

# Faith & Fellowship

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**Quiet Moments**

Email prayer requests to: [pray@clba.org](mailto:pray@clba.org)

**Into the Depth**

H.E. WISLØFF



Photo by Siles Baisch on Unsplash

When God forgives, he also forgets. He does not keep a file of sins forgiven. This truth is often verified in Scripture. The prophet writes, “You will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea” (Micah 7:19). That which is hidden there will never surface.

There are times when past sins rob a Christian of peace and joy.

To be sure, we are forgiven, but memories bob up and destroy everything. It is not always easy to rest in the forgiveness of sin.

When memories of past failures disturb us, it is unspeakably precious to hold on to a Word such as this one which God has given us today, “Our sins have been cast into the depths of the sea.” God has done this because of the blood of Jesus.

Then we too may forget, in the name of Jesus, all the sins of the past. Forgiveness of sins is a complete forgiveness. That which God has blotted out shall not be disclosed even in eternity.

Faith in the forgiveness of sins gives peace and joy.

*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.*

# A Love Story

TROY TYSDAL

The old man greeted me kindly and offered a cup of coffee as I entered his home. He and his wife were members of our congregation, but due to health issues they hadn't attended in years. Eager to get to know them, I accepted the offer for coffee and took a seat at their table. "How did you meet?" I asked, as the old woman brought me a treat from the kitchen. The old man laughed, and replied, "How much time do you have?"

Just before 8:00 a.m. on December 7, 1941, a young man on the deck of the USS California was setting up folding chairs for Sunday service. The California served as the flagship of the United States Battle Fleet in the Pacific Ocean, and the young man was proud to be counted as part of her crew. As he placed chairs into neatly organized rows, he heard the ominous sound of planes approaching. At 8:05 a.m. a pair of torpedoes struck the California, and the ship rocked violently. The young man was knocked unconscious. The next thing he remembered was being shaken awake and told to abandon ship.

The old man said to me, "I couldn't hear them. My ears were still ringing, my head still throbbing, but I knew what they were trying to tell me, the ship was going down!"

The young man followed his fellow sailors over the side of the California and into the warm waters of the Pacific. As he swam to shore the California sank to its grave.

## MARK 15:43-16:7

Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent member of the Council, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, went boldly to Pilate and asked for Jesus' body. Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he gave the body to Joseph. So Joseph bought some linen cloth, took down the body, wrapped it in the linen, and placed



it in a tomb cut out of rock. Then he rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph saw where he was laid.

When the Sabbath was over, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so that they might go to anoint Jesus' body. Very early on the first day of the week, just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

But when they looked up, they saw that the stone, which was very large, had been rolled away. As they entered the tomb, they saw a young man dressed in a white robe sitting on the right side, and they were alarmed.

"Don't be alarmed," he said. "You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples and Peter, 'He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.'"

The Bible tells us the greatest love story that has ever been told. Within its pages we learn about a God who loved the world so much that he sent his one and only Son to take on flesh, and to give his life as a sacrifice for the sins of the world.

Mary and the disciples of Christ were probably not surprised by the death of Jesus. He had told them on several

occasions that he would die, and they had witnessed first-hand the rage of the world against him. Yet, death was not the only thing Jesus promised. He also told them that he would rise again.

Today, if you visit Pearl Harbor, you will not find the USS California at the bottom of the ocean. After the attack on December 7, salvage efforts patched her hull, pumped out the water, and raised her back to life. She returned to the continental US and was outfitted for war.

"That's where I met her," said the old man, looking across the table at his bride, still smitten after all the years. "She was a Rosie the Riveter," he said, "... and I told her I'd come back for her."

As Jesus' disciples gathered in Galilee, he appeared to them, but something had changed. He was now the one who had conquered death, and all power and authority in heaven and on earth belonged to him. As Jesus ascended into heaven, he charged his disciples to take his message of love to their neighbors and the nations, but he warned them it would not be easy.

Is your life as a Christian easy?

Do not shrink back from the battle, but keep the faith. Whatever trial you endure, whatever heartbreak comes your way, know this: the one who has conquered death has promised to come back for you, and he has never failed to keep his word.

*Rev. Troy Tysdal is Editor in Chief of Faith & Fellowship magazine.*



*The Bronson boys.*

# Fully God and Fully Human

MANDY BRONSON

**H**ow is Jesus fully God and fully human? I do not think I understand it well, and I cannot explain it well with big theological words. But maybe, as a mama, I feel some sort of understanding when I think of him in his final moments, caring for his mama.

My mind, with all the emotions, often goes back to the early morning of June 19, 2019. A few hours earlier, our six-month-old son's doctor had come into his hospital room to let us know they had found a liver that was compatible for him. Ever since Boaz was diagnosed with a liver disease a few weeks after his birth, it felt as though we were forced to watch his body slowly deteriorate. Each day, he struggled keeping down the small amount of milk we fed him in his feeding tube. His skin color and eyes turned

more yellow, and he slept more each day. Without this new liver, he would die.

That night, they needed me to contact my husband Danny, bring Boaz's brothers to see him before surgery, and fill out paperwork to consent for surgery. There was a sense of urgency and overwhelming relief, fear and sadness, and exhaustion.

Is it even possible to feel all those emotions at once?

I think many mothers reading this would give a resounding "yes." At 11 p.m., we had prayed over Boaz and his medical team right before they wheeled him off. Honestly, I think Danny prayed, and I squeaked noises between messy sobs. I was having difficulty seeing well because my eyes were puffy from crying. They intubated Boaz and placed various ports and tubes. Then we were able to be with

him while they started plasmapheresis to prepare his body for a liver from another blood type. I had trouble looking at or touching Boaz without dissolving into sobs.

During the next four hours I stayed at Boaz's side, as we waited for his new liver to arrive from Illinois. Finally it came, and his transplant surgeon inspected it. The surgery started at 4 a.m. We were warned it could take up to twelve hours. I remember not being able to catch my breath due to crying as they wheeled him away, because I wondered if this might be the last time I would see him alive. Miraculously, his surgery only took four hours. We were awakened in a room in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit at 8 a.m. by his transplant surgeon, who said it went well and we could see him soon.

