

Glorious Hope Slavná naděje

Vol. 45, N° 1, March 2019

Ročník 45, číslo 1, březen 2019

And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Matthew 28:1-20

Ježíš k nim přistoupil a řekl: „Je mi dána veškerá moc na nebi i na zemi. Proto jděte. Získávejte učedníky ze všech národů, křtíte je ve jménu Otce i Syna i Ducha svatého a uče je zachovávat všechno, co jsem vám přikázal. A hle, já jsem s vámi po všechny dny až do skonání světa.“

Matouš 28:18-20

Ježíš přistúpil a povedal im: „Daná mi je všetka moc na nebi aj na zemi. Chodte teda a získavajte mi učeníkov vo všetkých národoch a krstite ich v mene Otca i Syna i Svätého Ducha a naučte ich zachovávať všetko, čo som vám prikázal. A hľa, ja som s vami po všetky dni až do konca sveta.“

Matúš 28; 18-20

“My Lord and my God!” Thomas exclaimed.

NLT John 20:28

**„Můj Pán a můj Bůh!“
zvolal Tomáš.**

Jan 20;28

**Tomáš mu odpovedal:
„Pán môj a Boh môj!“**

Jan 20;28

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Front and Back Cover:
Composite image –Adobe Stock

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Convention Mission Statement

The Czechoslovak Baptist Convention of USA and Canada exists 1) to assist in extending the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ in lands of central and eastern Europe, particularly the Czech and Slovak Republics; 2) to support the work of Baptists and other evangelical churches in North America that minister to persons of Czech and Slovak descent, and 3) to provide a Christian context for worship, fellowship, teaching, and appreciation of heritage among those in the United States and Canada who bear interest in the nationalities we represent.

Misijní posláání konvence

Československá baptistická konvence Spojených států a Kanady byla ustanovena za účelem: 1) napomáhat v šíření evangelia našeho Pána Ježíše Krista v zemích střední a východní Evropy, zvláště v České a Slovenské republice; 2) podporovat práci baptistů a jiných evangelikálních církví v severní Americe, které slouží českým a slovenským potomkům; 3) předkládat formu bohoslužby, obecnství a učení, vážit si dědictví těch, ve Spojených státech a v Kanadě, kterým leží na srdci národy, které reprezentujeme.

Glorious Hope/Slavná naděje

Volume 45, N° 1, March 2019
(USPS 009334), ISSN 0700-5202

Published quarterly by

The Czechoslovak Baptist Convention
of USA and Canada
114 Pleasantview Dr.
Mc Murray PA 15317

Periodical postage paid at McMurray, PA
and additional mailing offices

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POSTMASTER: Send address changes to

Glorious Hope / Slavná naděje

P.O. Box 441516

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The Cross

If you were to visit the Czech Republic, you would be surprised by the sheer number of crosses that have been erected: at crossroads, by roadsides, in villages, in cities, or even in nature — in the middle of nowhere — placed there seemingly for no

reason. Since we were children we have wondered who erected them, and why.

The cross has been a familiar symbol since antiquity. The cross's four sides represented the spread of mythical signs over all the Earth, a symbol that is present in many cultures and in various forms.

Up until the fourth century, the symbol of the cross was not used within Christianity. From the fourth century, once the cross stopped serving as an instru-

ment of execution, it became one of the main symbols of Christianity. The cross represents Christ's work of salvation, which in turn influenced the development of European civilization. The golden cross on the Golgotha hill in Jerusalem was commissioned by Emperor Constantine I, in the fourth century, and is considered to be the first Christian cross to be erected. The cross simultaneously symbolized the emperor's triumph and the Christian symbol of victory.

The cross is therefore the oldest form of sacred object. The mandate of erecting crosses by roadsides is associated with Charles the Great (747/8–814 A.D.). They served as boundary markers, milestones, and other orienting markers. It is thought that early Slavs believed that crossroads had a magical and cultish significance. During the Middle Ages, crosses became a symbol to ward off fear and evil spirits. Crosses in the countryside were also erected in places where something tragic occurred, or at the site of a murder.

The cross as a Christian symbol appeared in Bohemian

Kříž

N avštívíte-li Českou republiku, překvapí vás nesčetné množství křížků nacházejících se na rozcestích, při cestách, ve vesnicích, ve městech a nebo jen ve volné přírodě, zdánlivě bez příčiny. Od dětství jsme si kladli otázku, kdo je stavěl a proč.

