerous seminars throughout the Church on worship and on the Psalms.

As the Dean he provides dynamic, strategic leadership for the development and implementation of academic programs and student support services. He facilitates an environment where faculty are supported, mentored, encouraged and developed in their calling as teachers and in their working together as a team in fulfilling the mission of the Seminary. In a time of advancing technology, theological education faces the challenge of remaining faithful to its mission.

Dr. Pribbenow is committed to lead LBS to be faithful as a seminary called by the Church of the Lutheran Brethren to serve the Church and world by living in and preparing others to live in the gospel of Jesus Christ and his call to participate in his mission of grace to bless all nations. The Seminary prepares people to enter the diverse cultural contexts of the world through particular ministries as Christ's servants shaped by his words and wounds, speaking his gospel in word and deed. The Seminary

approaches its ministry in dependence on the Triune God who speaks truth through his inspired Scriptures.

It is a blessing to have Professor Pribbenow on our faculty and to have worked together administratively this past year as he served as Associate Dean. God has equipped him with the qualities and skills to serve as Dean, for which we are grateful. He is passionate that our Seminary be faithful to Holy Scripture in preparing our students to go forth well-equipped into all the world with the message of the saving gospel of Jesus Christ.

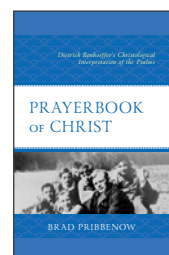
Dr. Pribbenow will continue to serve as a teaching member of the faculty, teaching courses in the Old Testament and Worship. Brad is married to Melissa and they have four children Emily, Elias, Elliot, and Elise. We pray for God's blessing on him as he serves as Dean and Professor at Lutheran Brethren Seminary.

Dr. Eugene Boe, Ph.D. serves Lutheran Brethren Seminary as Research Professor of Systematic and Historical Theology. He served as dean from 1998-2018.

Dr. Brad Pribbenow's book, Prayerbook of Christ, is available at:



www.barnesandnoble.com





Dr. Brad Pribbenow presenting on Psalms of Vengeance at the 2018 Biennial Convention.

Should We Pray *For* or *Against* Our Enemies?

MAKING SENSE OF THE BIBLE'S PSALMS OF VENGEANCE



BRAD PRIBBENOW

The book of Psalms is filled with so many memorable and meaningful psalms: “As the deer pants for streams of water...” (Psalm 42:1); “The Lord is my shepherd...” (Psalm 23:1), just to cite a couple. These are the psalms which have endeared this book to so many throughout the millennia.

And then, there are those *other* psalms; the ones we don’t quite know what to do with: “How blessed is the one who seizes your infants and dashes them against the rocks” (Psalm 137:9); “If only you, God, would slay the wicked!” (Psalm 139:19). *What do we do with these psalms?* Do we skip over them? Hide them away out of embarrassment? Or just ignore them?

These troubling psalms are called “psalms of vengeance” or “imprecatory

psalms.” They are psalms that incorporate a curse (imprecation) against an enemy. They appear at frequent points throughout the Psalter (e.g., 5-7, 28, 54-56, 104, 129, 140, etc.). While they may help us acknowledge the presence of evil, they also trouble us because of the nature of their requests. Upon reading them, the biblically-astute person naturally retorts, “I thought we were supposed to *pray* for our enemies, not *curse* them” (Matthew 5:43-48)!

In 1937, Dietrich Bonhoeffer—a German Lutheran pastor who was caught in the fray of increasing Nazi oppression—delivered a sermon on one of these psalms to his seminary students in Finkenwalde, Germany. Even though it might be argued that Bonhoeffer

had every cause to aim this psalm’s imprecations at Hitler and his agents of oppression, he instead opened up a different interpretation—one that allows us to embrace the message of the psalm as it finds its ultimate meaning not in our own experience but in the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross.

Bonhoeffer chose to preach on Psalm 58. After reading the text, he asks, “Is this terrible psalm of vengeance *really* our prayer? Are we even permitted to pray this way?” His immediate answer to this question is “no,” but not for the reason we might think. He says, “No, we cannot pray this psalm. But not because we are too good ... but because we are too sinful ourselves, too evil! Only those who are themselves completely without guilt can



pray thus. This psalm of vengeance is the prayer of the innocent.”

With this statement, Bonhoeffer begins to crack open the “hard shell” of this difficult psalm, revealing a way into the core of its meaning.

When reading psalms of vengeance, we must keep in mind the unconditional covenant (promise) God made with Abraham in Genesis 12:3. God said, “I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” The goal of this promise is blessing for “all peoples on earth.” We know that this blessing delivered to all people is salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, the promised Seed of Eve (Genesis 3:15). If anything were to oppose this work of God, then the promised blessing would be put at risk. Thus, God commits himself to assuring the outcome of this promise by attaching this unconditional, unstoppable commitment of himself to the line of Abraham, and ultimately, to the sending of his Son, Jesus Christ.