***“For this reason he had to be made like them, fully human in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people.”***

***Hebrews 2:17***

That was *our* story during that night, but it is impossible to share that story without wondering about *their* story. What about the family who donated their baby’s liver, so my baby had a chance at life? This liver did not just involve the thirteen-month-old baby who somehow had lost his or her life. It involved that family. He or she had a mother and a father. Did he or she have siblings? Over and over, Boaz’s surgeon mentioned how well that other baby’s liver fit into Boaz so that they were able to close his abdomen without complications. But why was that liver in Boaz and not in that other precious baby? A family in their deepest grief chose to think of helping another. Thinking of this baby’s mama brings instant tears to my eyes. Was she able to stand on her own as she signed the papers agreeing to donate their baby’s organ or as she said goodbye? Did someone have to hold her up? How puffy were her eyes? What does June 19, 2019 mean to her? How does she remember that day? The death of her baby allowed my baby Boaz to have life.

Jesus had a human body. He was born (Luke 2:7). He grew (Luke 2:40, 52). He grew tired (John 4:6) and got thirsty (John 19:28) and hungry (Matthew 4:2). He became physically weak (Matthew 4:11; Luke 23:26), and he died (Luke 23:46). And he had a mother (Luke 2). As Jesus was whipped, humiliated, slapped in the face, and finally crucified, his mother was always present. In John 19:26-27,

we hear Jesus telling John to behold his mother, meaning that he should take care of her as Jesus was no longer able to. Picturing this, I wonder how Mary was standing. How was she weeping? Was someone required to physically hold her up in this moment? I am reminded of God’s empathy toward me, toward us.

I have heard it said that having a child is like living with your heart outside your body. I get that. In times of grief or hurt involving my children, I feel a pain in my own heart almost like I am struggling to breathe.

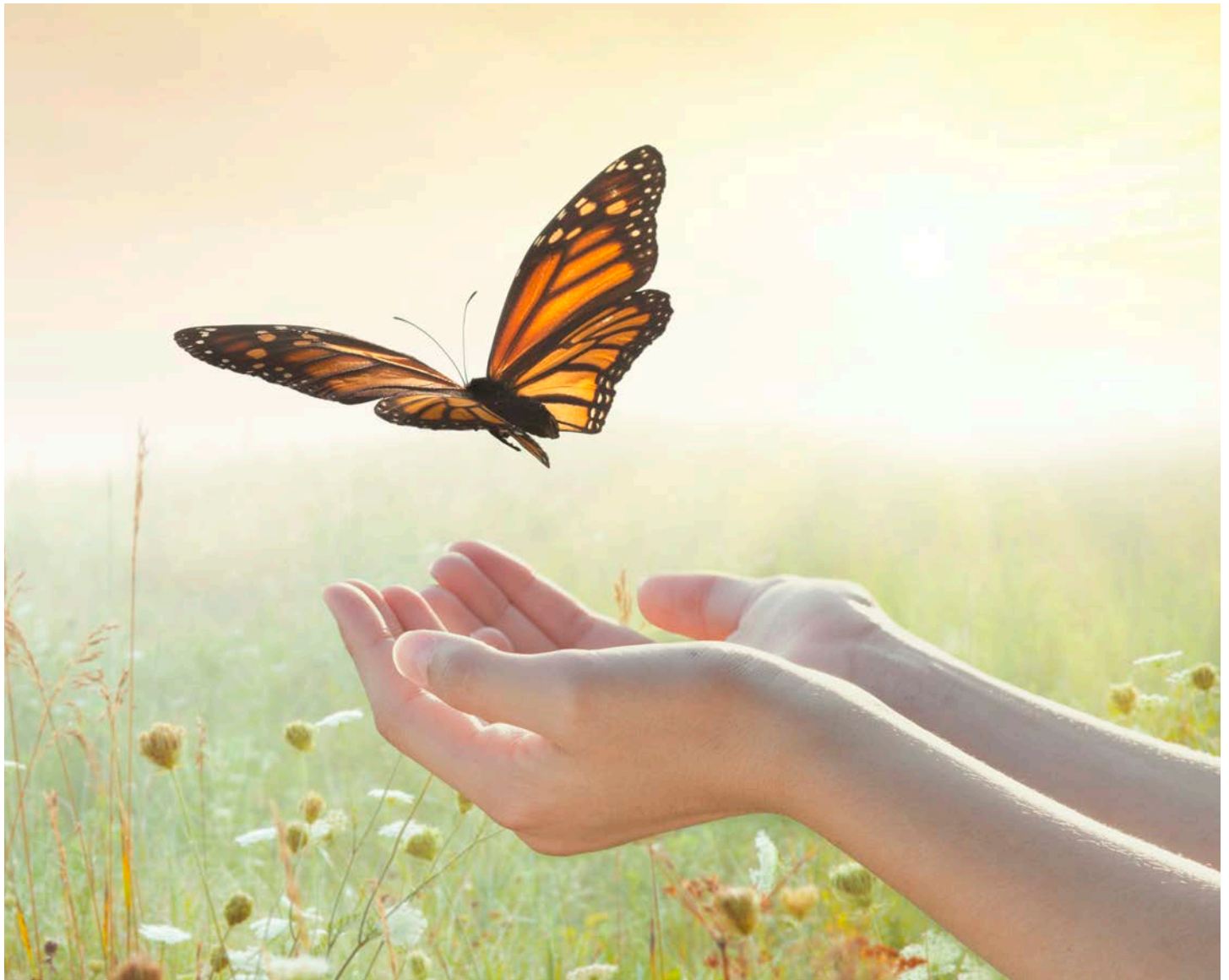
When Boaz was diagnosed with biliary atresia at three weeks old, it turned our lives upside down. It drastically changed our plans to share the gospel with the Bilala people in Chad. Amid the heartache, I remember my anger toward God: “You’d better make sure there is nothing wrong with him, God. You’d better heal him. I do not think I can go on without him; I know I do not want to try. How am I to continue to worship and serve you without a part of my heart?” I know Boaz is God’s child, but I am selfish. God would not give him to me and then take him away, would he? Did Mary wonder those same things? After Jesus’ birth, as Mary pondered all these things in her heart (Luke 2:19, 51), was she preparing for these moments of anguish standing before the cross of her dying son?

Jesus only spoke a few times from the

cross. In one of his last utterances, we see Jesus dying in agony and between gasps of breath, in great pain, he thinks to care for his mother. Jesus is a son with a mother, with a family. And unlike the baby who gave Boaz his liver, Jesus is offering up his own life, to save the world. As crazy as it sounds, I think I can feel it. I can feel his mama’s pain in watching her son dying in order to give us life. I think of this other mama in Illinois who said goodbye to her child, while we watched our son’s eyes and skin change color as his new liver worked miraculously in his body. I think I understand what it means that Jesus became human in full, so that he might save us in full.