Kříž je známým symbolem už od pravěku. Rozpětí kříže na čtyři strany představovalo mytické znamení rozšířené po celé Zemi, symbol v různých podobách a formách mnohých kultur. Až do čtvrtého století se symbol kříže v křesťanství neužíval. Od 4. století, kdy přestal kříž sloužit jako popravčí nástroj, se stal jedním z hlavních symbolů křesťanství. Kříž je znamením Kristova vykupitelského díla, které ovlivnilo vývoj evropské civi-

lizace. Za první kříž je považován zlatý kříž na pahorku Golgota v Jeruzalémě, který nechal postavit císař Konstantin na místě Kristova ukřižování už

ve 4. století. Kříž symbolizoval zároveň císařský triumf a křesťanské znamení vítězství.

Kříž je tedy nejstarší formou sakrálního objektu. Nařízení stavět kříže u cest je spojováno s Karlem Velikým (747 nebo 748 – 814 AD). Šlo o mezníky, milníky a různé orientační body. Všeobecně se soudí, že v období Slovanů se rozcestím přikládal magický a kultovní význam. Ve středověku se kříže staly symbolem překonání strachu z temných sil. Kříže v krajině se také stavěly na místech, kde se odehrála nějaká tragická událost nebo vražda.

Kříž se jako symbol křesťanství objevuje v Českých zemích v raném středověku (500 AD – 1000 AD). Rozvoj křesťanství bývá spojován s příchodem Cyrila a Metoděje na Velkou Moravu (863 AD). Archeologické nálezy však dokumentují křesťanství na tomto území už před tímto obdobím.

Vrcholný středověk se v evropské historii označuje jako doba největšího rozkvětu společnosti (od počátku 11. až do 14. století). V roce 1369 se narodil Mistr Jan Hus, významný teolog, kazatel a středověký církevní



Continues on page 7

Pokračuje na straně 7

From the President

I like to read biographies. Each person's story differs: their time in history, the advantages or perils into which they were born, their life's work and what they accomplished. For all their differences, though, have you noticed they end the same? Hero or villain, rich or poor, leader of thousands or lonely outcast, each individual dies at the end. There are four biographies of one man's life, however, which agree upon an astoundingly different ending. The hero dies and distraught friends grieve and weep, but instead of the story ending there, it takes a sudden, unexpected turn. An empty tomb, neatly folded grave clothes, reports of seeing Him alive, and continuing appearances over a period of forty days convinced His friends beyond doubt that He was alive. In his inimitable way, beloved author C.S. Lewis describes what happened as:

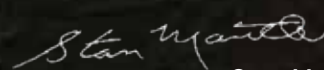
"the first movement of a great wheel beginning to turn in the direction opposite to that which all men hitherto had observed."

By his death Jesus paid the terrible price of our sins. Having done so, He strode out of the tomb ALIVE, leaving death's door broken and ajar. This is what we remember gratefully and rejoice in exuberantly this Easter.

"CHRIST IS RISEN!"

"HALLELUJAH HE IS RISEN INDEED!"

Happy Easter everyone!



Stan Mantle



2019 CONVENTION UPDATE

We are most pleased to announce that arrangements have been made for the 2019 Czechoslovak Baptist Convention to be held

July 11-14

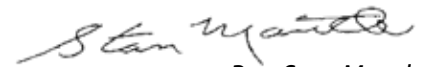
at Malone University in Canton, Ohio

Canton, Ohio, is less than 100 km (55mi) south of Cleveland on interstate I-77 S.