Returning to Psalm 58, we read the troubling requests in verse 6-9 in a new light:

Break the teeth in their mouths, O God; Lord, tear out the fangs of those lions! Let them vanish like water that flows away; when they draw the bow, let their arrows fall short. May they be like a slug that melts away as it moves along, like a stillborn child that never sees the sun (Psalm 58:6-9).

Seen in view of Genesis 12:3, we now recognize that this is no personal vendetta, but instead a prayer to protect the line of the Messiah and, with it, the provision for blessing to all peoples of

the earth through Jesus. The Psalmist prays here in the same way that we pray, “Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”

The problem for us frail and sinful pray-ers, however, is that this prayer is too easily tainted by our own self-righteousness. The fact is, evil is not just “out there.” It’s “in here,” too—it’s in *me* as much as in others. So, as I attempt to pray this psalm, I find *myself* in the crosshairs of God’s judgment. This would be the death of me if it weren’t for what we find in the climax of this psalm: “The righteous will be glad when they are avenged, when they dip their feet in the blood of the wicked” (58:10).

What we have here, argues Bonhoeffer, is a picture of the day when the holy, righteous God crushes his enemy. Only, as viewed through Christ on the cross, we acknowledge that the One made to be the enemy of God—the One who, as Luther says, became the greatest sinner of all time—is not us (frail, sinful humanity) but rather Jesus Christ, God’s one and only Son!

Hallelujah! The ones who were wicked have been redeemed and made righteous! To paraphrase the psalm, these righteous ones are those who rejoice as they wash their feet in the blood of the One who was made wicked for them! Or, as the apostle Paul put it, “God made him who knew no sin to become sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Bonhoeffer brings his sermon to a focus as he says, “Anyone who shrinks back in horror from such joy in God’s vengeance and from the blood of the wicked does not yet understand what happened on the cross of Christ. God’s righteous wrath at the wicked has, after all, *already*

come down upon us. The blood of the wicked has *already* flowed. God’s death sentence over the wicked has *already* been pronounced. God’s righteousness has been fulfilled. *All this happened on the cross of Jesus Christ.*”

And with this, the psalm’s apparent “thirst for blood” has been turned on its head, as the sinful ones praying it find themselves recipients of God’s mercy in Jesus Christ. As Bonhoeffer states, the ones who have now become partakers through faith with the innocence of Jesus Christ, the truly Innocent One, “pray along with this psalm, in humble gratitude for the cross of Christ having saved us from wrath, with the ardent petition that God bring all our enemies to the cross of Christ and grant them mercy, with fierce yearning that the day might soon come when Christ visibly triumphs over all his enemies and establishes his kingdom. Thus,” Bonhoeffer concludes, “have we learned to pray this psalm. Amen.”

Dr. Brad Pribbenow, Ph.D. serves Lutheran Brethren Seminary as Dean and Professor of Old Testament.

Sources

1. Bonhoeffer, Sermon on Psalm 58, DBWE 14:964. Emphasis added.

Watch the videos:
www.clba.org/bc18-workshops





Kay A. serves the Church of the Lutheran Brethren as a missionary in Chad, Africa.

My First Week as a Missionary in Chad

KAY A.

“See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut” (Rev. 3:8).

The late night flight into Ndjamena is surreal. Am I really landing in Chad? I cover my hair with the obligatory scarf to exit the plane, enter the bus parked on the tarmac, and sit patiently for a period of time, only to drive a matter of yards to exit the bus and climb the steps into the airport.

An official looks at my passport, scans my forehead, and squirts an unknown substance onto my hands. Another official

hands me an embarkation form, but my pen is leaking ink, so he sends me to the men’s bathroom where there is a working faucet. I hurriedly scrub most of the ink off, return to fill in the form and take my place in a long line that eventually brings me to an official seated at a glass-enclosed desk.

I try to act nonchalant, but I am secretly relieved when he returns my passport.

After showing my passport again at the stairs down to the luggage area, I spot a porter with my name on a card. He hurries me towards the exit door, where there is a

delay with the baggage inspection official and a request for bribe money.

The porter is vanishing out the door with my luggage, so I grab my passport out of the official’s hand and run to find the porter. No one stops me and I enter the Chadian night with skirts flying.

At the Land Cruiser in the parking lot, there are joyful hugs from my teammates, my luggage is loaded, and Jeremy wheels the vehicle out into the dark streets. He patiently answers my flood of questions while expertly avoiding what seems like a chaotic tangle of vehicles and people

“See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut.”

Revelation 3:8

running across the street. It is oddly comforting to feel the sand on the seat under my fingers and see the same fur on the dash for heat protection that was there when I visited before.