*Mandy Bronson served the Church of the Lutheran Brethren as a missionary in Chad. She currently is a member of Community of Joy Lutheran Brethren Church in Eagan, Minnesota where her husband Rev. Danny Bronson serves as pastor.*



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# You Don't Need to Fear Death

JEFF SEAVER

**W**hy did Joseph wake Mary in the middle of the night and tell her to gather her things quickly so they could flee to Egypt? Jesus was in danger. The forces of darkness were intent on killing him. A spiritual battle was engaged. The enemy of our souls had reason to fear the child. “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work” (1 John 3:8).

In his humanity Jesus was like any other Jewish child. But his mom knew he was anything but ordinary. Before he was conceived in her womb, the virgin Mary was told, “The Holy Spirit will come on you, and the power of the Most High will

overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). The birth of Jesus was a miracle. He was as human as Mary and he was as divine as God. He had to be in order to do what he came to do. The angel told Mary’s fiancé Joseph that Jesus would “save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21b). No ordinary human could save us from our sins. But he could if he were God!

John described the wonder of Jesus this way:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning.

Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made... The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:1-3, 14).

This description of Jesus is so important. It reflects the wonder of who Jesus is and why we can trust our souls to him. It takes us into the realm of the very nature of God and helps us understand the relationship in the Trinity, which is the unfathomable reality that God is one

**Jesus said, “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die...”**

**John 11:25-26**

God who exists in three Persons—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. So we need to keep this in mind when we look at what God has done for us in the person of the Son.

During the three short years of his public ministry Jesus clearly revealed that he was no ordinary human. We see his divine nature in his miracles of calming the storm, feeding the multitudes, healing the sick, casting out demons, and even raising the dead. Jesus, the Son of God, revealed the kingdom in ways that sparked hope in those longing for a Savior. Their hopes were not misplaced. Neither are ours!

The demons knew Jesus was more than a prophet or great teacher. As Jesus was met by two demon-possessed men whose lives were being destroyed by the devil, the demons feared Jesus and shouted, “What do you want with us, Son of God?... Have you come to torture us before the appointed time?” (Matthew 8:29). They knew they were in the presence of no ordinary human. Jesus was the one who came to destroy the work of the devil, and they were doomed!

Jesus not only demonstrated that he was the Son of God, but he declared it. He said,

- “I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty” (John 6:35).
- “I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness, but will have the light of life” (John 8:12).
- “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:11).
- “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die...” (John 11:25).

- “I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me” (John 14:6).
- “I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:5).

These are tremendous promises. Only if he were God could Jesus say these things. He said them because he is!

A defining moment in his ministry occurred when some men brought their paralyzed buddy to Jesus.

When Jesus saw their faith, he said, “*Friend, your sins are forgiven.*” The Pharisees and the teachers of the law began thinking to themselves, “Who is this fellow who speaks blasphemy? *Who can forgive sins but God alone?*” Jesus knew what they were thinking and asked, “Why are you thinking these things in your hearts? Which is easier: to say, ‘Your sins are forgiven,’ or to say, ‘Get up and walk’? But I want you to know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.” So he said to the paralyzed man, “I tell you, get up, take your mat and go home” (Luke 5:20-24).

Incidents like this led to Jesus’ death. Jesus would be crucified because he was accused of thinking and acting as if he were God. The fact is, he was and is! Jesus, the Son of God, came to destroy the work of the devil. The devil, knowing that, plotted Jesus’ death. We can hear the devil’s hatred in the crowds that shouted, “Crucify him! Crucify him!” And so, Jesus was crucified. If Jesus were merely human, that would have been the end of the story. Yes, he was as human as any of us, but remember, he was also in very nature God!

God did this for you! He came to us in the person of Jesus. Jesus died for us. “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death” (Hebrew 2:14,15). The devil’s vile grip on humanity is the power of sin, which leads to death. So, in his great love for us, God has done this great thing. Jesus shed his holy blood so that we can know with certainty that our sins have all been forgiven! Then Jesus rose from the grave, victorious over death. The Son of God defeated death for us!

They killed Jesus because he claimed to be the Son of God. Jesus rose from the grave because that’s exactly who he was... and is! This Son of God died for you so you can hear the words, “Friend, your sins are forgiven.” And he conquered death so you can know the certain hope of eternal life. The believer can say, “Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?” The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:55-57).



*Rev. Jeff Seaver serves as Senior Pastor at Triumph Lutheran Brethren Church of West Fargo, North Dakota and Moorhead, Minnesota.*



Marjan\_Apostolovic/Stock

# Good News from the Tomb

JOEL EGGE

**W**ho understands forgiveness best—the forgiver or the forgiven?

A betrayed husband (call him TK) wandered in rage, tears, thoughts of revenge, and prayer throughout the night. In the morning, he found himself heading to church, which was his practice.

It had started ten years before when their son and daughters were young. TK and his wife enjoyed life in a family that loved adventure, each other, and the Lord Jesus. But without warning, she became quiet, emotionally absent, and even bitter toward him and their children.

The tension grew as the weeks, months, and years dragged on. Then TK's wife found a new "friend," one that came in a bottle. At times, when intoxicated, she would laugh and chatter a bit but always slip back into her darkness. Spiritual, emotional, and medical counseling didn't break through the frosty night of her soul.

As soon as he could, their son moved away to escape the constant bickering. Their daughters withdrew into their private, high school lives.

A decade into her silence, she drank more than usual and started talking about their romance. She recounted the happy times of their early marriage when suddenly she paused and stared into the distance as if searching for the courage to proceed. She stumbled ahead, saying that a man began visiting her when TK was at work and their children in school. His visits increased, and she began welcoming their passionate encounters.

"But," she said, "I won't tell you who he is. He's your friend!"

TK anguished for weeks until another night when his wife drank more than intended, and she named the man who had accompanied her in their bedroom.

Shocked, TK left the house, unsure where to go or what to do. He wandered

in the darkness of the night and his soul. Filled with rage, disbelief, and confusion, he planned how his betrayer "friend" would pay—and pay dearly—for robbing him and his wife of ten years of marital joy and their children of a healthy home environment. It was a Saturday night.

Sunday dawned. He went to worship, as he usually did on Sundays. None other than the man he wanted to suffer met him in the foyer. His trusted, longtime friend extended his hand, smiled, and wished him "Good morning."

As TK shoved his hand deeper into his pocket, he "heard" a prayer he had voiced hundreds of times, "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us."

His hostility melted, his fist unlocked, and he extended an open hand to the betrayer.

So I ask again, "Who understands forgiveness best—the forgiver or the forgiven?"



