

Wenatchee Brethren Baptist Quarterly Newsletter

Representing a Church of the Brethren and an American Baptist Church, January / February / March Issue, 2024

WHEN I CONSIDER WHAT YOU'VE SUFFERED FIRST

"We must learn to regard people less in light of what they do or omit to do, and more in light of what they have suffered." – Dietrich Bonhoeffer

I hope that God does with me what Bonhoeffer describes. I hope that God evaluates my actions with a view to my sinful brokenness and what's still wrong with me. I hope God views all my malicious thoughts, cruel words, and neglectful, selfish choices with a clear eye that I am the sinful, screwed-up, in-the-process-of-being-redeemed-but-still-a-long-way-to-go...Beloved. I am God's Beloved. I hope God considers, when I shout at my son Corin later today or punch a wall in frustration or harbor some truly unloving thoughts about our political leadership, not how bad I always am but how much in need of grace I am.

What we have suffered, all of us, is being sinful, broken people in a sinful, broken world. That isn't "an excuse." That's reality. We're all splintered and shattered in a bunch of ways, and some of us hide it better than others.

When the younger son of the wealthy father in Luke 15, the one who "devoured his inheritance with prostitutes," came limping and stumbling on bare, bloody feet, the father had choices.

He could ignore the return of his son. Disown him. Leave him to survive however he might. "You get what you deserve."

He could have the brunt of Jewish Law, which the son broke in dishonoring his father, brought to bear against this young man now. Likely he could have the boy killed. "You get justice with no mercy."

He could listen to the begging apology/admission of guilt that his son had composed and take him up on that entreaty, i.e. take the son on as one of his servants, disinherited and humiliated but not left to starve. "You get mercy but no grace."

Those were all legitimate, legal, *reasonable* responses to the younger son's behavior. Just to review, so we don't gloss over it, the younger son in Jesus' story goes to the father—no background or context provided by Jesus—and demands his share of the inheritance, i.e. what he would get *when his father dies*. He is saying, "Hey, I can't wait until you're dead so let's pretend you're dead now and I'll get my share." You'd be hard-pressed to come up with a more dishonoring, disrespectful statement.

Again, with no explanation, the father gives the son what the son demands. The son liquidates his inheritance into cash and leaves. He spends the money wildly, frivolously, impulsively, hedonistically. We can assume that everything he does with his money directly assaults his father's values as a God-honoring Jew. He spends it all. Who knows if he had a plan for his future, but right then the "far off country" where he now lived fell into famine. He went from wealthy and epicurean to starving and desperate. He found a job feeding pigs—a mortifying, defiling job for the son of a wealthy Jewish landowner—and still he was starving.

-continued on page 3

FAREWELL TO OUR CHURCH BUS!

Some of you may have noticed that the bus is no longer in the parking lot! We were blessed with the use of the bus for 15 years, but it was time to let it go. We gifted the bus to the Veteran's Warehouse Thrift Store on Wenatchee Avenue where it will be put to good use.

Lael Vickery
Property Chair

God's Handwriting

He writes in characters too grand
for our short sight to understand.

We catch but broken strokes,
and try to fathom all the mystery
of withered hopes, of death, of life,
the endless war, the useless strife;
But there, with larger, clearer sight,
we shall see this—His way was Right.

by John Oxenham

Adobe Stock | #519963582

MARCH 10 DAYLIGHT SAVINGS BEGINS!

(Don't forget to set your clocks ahead 1 hour)



**Happy New Year
2024!**

Happy Easter!

REMEMBER IN PRAYER

Our Shut-ins:

- Mary Kintner
- Carolyn Storme

JANUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 14th Merry Roy
- 30th Diane Stober

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

- 2nd Evelyn Eikenberry
- 7th Virginia Crowl
- 10th Barbara Miller
- 24th Jay Stockwell
- 27th Warren Eikenberry
- 28th Dan White

MARCH BIRTHDAYS

- 10th Jesse Graybill
- 15th Karen Whitley

JANUARY ANNIVERSARIES

- 6th Dennis & Betty Radke
- 31st Don & Barbara Miller

FEBRUARY ANNIVERSARIES

- 22nd Dave & Karen Whitley

MARCH ANNIVERSARIES

NO Anniversaries



Happy Birthday to You
(sung to the usual tune)

Happy Birthday to you!
To Jesus stay true!
May all of God's blessings
Rain down upon you!



HOLY WEEK 2024

Holy Week is the high point of our yearly church calendar: Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday Love Feast, and a joyful Easter worship.



Presently we are planning for a Bread and Cup Communion during the Palm Sunday service. We also plan to have a Maundy Thursday Love Feast with Hand Washing as it worked quite well last year.

Remember, Lent starts on Ash Wednesday, February 14, and Easter is March 31 this year. We will joyfully be celebrating the resurrection of Christ, and that's good news.

-continued from page 1

When the young man “comes to himself,” an English translation but possibly my favorite line in the story (except for the father’s running part), he decides to go back home, though he *knows* it’s not his home anymore.

But when he came to himself and said, ‘How many of my father’s hired hands have bread enough and to spare, but here I am dying of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you; I am no longer worthy to be called your son, treat me like one of your hands.”’

I’m guessing you see what I’m building toward. Did the father regard the son in light of what he had done or omitted doing, or in light of what he had suffered? This father did the latter.

Grace is a scandal.

“What he’d suffered?” people will object. “*Everything* he ‘suffered’ he brought on himself.” The young man *deserved* consequences, right? Punishment? What, he’s just going to “get away” with all that?

Or did he already pay his consequences?