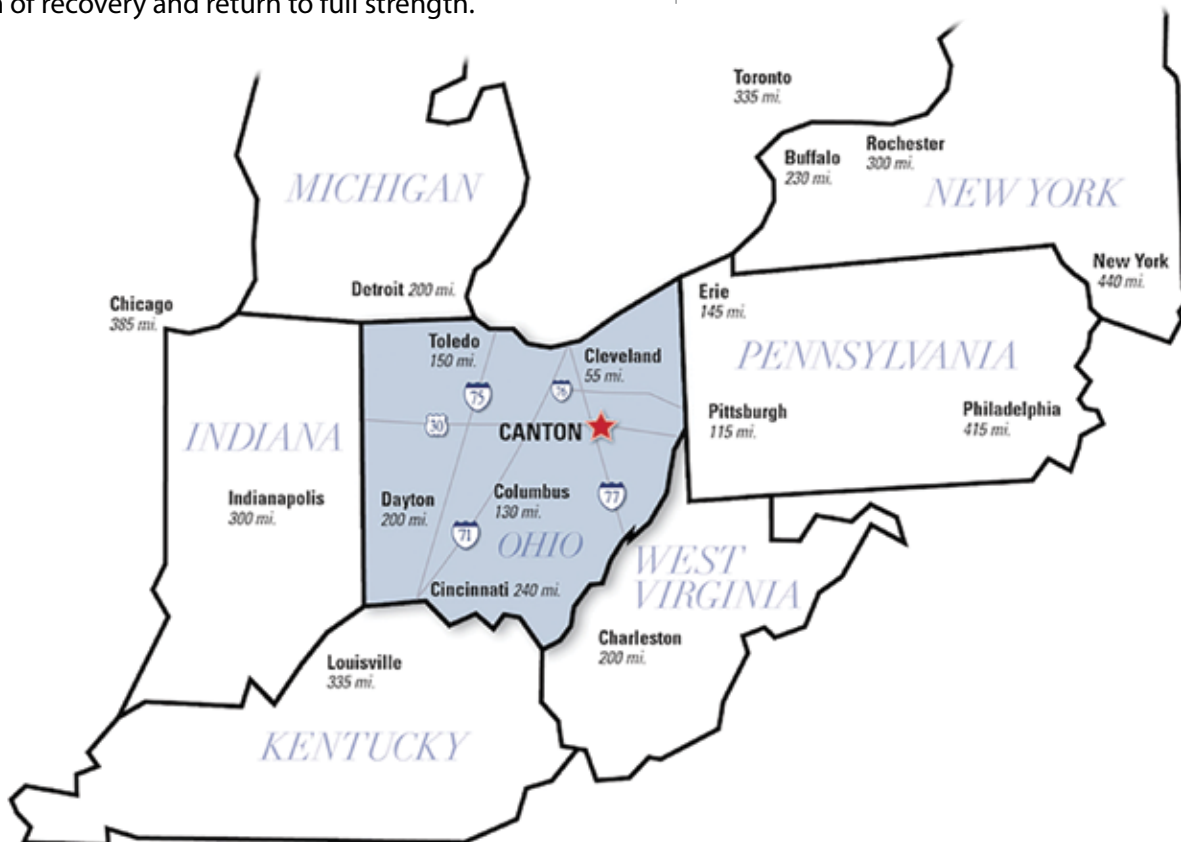
Some health problems unexpectedly put our General Secretary Darko Siracki out of commission throughout January and into February, delaying the search for the location and date of this year's Convention. Darko is still not 100% so prayers would be appreciated for completion of recovery and return to full strength.

Thankfully, in March, Darko was able to contact at least 6 schools and arrange site visits at two of them for him and the President. On Friday, March 8, they visited the two schools and considered each of them with the needs of the Convention in mind. It was a long but profitable day and we believe that Malone University will be most suitable for the 2019 Convention, providing excellent accommodation, food and meeting space as well as plentiful parking.

More details, photos and tentative program will be soon available on our website www.czskbc.org, our Facebook page and the next issue of the *Glorious Hope*.



Rev. Stan Mantle
President



It is no secret that Christians disagree. This is one of the reason we have so many denominations. We are some what like the man who was late for an important meeting and could not find a parking place. So, he parked in a No Parking Zone and attached this note on his windshield: I've been circling the block for 20 minutes and could not find a parking place. If I miss this appointment I'll loose my job: Forgive us our trespasses. After his meeting he came out to find a parking ticket on his windshield along with this note: I've circled this block for 20 years. If I don't give you a ticket I'll loose my job: Lead us not into temptation. While there are many things about which we disagree and even use Scripture to prove our position, there is one thing about which all Christian strongly agree, the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Evidence

There are many reasons we agree that the grave in which Jesus had been placed was empty. Mary Magdalene, the first to arrive at the tomb, strongly affirmed that the tomb was empty. Peter and John, the next to see it, not only affirmed that He was not there, but they saw the burial clothing in perfect order like a hand removed from a glove. Many others came to the tomb that day and all walked away convinced, not only that the tomb was empty but that Jesus had been resurrected.

Encounter

However, the reality of an empty tomb did not change them. Mary Magdalene saw the empty tomb, the grave cloths, and even the confirmation of His resurrection by angles. But still she was weeping. She had the facts of His resurrection but that was not enough. It only raised more questions.

On the evening of Christ's resurrection His disciple were meeting together. The doors were locked and hearts were heavy. They were empty and afraid although they knew Christ was alive. There was no life-change until Christ appeared in that room and had them put their hand in his side. Even Thomas, who knew all the facts about Christ's resurrection, had to have an encounter with the living Christ before he could pronounce My Lord and my God.

The point is this, life-transforming faith requires both Evidence and Encounter. The disciples knew the facts, they had the evidence but their lives were not changed until they had an encounter with the living Christ.

Easter Sunday for some, will be like it has been for years. They believe Christ is Risen. But so what? It has made little difference in their lives. I was once in that group. I was in Church every Easter Sunday because that was what our family did on Easter Sunday. I was not an atheist. I believed the facts of the Christian faith. I had the evidence but I didn't know the Christ of Easter. Then one night on a street curb, alone, I met the Jesus. I confessed that I was a sinner and I fully, genuinely repented. It was on that street curb that I gave Jesus the control of my life. I had believed ABOUT Him but it was there that I believed IN Him. It was there I came to understand what Jesus was talking about in John 3:16: *"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes IN him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

James Denny, the great Scottish preacher, expressed well what it means to believe in: The early Christians did not just remember Jesus. They lived in the now of a dynamic union with Him. So can you.