**“He himself bore our sins’ in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; ‘by his wounds you have been healed.’”**

**1 Peter 2:24**

David Augsburger says it is the one who forgives,<sup>1</sup> and I agree. The adulterer will never comprehend the pain TK suffered or the cost he “paid” to forgive him. Neither can we grasp the depths of Jesus’ anguish nor the heights of his mercy as he prayed, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing” (Luke 23:34).

Jesus’ contemporaries knew they had called for his crucifixion. Still, they did not realize the heinousness of their guilt or the enormous cost of being forgiven. Neither do we recognize the extreme cost to Jesus of absorbing our sin, of being *made to be sin* so that we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Some women went to Jesus’ tomb early on Resurrection Sunday. To their surprise, a person dressed in absolute whiteness was seated inside.

The divine messenger said, “Don’t be alarmed. You are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. He has risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid him. But go, tell his disciples *and Peter*, ‘He is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.’”

Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. They said nothing to anyone because they were afraid (Mark 16:6-8).

The angel addressed their fear. He confirmed they were looking for “Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified.” Then he declared, “He has risen!”

He told them to tell the disciples Jesus would meet them in Galilee.

The text says the women fled from the tomb bewildered, trembling, and afraid.

The mob had demanded Jesus be crucified. His disciples betrayed and abandoned him. Now he is alive! What will Jesus do? Is this judgment day?

Jesus’ resurrection is either the best of all news or the most frightening of all reality.

Remember how Joseph’s brothers felt when they were invited (told) to dine in the Egyptian palace? As they were interrogated, they realized the officer knew more than they wanted anyone to know. Likely, they wondered if their past was “catching up to them.” After they told the royal official that one brother was dead and their youngest was with their aged father, the officer ordered his attendants to leave the room. Then he said, “I am Joseph!”

The brothers were speechless “because they were terrified at his presence” (Genesis 45:3). They were petrified with fear of the living Joseph who had authority over them. They knew they deserved to be thrown in prison.

But Joseph embraced them! He assured them that while their deed was evil, God turned it for good!

Likewise, Jesus’ resurrection is terrifying until we are told the Good News that he wants to see us, “just as he told you” (Mark 16:7, cf. 14:27-8).

Satan engineered Jesus’ death, but God turned it for our salvation. Scripture declares that Christ died for us while we were sinners. It assures us that having been forgiven through his death, we will certainly be saved through his life! (Cf. Romans 5:9-10.)

“*And Peter*,” the angel emphasized.

It was early the first Resurrection Sunday that Peter received news of forgiveness. He had denied knowing the Lord the same night he claimed to be the most loyal of all Jesus’ disciples. Amazingly, he was personally identified as included in the invitation. In preparation for their future relationship, Jesus led him in confession and affirmed his calling to feed and care for God’s people (cf. John 21).<sup>2</sup>

While Peter would never grasp his

salvation’s full cost, he knew the price was far greater than any human could sacrifice. He declared that God redeemed us “with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect” (1 Peter 1:19).

Jesus, crucified and risen, extends his arms to embrace and assure you that he included you in praying, “Father, forgive them...”

The Risen One says, “I forgive you.” Believe him.



*Rev. Joel Egge served as president of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren from 2000-2014. He is a member of Bethel Lutheran Church in Fergus Falls, Minnesota.*

## Source

1. Augsburger, David W., 70 X 7, *The Freedom of Forgiveness*, Chicago, Moody Press, c 1970, 3rd printing. From pages 9-12.
2. *ibid.* After worship on that Sunday of forgiveness, the newly liberated TK went home and forgave his wife. It took time for her to believe him. It took longer to accept his forgiveness and relax in the reality of forgiving love, but their marriage was renewed.

## CLB Shared Ministry: Contribution Report

**\$2,023,217**

Received Through 2/15/21

**\$2,650,000**

2020-21 Contribution Goal

*The CLB Fiscal Year Ends April 30, 2021.*

# Not Yet Home

**PAUL LARSON**

**F**riends and partners in mission: The author of Hebrews writes, “Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see. This is what the ancients were commended for” (11:1-2). The author continues by pointing to examples of how the patriarchs and matriarchs of ancient Israel lived by faith. The words about Abraham particularly resonate with us today: “By faith Abraham, when called to go... obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going” (11:8).

This is a reminder to us of who we are, of where we find and where we don’t find our home, and of how we by faith follow God in his mission. We are told that, by faith, Abraham “made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God” (11:9-10). In fact, all the faithful people listed in Hebrews 11 “saw the things promised by God and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth... They were longing for a better country, a heavenly one, therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God...” (11:13,16).

To call him our God—this is so good! We admit we are not yet home, nor is our neighbor. When the CLB Mission Team and Council of Directors planned our ministry budget for the 2020-21 fiscal year, we did so in consideration of circumstances,

anticipating the reasonable possibility of contribution decline in a context of national unrest and an atmosphere of polarization. The vulnerable uncertainty of a deadly pandemic was hindering our congregations’ abilities to meet and minister in person. So we did our best to pursue our vision, support our mission, and plan accordingly financially. We adjusted our budgets, tightened our expenses, tabled some plans.

Still, the vital mission of Lutheran Brethren Seminary ministered forward. Church leaders need to be trained, rooted in the Word. Lutheran Brethren International Mission moved forward. We would not bring missionaries home, but planned for the advance of the gospel. Likewise our newly restructured North American Mission continued with a vision and strategy to plant churches, and also to serve the vitality of our existing congregations to live out our calling as a disciple-making movement.

With that background, I want to express gratitude to God and for you, Church of the Lutheran Brethren. You have selflessly and sacrificially responded to God’s call, and you have embraced this vital mission we share. As many of you know, year-end giving is crucial to the support of our shared CLB mission. The months of December (calendar year end) and April (fiscal year end) are especially important.

Our target goal for contributions for the month of December—set with caution, humility, hope, and prayer—was just over \$610,000. The gifts of God’s people in

that month expressed a great faithfulness, sacrifice, and expectancy for our shared mission. I’m so humbled and grateful to our Lord and his people to report \$620,000 was received for our shared mission and for the gospel in December, reaching and exceeding our goal by \$10,000. Thank you. Thank with me the Lord of the Church and our disciple-making God for this great outpouring.

The CLB fiscal year will end on April 30, 2021. As of February 15, we have received \$2,023,217 of our \$2,650,000 million fiscal-year goal. Yes, we have a way to go. But as of today, I want to report that we are grateful, and by God’s grace and your continued partnership, we are on the way toward reaching our goal. So on behalf of all the shared ministries of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren, and on behalf of all those longing foreigners and strangers on earth who will yet hear the gospel and find their home because of this mission, I say, “Thank you.”