Many years ago now, I embraced the understanding that we are punished not *for* our sins but *by* our sins. It makes all the difference. Does God want us not to sin because if we do, he will hurt us for it? Or does God warn us not to sin because doing so will hurt us, and God doesn’t want us to hurt? Is holiness not an arbitrary standard but doing the things that make us whole and avoiding the things that shatter us?

Yes, the father could have turned the thumbscrews down much harder. He could have decided that even though his ragged, emaciated sone had come through a famine, utter degradation, and failure, he *needed* further punishment. Or deemed that justice demanded it.

But the father did *not* make that choice. He embraced and restored his son. He dressed him. He kissed him. He *interrupted* him, to call for a celebration!

The father regarded the son in the light of grace, in light of what the son had suffered, in light of the consequences he’d already paid for his horrible choices, and in light of his unwavering love for his child. Grace means he gave the boy good instead of the bad the boy had coming. The father didn’t just refrain from punishing him—he embraced his sone and welcomed him home.

The center of the Gospel may be that God *always* sees me with grace, calling me away from my self-destructive sin but as the beloved, so that I can experience life and share life. The center of the Gospel may be that even when I behave as an enemy, God does not treat me as an enemy. God can see through my evil, through the rags and filth and stench that I’ve made of the inheritance *I’ve* squandered, and still see a beloved child in need of redemption. Dying for that redemption, even though I’m bargaining to be made a servant and not restored as a son.

Pastor Mike



FOOD

Buy only what you need; use what you have; freeze items when you have too much; eat ugly produce; rethink the "Use by" date as "Freshest by". Save money and the environment! 20% of food that the average American buys is never eaten. 90% of food is thrown away too soon. Food waste in America has grown by 204% since 1960 and 50% since 1990. Reducing food waste by just 15% would be enough to feed more than 25 million Americans every year.

Creation Care Team

GENEROSITY AND THE WIDOW'S MITE

In 1847, when Ireland was gripped by what we call The Great Starvation (there was plenty of food in Ireland; the occupying powers were shipping it out to other places for profit; ships often being loaded with food by starving people), the Choctaw Nation sent a donation of \$170 dollars for the relief of the hunger. \$170 dollars. That is a lot of money.

This was sixteen years after the Choctaw Nation had been afflicted with displacement and war through the Trail of Tears.

There has been increasing connection between Ireland and the Choctaw Nation in the decades since: recently scholarships, exchanges, and dialogues have taken place. A sculpture in County Cork honors the generous donation made during a time of turmoil. Troubled people to troubled people. All gestures have limits: and this one did not alleviate the problem, but it was a reaching out, an attempt.

When people in poverty reach out to other hurting people, everyone is touched, both the giver and the receiver. In today's Upper Room devotion a woman from Indonesia wrote of the children in her impoverished church raising money through recycling water bottles to buy gifts for children in an orphanage. This women wrote "even though our children were living in poverty, they gave what they had to the children in the orphanage to show their love and care."

The Choctaw people in 1847 and these Indonesian children teach us, and Jesus smiles.



-Picture by Grace McMullen

2 CENTS WORTH OFFERING

Sunday, February 25

The 2 Cents Worth Offering is where every person sets aside 2 Cents for every meal every person eats in their home to go toward world hunger and the Heifer Project. Until we can meet in person again, please send a separate check for the 2 Cents offering. Thank you!



PRAY FOR PEACE

Together, along with the European Baptist Federation and Baptist World Alliance, we mourn with those who have lost loved ones, and we lift up prayers for peace and justice. Even during suffering and conflict, God's light and faithfulness remain. We urge our fellow brothers and sisters in Christ to be peacemakers who reject any restrictions on human rights based on geography, ethnicity, or faith. As the hands and feet of Jesus, we unequivocally denounce terrorism and all acts of violence that target innocent civilians.

“The developing tragedy in Israel and Gaza breaks our hearts as we learn of the violence against innocent civilians and anticipate a growing number of casualties,” says Charles Jones, Area Director for Europe, the Middle East, and Liberia. “Please join us in praying for God’s intervention, comfort for those who mourn, and a transformed commitment to peace and justice in this troubled land – the land of our Savior’s birth and life.”

We pray for protection, peace, and comfort over our local partners in this region, including the Association of Baptist Churches in Israel, Bethlehem Bible College, Christian Mission to Gaza, and Lebanese Society for Educational and Social Development. We thank God for the safety of our global servants Melanie Baggao and Dan and Sarah Chetti, who serve in this area.

Let us stand together with those suffering in this time of complexity and violence. Our partners in the region have shared the following calls for prayer:

- Pray for lasting peace, hope, security, and freedom for the entire region.
- Pray for God’s comfort to be with those who are grieving lost loved ones.

- Pray for healing for those who have been wounded during the conflict.
- Pray for the safety and liberation of those who are being held hostage.
- Pray for wisdom and discernment during the facilitation of a peace mediation process.
- Pray for wisdom and discernment for the leaders.
- Pray for unity in God’s church.
- Pray for God to use Christians as witnesses of his love.
- Pray that Christians around the world will give generously to local partners who will holistically minister to people in this region.

Please also pray for IM’s local colleagues, global servants, and for the people they serve as we continue to monitor the developing situation. In the words of the prophet Micah, we hope to “act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly” (6:8) in pursuit of restorative peace and justice for all people.

World Relief Officer Lisa Rothenberger shares, “We are witnessing the mounting humanitarian needs on both sides of this conflict, and the coming days and weeks will determine the level of destruction in this region. What we know for sure is that there already is and will be an enormous human need for months and years to come. War creates a great need for physical rebuilding of homes, schools, medical facilities, and other infrastructure. It also leaves behind extraordinary psychological impact on families, communities, and entire countries. Working with our local partners in response to the needs they identify, we will respond and steward all funds to meet the needs of the innocent civilians regardless of location.”