The guards at the compound call out greetings as they open the gates wide for us to drive through. My luggage is hefted into the apartment where colorful signs from the missionary children decorate the entrance. It is very late and after some brief instructions from Jeremy and Sallee, I reluctantly let my teammates go and gratefully climb into a bed with crisp, clean sheets.

Day 1 – Monday

“See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put fine garments on you” (Zechariah 3:4).

I woke up early to a rooster crowing, dogs barking, and a new way to dress in long skirts and head scarves.

A gas stove and six matches later, I had pancakes on my plate and tea in my teacup that travels with me. A cold shower and I head outside to see the missionary children playing in the courtyard.

Fellow missionary Sonja N. takes me on a short walk around the outside of the walls. She introduces me to the woman pounding grain into flour and selling onions outside the gate. Children and adults call her name while we pick our way through the garbage and avoid the muddy spots.

Back at my apartment, I carefully remove my sandals outside the door and think about how very rich I am.

Later, I have lunch with Jeremy and Sallee S. and their daughters in the office compound and get a glimpse of the wide range of their duties.

Day 2 – Tuesday

Veteran missionaries reassure me that it is not outside the norm to lose my breakfast and spend a large portion of the day

getting acquainted with my bathroom the first week here.

Jeremy and Sallee help me set up my finances and phone service. Later, a knock on the door brings the tailor with new cushions for the wooden chairs and couch in my apartment.

Late in the day, I call my mom on Messenger and we are thrilled to know we can talk to each other live, when the internet is working! We are not so far away from one another after all!

Day 3 – Wednesday

I attempt a shower to wash my hair, but unheated water in combination with a low-grade fever is too much for me. A decision to wash my hair in the kitchen sink rewards me with a nose-to-nose meeting with a gecko. Surprised that it doesn't faze me at all, I switch to the other sink and then find a dustpan to take the little guy outside. Maybe I can do this!

I am frustrated that I do not feel well and miss out on a trip to the market. I so want to see this country that I live in! I tried to do more unpacking but my temperature went up.

Day 4 – Thursday

It feels so right to be here. More unpacking reminds me of family and friends. There is grieving for the loss of nearness, along with a deep sense of peace that God has brought me here. How can both realities exist together?

I am surprised at how quickly it becomes normal to use a water purifier, and to sanitize vegetables, fruits and dishes in bleach.

A meal of corn *boule* with a sauce of okra and fermented beans at the home of missionaries Nathaniel and Carrie S. goes down well and I begin to feel stronger again.

Day 5 – Friday

My fever broke in the night and it seems so easy to accomplish daily tasks now.

It is sobering and mind-boggling to prepare a “go-bag” in the event of an unforeseen evacuation situation.

Joy of joys, it is possible to take a fairly warm shower later in the day when the heat of the sun has warmed the water in the pipes!

Day 6 – Saturday

I try to reconcile my nice clean bed under a mosquito net with the idea that there are people around me sleeping on mud floors during the rainy season.

Just when unpacking and sorting medical supplies is getting way too complicated, there is a knock on the door and one of the missionary children asks if I want to put a puzzle together with him in the library. I readily agree, leaving behind the medical mess on the floor, and we go to the library where we sort the edge pieces and talk about what our favorite foods are.

Later, Carrie stops by my apartment. She briefs me on when and how to use the malaria test kits, and I try to picture poking my finger for the blood sample.

Day 7 – Sunday

Today, we worshiped together at the compound. It was a precious time of sharing from God's Word, praying, and singing together.

I am so very thankful that God is good and gracious and gives me a whole day to rest and worship him. My strength has returned and with it the realization that I am really here in Chad, where God told me I would be. Praise the Lord!

Kay A. serves Lutheran Brethren International Mission and the Church of the Lutheran Brethren as a missionary in Chad, Africa.



Terach, from our CLB Chadian Church, will be moving his family from Southern Chad to serve as the school's first director.

Can You Build a School For US?

NATHANAEL S.

Can you build a school for us?" "Uh, no." That's pretty much how that phone conversation went. My family and I had left our village for the rainy season, and the village chief called me to ask me to build a school when I come back.

It wasn't the first time he had asked, either. Clearly, he had invited us to settle in their town hoping that I would develop the place for them, help them enter modernity.

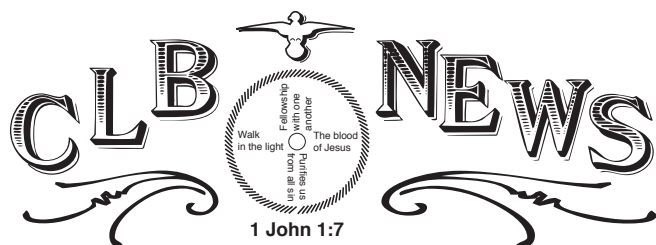
Our calling, however, is to share the gospel. And I'm quite open about the fact. "I'm here to teach you God's Word in your own language," I say to anyone who asks. It is a novelty. They think Christianity is

a French religion, because that is what they know from colonialism. All of their religious activity is conducted in Arabic. So, God's Word in their own language? Never heard of it. And when I tell them a Bible story in their own language, they're riveted. We're translating Scripture, we're building relationships and sharing God's good news. That's why I came. No, I'm not building a school.