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

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# One Mission Together

CHERYL OLSEN

It has been challenging for women to gather in person this year, due to COVID-19. Some feel lonely, unable to fellowship, contribute, or safely meet with others. Others feel overly taxed, doing double-duty at work, church, and home. But you *can* be involved, whether you're in an isolated situation, or in a frenzied multi-tasking season of life.

The desire of WMCLB is to align itself with the mission of Jesus, here and overseas. Each year women join together in projects that encourage women to grow in their faith, and to spread the gospel message in North America and other nations.

**Our focus project** this year has been to aid in providing an airstrip for our missionaries in Chad, Africa. You can help this become a reality, right where you are! Here is the first step: Pray with us that the Lord would turn the hearts and minds of the Chadian government officials to grant the approvals needed to build the airstrip.

Every Wednesday at 11:30 a.m. eastern time, a group of women pray for this request, and other missionary needs. You can join this virtual prayer meeting or pray right where you are. The Apostle Paul asked for specific prayer from his readers, "You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many" (2 Corinthians 1:11, ESV). Will you help, praying for this specific request?

**The yearly SWEET Retreat** is a weekend for seminary and faculty wives to meet, connect, and fellowship together, funded through WMCLB giving. This year's speaker, Gretchen Ronnevik, focused on Gospel Mentoring. Participants commented: "I love how Gretchen spoke on Law and Gospel, and how that motivates the way we mentor



Back: Emily Juhl, Christa Christensen, Crystal Veum, Joy Mathiesen, Alexa Fraser, Gudrun Boe.  
Front: Kari Andrews, Gianna Reese, Sallee Stanton, Kelsey Matthys, Gretchen Ronnevik.

and serve." "It was nice to have down time to rest and be refreshed by nature." "We were also blessed to hear from Sallee Stanton about the ministry she and her husband provide at the Welcome Center in N'Djamena, Chad." This event was hosted by Inspiration Point at Twin Oaks, the new camp property near Vining, Minnesota. Peak fall foliage provided added appreciation of the amazing trails and spacious new grounds.

Here's what you can do: Since many of the SWEET Retreat women are wives of our future missionaries, church planters, and pastors of our Lutheran Brethren churches, will you commit to pray for them during their training years?

**HELP** (Household Equipment Linen Project) is a way to give to missionary families who are returning overseas, or on home assignment. We are so grateful for churches who have given to this separate designated fund, as three families have received funds this year. Would you consider a special gift to this fund, in addition to your regular giving to WMCLB?

**God is working** even through technology! We are grateful for virtual

Bible Studies, virtual speakers for events, and even online contributions! April 30 is the end of the fiscal year for WMCLB, so we encourage you to give, be as involved as you can, and above all, pray!

**Contributions:** By mail, WMCLB, Box 655, Fergus Falls, MN 56538-0655, or online, [www.clba.org/giving](http://www.clba.org/giving).

**Send HELP funds to:** Joy Mathiesen, 1421 Highway Terrace, Fergus Falls, MN 56537.

**Online prayer meeting:** Contact [wmclbchairman@gmail.com](mailto:wmclbchairman@gmail.com) for the Zoom link.

*Cheryl Olsen is the Faith & Fellowship correspondent for Women's Ministries of the Church of the Lutheran Brethren.*



Visit WMCLB online: [www.WMCLB.org](http://www.WMCLB.org)  
Email: [WMCLBcontact@gmail.com](mailto:WMCLBcontact@gmail.com)



*Ethan Christofferson hiking with friends in Taiwan.*

# Being Useful in Taiwan

**ETHAN CHRISTOFFERSON**

Every time I talk to Mrs. Yue about Christianity, she predictably retells me how she faithfully helps her extended family (and two other persons who died without descendants) by performing the twice-daily ancestor rituals for them at the god shelf in her home. As I have probed and listened to Mrs. Yue’s heart over the course of the last five years, I have concluded that being able to perform these rituals makes her feel deeply useful to others. Feeling useful brings the security of knowing that those she has helped for so many years can be counted on to assist her in the future as she gets older (80+) and weaker. Since Christians don’t worship ancestors, Mrs. Yue quickly dismisses any talk of Christianity. She understands that the

Christian way of life would forbid the actions she depends on to make her feel useful and secure.

How can I bring the Word of God closer to my friend? I’ve been praying and planning... and here is my next step: I will invite Mrs. Yue to join me (and several other Christian couples with a burden to reach the unreached in Taiwan) on one of our weekly Sunday afternoon hikes (yes, she still hikes at 80+!).

While we hike, I want to initiate a discussion with her (and our group) about “getting the help one needs” and “being useful.” I’ll start with some questions to bring her thinking to the surface so it can be engaged, and to stimulate her to realize that there may be other options in these areas. Questions like: “Why is

it that people need so much help from others? How did things get to be this way?” and “What is the best way to determine a reliable source of help?” and “What makes someone useful?”

As we’re walking and discussing these things for a while, I’ll suggest we pull off the trail for a rest break. Then I plan to tell the story of Gideon and, in doing so, flesh out God’s perspective on what it means to be useful and secure. Some ideas I want to highlight as I proceed: 1) Problems come to us because we are foolish enough to look to others (rather than our Creator) for help; 2) God is a reliable source of ALL the help we need; and 3) people are useful, not in order to gain the help they need, but because God—to fulfill his purposes in the world—makes them so.

***The Lord said to Gideon, “You have too many men. I cannot deliver Midian into their hands, or Israel would boast against me, ‘My own strength has saved me.’”***

***Judges 7:2***

Gideon’s story is found in Judges 6-8, but this is the short version I will share with our hikers:

The Israelites were in a bad place—their enemies were brutally oppressing them to the point that they were starving and hiding in caves to stay alive. Created by God to depend on him for everything, these Israelites had cut themselves off from him and sought out the help of Baal, a god that other nations around them said was an awesome source of help. It was this foolish choice that had brought them into their current predicament. They desperately needed someone to help them to defeat their enemies and to get reconnected with God again.

At this moment—as their desperation reached a climax—an amazing thing happened. This all-powerful, all-knowing, and perfectly righteous God reached out his hand to them in mercy. He opened their eyes to recognize their foolishness and guided them to find the strength they needed to call out to him for help. And then, almost before their cries had left their lips, God set his rescue plan in motion.

And what a plan it was... God starts by sending an angel to visit a man named Gideon at his worksite, announcing to him, “The Lord is with you, mighty warrior.”

Really? Mighty warrior? Are you kidding me! “Fearful,” “weak,” and “useless” are a few of the words that come to my mind as I watch this fellow in action in the ensuing days.

First, Gideon blame-shifts, accusing

God (the One who has NEVER done anything wrong) of being the source of Israel’s problems. Next, as if success depended on his own status and abilities, Gideon questions the plausibility of God’s plan (the One who made everything in the world out of nothing) to make Gideon a hero. Once this “warrior” finally gets going on his first assigned act of rebellion, he fearfully works at night, acting as if the all-powerful God who is sending him cannot protect him. Before long, he famously conditions his continued cooperation with God’s plan on God being able to perform two miracles for him. In a final flourish of foolishness, as the battle against Israel’s enemies looms, he gathers as many people as he can find to help him, as if the all-powerful God needs his help. Gideon should have known better!

When the battle is finished, Gideon and a mere 300 Israelites, using only trumpets, jars, and torches as God instructed, have defeated a huge army (120,000) of their enemies. It is obvious that it was God who won the resounding victory, and that when Gideon heard people call him “a mighty warrior,” he should only have said, “It was God who made me a hero, to accomplish his purposes.”

When the story is finished, I’ll sit back and watch as the other Christians in our group add some important details to help Mrs. Yue connect better with God’s perspective. I love being able to partner with them!

What will happen as a result of our

efforts? I’m not sure. A couple of things I do know: 1) The Word of God is powerful and the Holy Spirit is at work; and 2) just as God used Gideon, God will use me (us!) in the way he wants, to accomplish his purposes.

Will you pray for Mrs. Yue (and others like her) as we have conversations together? Pray that she will allow God’s Word to engage her heart and, instead of looking for help elsewhere and thinking she needs to earn the help she needs, she will turn to him.



*Ethan Christofferson is a pastor and a cultural researcher seeking to reach the unreached in Taiwan. Ethan and his wife Sandy live in Qionglin (Q=Ch) in northwestern Taiwan.*



JoshBlake/Stock

# The Other Lost Boy

DAVID VEUM

Everybody loves the story of the prodigal son: a rebel sinner confessing his misery, the waiting father running and smothering him with kisses, filthy clothes exchanged for the father’s finery, a ring of sonship, and even sandals for his feet—for only slaves walk barefoot, not sons and daughters.

Recovering alcoholics are convinced that the boy had a serious drinking problem. They find that the boy’s story parallels their own. Jesus doesn’t include that detail because he wants each of us to find our own story in the parable.

What may be less obvious to us in the church is finding ourselves in the story of the elder brother. Except, that is our Lord’s intention.

The chapter begins with the note that those most like the younger son gathered in the inner circle close to Jesus, while the outwardly righteous stood in the outer circle.

Then Jesus tells two parables: one of a lost sheep and a lost boy who both wandered away; and another of a coin and a son who were both in the home but lost. The first story parallels those “tax collectors and sinners” in the inner circle, and the second, those on the outside.

Those of us in the church do not easily identify with the outside circle, the self-righteous Pharisees. We would be glad for any sinner who finally repents and comes to join our circle and be like us. But do we share the Father’s heart of mercy for those who are still far away? This father still loved that younger boy even though asking for his inheritance early meant, in that culture, that he wanted his father dead.

It is no wonder the elder brother was angry at the younger boy. Like the elder brother, it is difficult for us to see our values disregarded and even destroyed. We become angry at anti-Christian

pressure around us. We can forget that our Heavenly Father wants all to come home to his heart of mercy.

Maybe there is more elder brother in each of us than we thought possible.

What happened to the older boy? How could he get so lost while still living in the father’s home? For one, our Lord notes, the boy forgot his own need for mercy. With angry tones he justified himself, “I never disobeyed your command.” It is not difficult to slip into this way of thinking, “I’m living the right kind of life.” I do this. I attempt to control my sin nature and forget my own need for mercy.

He had an even deeper issue. The older son failed to spend intimate time with the father. The second part of his angry reply accused his father of being unjust. “You never gave me a goat to have a party with my friends!” He did not want to have a party with his father.

Imagine how different his response

***The father said, "My son, you are always with me, and everything I have is yours. But we had to celebrate and be glad, because this brother of yours was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found."***

***Luke 15:31-32***

would have been if he had spent time at the end of each day sitting on the back porch with his father watching him scan the horizon for some sign of the younger boy returning. Imagine the elder brother saying, "Father, it's too dark to see anymore. Why don't you come in and see if he comes home tomorrow?" Had he done that he would have come to know his father's heart of mercy. Instead, he is outside and refusing to come into the celebration.

Notice how Jesus has constructed this story. Verses 2-4 of Luke 15 make it clear he is speaking to the Pharisees and the scribes. Jesus invites them to imagine one of their own number having a sheep wander away. Any one of them would go in search of that lost sheep. But when Jesus comes to the parallel story of the boy who got lost in the far country, the father does not go looking for the younger son. In this story the father goes looking for the elder son lost at home who would not come into the celebration of mercy.

His deep love for the older son becomes more evident in the story. When the father

finds him, he calls him, "Son." We should hear more than just an identifying title. This is much more like our Heavenly Father saying to us, "You, my very dear, precious child." He is calling to each of us with a heart of love and mercy.

Then the father tells the older boy, "All I have is yours." Did the older brother assume his father would divide the estate again? Then he would lose half of what remained. That would be so unfair. He was wrong. "All I have is yours." We never have to worry. We will always receive all of God's mercy. There is always more than enough for anyone who comes home.

As the story ends, we do not know if this lost boy went into the party. We are left with a question, "Did he come home to his father's heart of mercy?" We are each left to answer the question in our own lives, "Will you come home to the celebration of your Heavenly Father's mercy?"

There is great reason to celebrate!

Jesus Christ has died for the sins of the whole world, even for those who

have rejected the ways of the Father and travelled far away from God. Jesus Christ is risen from the dead. He can bring back from the dead anyone who returns home. The Father has mercy for anyone who comes home to his heart. You are invited to come into the celebration of mercy.



*Dr. David Veum is President of Lutheran Brethren Seminary.*



Sedmak/Last Supper of Christ from St. Nicholas Church, Brussels/Stock

# Disciple: A State of Being

NICK MUNDIS

I have long thought that John 1 gives us a simple and concise example of how we are invited to follow Jesus in making disciples. In this chapter we see Jesus identified as the long-awaited Messiah. He is the Word of God incarnate, that is, in flesh and blood, who has come to be the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. John the Baptizer points his followers to Jesus and basically says, “Go to him. He is the completed revelation of God. He is the fulfillment of the prophecies and the answer to the cries of your heart. Jesus is the Way, the Truth, and Life itself!”