Except that now, a year later, we are starting a school. It's not the kind of school the locals were hoping for. They already have a public school that meets in thatched-pole classrooms that they rebuild every year. But they want a big, beautiful new school. Never mind that

their kids don't show up for school until mid-December. Never mind that parents don't actually make their kids go to school if they don't want to. Never mind that teachers strike most years for some period of time because the government isn't paying their salaries. Never mind all that; they want a new private school to make the town look good. So no, I'm not going to build that kind of school.

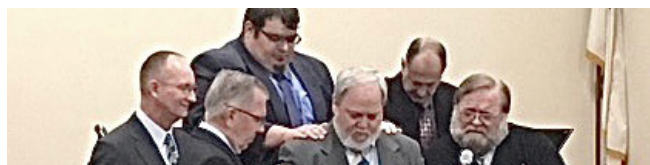
It's a common phenomenon in missions: the local people want development and access to the modern world; missionaries want to teach God's Word. Those priorities coincide in education. We were already starting to teach the neighbor kids. They would march off to their



1 John 1:7

SEPTEMBER/OCTOBER 2018

Panicucci Ordained as Elder



L to R: Elder Bruce Carlson, Regional Pastor Warren Geraghty, Rev. Michael Natale, Elders Peter Panicucci, Earl Sandin, and Dana Ekelund.

On June 3, 2018, Peter Panicucci was ordained as an elder at Faith Chapel Lutheran Brethren Church in Cranston, Rhode Island. Regional Pastor Warren Geraghty led the service.

“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my loving eye on you.”

Psalm 32:8

first-grade class full of optimism at 7:00 a.m. ...and come back an hour later to say that the teacher was away traveling. They weren't learning all that much this way, so I started to teach them. A short lesson in the alphabet, a Bible story, and a praise song in their own language. And I realized: this is why we came.

So we're starting a school, managed and taught by our Chadian partners in ministry, and focused on a holistic education. In addition to the core French curriculum, we will include classes in agriculture, and the "Story of the Prophets"—beginning in Genesis. We will also begin in a thatch classroom, because, as I told the village chief, "A

good school needs only two things: a good teacher and the engagement of the parents."

But we also need you. Please keep the school project in front of your prayer group, Bible study group, and church.

Nathanael S. serves with his wife Carrie on behalf of Lutheran Brethren International Mission and the Church of the Lutheran Brethren as missionaries in Chad, Africa.



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Chains for Christ

Other people can be very flippant regarding your struggles. You may be struggling through a long illness, disability, loss of job and income, a fractured vital relationship... Whatever it is, you feel completely stuck. It doesn't go away; it doesn't "get better."

And they say to you, "Well, God is working it all out for your good." Easy for them to say.

The Book of Acts concludes: "For two whole years Paul... proclaimed the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ—with all boldness and without hindrance!" Without hindrance, that is, except that Paul wore chains (the old-fashioned kind), probably never left the house, and was supervised day and night by a Roman soldier.

In the big picture, Paul had been imprisoned for two years in Caesarea, finally appealed to Caesar, then was transported to Rome where he waited another two years for a life-or-death trial before Nero. He may have worn those chains for well over four years. How he must have hated them!

Based on at least thirteen Scripture references, the chains were certainly on Paul's mind a lot. Testifying before King Agrippa, Paul says, "I pray to God that not only you but all who are listening to me today may become what I am, except for these chains." He wouldn't wish those chains on anyone!

But other passages reveal Paul's eventual understanding of his chains. In Ephesians 6:19-20, Paul calls himself an ambassador in chains for the mystery of the gospel. In Colossians 4:3, almost the same thing—"We... proclaim the mystery of Christ, for which I am in chains." And in Philemon 1:13, "I am in chains for the gospel."

We begin to understand that Paul does not see himself wearing chains of Rome. On at least four occasions he refers to himself instead as the prisoner of Christ.

In Philippians 1:12-14, Paul speaks of the tangible benefits of his chains. "Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear."

Was Paul convinced that his hardship was good for him? Perhaps not. But he was convinced that it was for the good of many others, and for the advancement of the good news of Jesus.

So Paul says to the Colossian Christians (4:18)—and to us—"Remember my chains."

Rev. Brent Juliot serves as pastor of Oak Ridge Lutheran Brethren Church in Menomonie, Wisconsin.

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