So two of John’s followers encounter Jesus and we see the consummate Disciple-maker in action in John 1:37-39 [NLT].

When John’s two disciples heard this, they followed Jesus. Jesus looked around and saw them following. “*What do you want?*” he asked them.

They replied, “Rabbi” (which means “Teacher”), “where are you staying?” “*Come and see,*” he said. It was about four o’clock in the afternoon when they went with him to the place where he was staying, and they remained with him the rest of the day.

The perfect Disciple-maker does two simple things here that we can do as well.

1. He asks them a question that expresses true interest. He is inviting them to share what is on their minds. He wants to truly know them. “Tell me about yourself because you matter to me!”
2. He invites them into his life. “Come and see, let’s do life together!” He is going to share with them the joys and burdens of his life. Jesus is committing himself to them.

This way of making disciples does not require one to be impressive, or brilliant, or have a seminary education. Jesus’

disciple-making path is truly accessible to each one of us. This is living our life with others because that is what Jesus did. It is living out our best days and also our most difficult days connecting people to Jesus, his community, and his mission.

There is an assumption about being a disciple-maker that I believe needs to be addressed. As clear as our scriptural call is to make disciples, we first need to consider what it means to simply be a disciple of Jesus.

I really enjoyed my 9th grade physics teacher. He was understandable, very relatable, and I believed that he actually enjoyed me. From 1:30-2:20 p.m. every weekday I learned from him and enjoyed his humorous style of teaching. He taught me about cool stuff like gravity and thermodynamics. But his accessibility was clearly defined and limited to his classroom during school days. There were a few times I met him after school in his classroom for a little extra help,



***Jesus said, “You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit—fruit that will last—and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you. This is my command: Love each other.”***

***John 15:16-17***

but he never invited me over for dinner and I didn't hang out with him. In our contemporary understanding of a disciple, we often think simply in terms of being a learner or a student of a teacher, similar to my interaction with my physics teacher.

It is correct that there was a student-teacher component, but a disciple in Jesus' day hoped to live day in and day out with their Rabbi. This significant component of being a disciple of Jesus shows up often in John's Gospel. We see it in 1:39 as the new disciples of Jesus "remained with him." They wanted to be with Jesus and *stay with him*. They didn't just stop in to see him for a moment.

How often am I guilty of just wanting to stop in for a brief visit with Jesus from time to time? I may call on him when things are beyond me or maybe say "thanks" when things turn out the way I want, but the Bible's invitation is so much grander—or more invasive, depending on your perspective. Jesus wants us to abide with him always. He doesn't want us to miss out on anything. He is continually asking us "What are you seeking?" and then declaring, "Come and see what I have for you!" This is life's rhythm of being a disciple of Jesus.

Being a disciple of Jesus is our primary

identity. It is not so much about a set of tasks or a scale of progress, as it is simply a state of BEING... in Christ. Oh, we will grow, and we will be transformed, but it doesn't happen by looking in a mirror and measuring personal improvement. It happens by staying, abiding, and celebrating with Jesus. It happens when we are engaged in God's living Word. God's Spirit speaks into our hearts and minds so that we are set free in God's perfect Law and glorious Gospel to live in and with Jesus.

It is when we are continually relating with Jesus and being influenced by him that disciple-making becomes a natural part of life. This ever-present influence on our heart, mind and soul will naturally become tangible to others as we live out our days. The love, grace and truth we see Jesus living out in the Gospels will show up in how we relate to others as well. It is in this transformational work of God that our disciple-of-Jesus relationship becomes our "state of being."

It isn't that we are now following Jesus perfectly, but it is a place of magnificent and consuming desperation for the things of God provided to me in Christ.

- It is an understanding that I need a savior and his name is Jesus.

- It is my need to be set free and knowing the one to do this is Jesus.
- It is my need for peace in the midst of life's storm and Jesus speaks to me, "Be still."

When we find ourselves craving Jesus, we will find ourselves loving people, because this connects us to Jesus. We will find that we have been created and then redeemed to be a part of God's Disciple-Making Church.



*Rev. Nick Mundis is Director of North American Mission for the Church of the Lutheran Brethren.*

# Easter is About Jellybeans

JIM BOSSERT

I have always reminded myself that Christmas is about the birth of the Savior, not about Santa Claus and the presents. Easter is about the suffering, death, and resurrection of that Savior, not about the Easter Bunny and the jellybeans. While I enjoyed those other things and let my children enjoy them as well, I made very certain that my focus and theirs was rightly centered on the Savior and the cross. All the other traditions were simply man-made. They were fun but never the true reason for the celebration.

But something happened in the middle of Holy Week two years ago that caused me to see things a bit differently. For me now, Easter will *always* be about the jellybeans! The reason came to me on a busy day and from the most unlikely of sources. When I should have been much more focused on the significance of Holy Week, I was absorbed in life's details—"caught up in the thick of things." Near the end of the day, I had driven my granddaughter home from her music lesson. Rushing into the house, I said a quick hello to my son and grandson, and a quick goodbye to my granddaughter. Before I could exit, my grandson stopped me. "Hey Pop, wait! I have something for you."

He dug deep into his preschool backpack looking for my "something." As he fumbled around in there, I could see all his little treasures coming up and then dropping back down into the bag. I almost said, "Ok Buddy, you can give it to me next time because Poppy has to go." But somehow I just felt I should be patient and wait. Ever since that day, I've thanked God for enabling me to be patient with this little guy. Finally he said, "Oh, here it is, Pop." Out of his backpack came his small hand and in it was an orange jellybean. Before I could comment he said, "And wait, take this too."

He began digging again, but this time nothing in the world could have moved me away from that little guy. His first gift had stopped me dead in my tracks, for I knew exactly why I received



*Jellybeans—a symbol of something bigger.*

that jellybean. Then out came the second thing—a green jellybean. "Give this one to Nana; it's for her."

To grasp the significance of this cute little episode, you need to know that orange is my favorite color and green is my wife's favorite color. More importantly, this little boy just *loves* jellybeans. What kind of love and caring does it take for a four-year-old to lay aside two pieces of *his favorite thing* because he knew his grandparents would appreciate them?

This sweet little boy innocently captured the truth and focus of Holy Week, making it so real and "in my face." He taught me once again the staggering truth of this week and the meaning of the cross: God gave his only Son, *his favorite thing*, for the benefit of others.

It was the innocent love of a child, not the flawed wisdom of an adult, that snapped me back to the powerful truth. My grandson centered me on the very thing, the *only* thing, I should be centered on in Holy Week. He connected the dots for me, leading me away from the noise of my life and back to the most important thing.

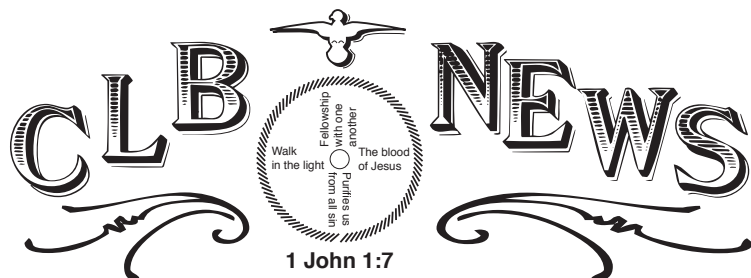
Placing those two jellybeans ever so carefully in my jacket pocket and walking to my truck, the depth of this little boy's love overwhelmed me. It pointed me to the love of Christ poured out for us, for me.

I will never eat those jellybeans. I saved them in a special box with a copy of this essay. I will revisit them often. I will speak of them to others.

When my grandson tells me one of his "little boy" ideas, he always concludes, "How about that, Pop? That's a good deal, right?" Well, Matthew boy, you blessed me that day with your love, and you showed me the cross when I really needed to see it. Yes, my boy, that is definitely a good deal! I love you, Buddy!

For me, Easter will always be about the jellybeans.

*Jim Bossert serves as an elder of Bethany Lutheran Brethren Church in Staten Island, New York.*



## Martin Installed as Associate Pastor at Pilgrim

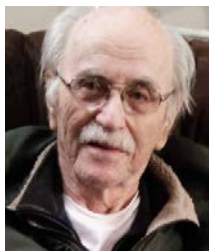


L to R: Rev. Bob Heggstad, Rev. Nick Mundis, Elder Kurt Helfrich, Pastor Dave Martin, and Elder Dallas Rodgers.

On September 27, 2020, Dave Martin was installed as Associate Pastor at Pilgrim Lutheran Brethren Church in Mentor, Ohio. Rev. Nick Mundis officiated.

## Rev. Solheim Called Home

Rev. Gordon Solheim passed away on December 31, 2020 in Platte, South Dakota at the age of 91.



Gordon “Gordy” Solheim was born on June 14, 1929 in Castalia, Iowa. On September 9, 1950 Gordy was united in marriage to Jeanive Halverson at Bethel Lutheran Church in Grand Forks, North Dakota. He continued his education at Lutheran Brethren Bible College in Fergus Falls, Minnesota, graduating in 1955 and completing seminary in 1957. Rev. Solheim served churches in Loogootee, Illinois; Cooperstown, North Dakota; Toronto, South Dakota; Hendricks, Minnesota; and Antler, North Dakota. During his time in Toronto, he was also employed at Flax Straw Stacks, proud that even as a foreman, he never shied away from manual labor. Rev. Solheim enjoyed being outdoors, hunting, walking, running and spending time with his family. He was a Prayer Warrior, and loved to read the Bible.

## Nugent Installed as Pastor at Living Faith



L to R: Elders Matt Griffith, Jim Hanson, Rev. Ed Nugent, President Paul Larson, and Elder Tim Larson.

On January 24, 2021, Rev. Ed Nugent was installed as Pastor at Living Faith Church in Cape Coral, Florida. CLB President Paul Larson officiated.

## Rev. Erickson Called Home

Rev. Elroy Erickson passed away on January 24, 2021 in Mesa, Arizona at the age of 76.



Growing up in Grand Forks, North Dakota Elroy graduated from Central High in 1962. He played hockey from a young age and won 3 state championships with his high school team as an outstanding defenseman. He joined the army after high school and served in Vietnam. Elroy and Judy (Holter) were married in 1964. After serving in the military, Elroy felt called to the Ministry. He graduated from Lutheran Brethren Seminary in Fergus Falls, Minnesota in 1983. Rev. Erickson served churches in Bozeman, Montana; Everett, Washington; and Vancouver, Washington before serving as a full-time hospice chaplain for 25 years at Southwest Washington Medical Center. He loved sharing the good news of Jesus Christ. After retirement he served two years as a visitation pastor in Fargo, North Dakota.

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## Seeing... or Not Seeing

The crowd cried out, “Blessed is the king who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!” Some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, “Teacher, rebuke your disciples!” “I tell you,” he replied, “if they keep quiet, the stones will cry out.”

As he approached Jerusalem and saw the city, he wept over it and said, “If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace—but now it is hidden from your eyes” (Luke 19:38-42).

What happened as Jesus rode toward Jerusalem on Palm Sunday? There was a recognition problem, and Jesus wept.

In the US, we recently completed a year (or was it two?) of political campaigning. A deluge of advertising, campaign slogans, political rallies—and rhetoric. Thinking of Jesus’ grand entrance, what would his campaign slogan have been? “Vote Jesus for King”? “Make Israel great again”?

Not at all. He’s riding this humble donkey, which communicates his mission. He does not revel in the adulation. Rather, his mind focuses on what is most important: Do people recognize him for who he is, or do they not?

Some of the crowd acclaim him king of Israel in hopes he will immediately take charge and lead a revolt against the Romans. Others recognize him as the humble Messiah. Regardless of who shouts it, the truth must be heard. To the Pharisees’ objections, Jesus says, “If the people don’t shout the truth about me, the very stones will.”

As Jesus overlooks the city, he pauses to weep over their blindness. Many are saying the right words about Jesus, but they do not comprehend his Good News.

What is good news today? For many, it’s something immediate, shallow, and temporary—like a vaccine, or a stimulus payment. That’s all we need to set the world right. For such people, Jesus wept. He wept for people who rejected him, but also for all who missed the point, who walked away from the cross on Friday, saying, “Guess we were wrong about him...”

Jesus’ heart still breaks for those who fail to recognize him, who don’t understand that he came solely to die a sinner’s death, then rise again as the conqueror of sin and death, for us. This Good News, if you truly see it, is not shallow, not temporary. It changes your life. It changes your eternity. Because it changes your relationship with God from his enemy to his child. To you who believe this, Jesus says, “But blessed are your eyes because they see, and your ears because they hear” (Matthew 13:16).

The Cross and Easter—it’s all about seeing, or not seeing, Jesus Christ for who he is.

*Rev. Brent Juliot serves as contributing editor of Faith & Fellowship magazine and is Pastor of Living Hope Church in Menomonie, Wisconsin.*

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