The Resurrected Christ

Rev. Donald Shoff

Editorial... Continues from page 3

lands in the early Middle Ages (500 AD–1000 AD). The spread of Christianity in this area is often associated with the arrival of the missionaries Cyril and Methodius in Great Moravia (863 AD). Archeological findings have in fact documented the presence of Christianity in these lands before their arrival.

In European history, the High Middle Ages saw the largest growth of societies (from the early 11th until the 14th Centuries). The famous theologian, pastor and reformer of the Middle Ages, Mister John Hus, was born in 1369. His teachings sparked a reform of the Church of the time and gave impetus to the Hussite movement. It preceded the Reformation, which in turn caused the Counter-Reformation (the reaction of the Catholic Church to the Protestant Reformation). This was a period of great suffering that was felt across Europe. A large number of crosses are remnants of the Counter-Reformation. Following the Battle of White Mountain in 1620, a revival of the Roman Catholic faith — enforced in both violent and peaceful ways — swept through Bohemia. This occurred as directed by Bohemian King and Holy Roman Emperor Ferdinand II. Crosses dated from the mid-17th Century were erected as symbols of the re-Catholicization of villages after the Battle of White Mountain. Today, by the number of crosses and crosslets bordering the countryside and lands, one can guess just how far Protestantism had spread throughout Bohemia. To set out after the remnants of these historical events is a fascinating pastime.

The cross, a Christian symbol, is viewed in various ways. Many images of the cross seen today, from the basic unadorned shape, carry a specific meaning and significance. It has even spread beyond Christianity and is used as a common piece of jewelry.

To anyone who realizes how much Christ suffered on the cross, this symbol reminds them of the truth of God's concern for people. Through the cross, the non-sensical sacrifice to various gods in search of the true God was stopped. The cross became the turning point between two lives: a lost life without hope on one hand, and a saved life of hope on the other. After death on the cross came resurrection, a new way of life. In Jesus Christ, God came close to humankind. The apostle Paul recognizes: *"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless, I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith,"* (Galatians 2:19–20).

Editor-in-Chief *Natasha Laurinc*
Translated by *Elizabeth Jane Fields*



Editorial... Pokračování ze strany 3

reformátor. Jeho učení započalo reformu tehdejší církve a dalo podnět husitskému hnutí. Následovalo pohnuté období reformace, které vyvolalo protireformaci (reakci katolické církve na protestantskou reformaci). Toto období přineslo mnoho utrpení a poznamenalo celou Evropu. Veliké množství křížů jsou stopy protireformace. Po bitvě na Bílé hoře v českých zemích probíhalo násilné i nenásilné znovuobracení nekatolíků na římskokatolickou víru. Bylo řízeno českým králem a římským císařem Ferdinandem II. Kříže pocházející z poloviny 17. století byly stavěny jako symbol rekatolizace měst a vesnic po bitvě na Bílé hoře. Dnes lze podle množství křížů a křížků lemujících krajinu odhadnout, jak dalece bylo protestanství v českých zemích rozšířeno. Vydát se po stopách těchto dějin je vzrušujícím zážitkem.

Kříž, symbol křesťanství, je vnímán různě. Setkáváme se s různými podobami kříže odvozenými z jednoduché formy kříže, vždy však se specifickým významem. Kříž postupně přešel i mimo křesťanství a používá se jako běžný šperk.

Každému, kdo si uvědomil hrůzu Kristova utrpení na kříži, připomíná tento symbol skutečnost Božího zájmu o člověka. Křížem bylo jednou provždy zastaveno nesmyslné obětování různým bohům při hledání toho pravého Boha. Kříž se stal mezníkem dvou životů. Života beznaděje a ztracení na jedné straně a života naděje a spásy na straně druhé. Po smrti na kříži následovalo vzkříšení, nový způsob života. V Ježíši Kristu se Bůh přiblížil k člověku. Apoštol Pavel vyznává: *„Jsem ukřižován s Kristem. Nežiji už já – Kristus žije ve mně! Svůj život v tomto těle žiji ve víře v Božího Syna, který si mě zamiloval a vydal za mě sám sebe.“* (Galatským 2;20)

Nataša Laurincová, šéfredaktorka

Easter People

Deb Mulder



Recently, I discovered a surprisingly encouraging book series (Sensible Shoes, by Sharon Garlough Brown, I highly recommend it), in which I encountered the term Easter People for the first time. “We are Easter People”, one character, a pastor, explained during the funeral of one of the main characters. He went on to explain that we are people of the resurrec-

tion, we practice hope in our sorrow, we trust Christ who conquered death to give us life. I liked this term.... We ARE “Easter People.” We walk in the sure and certain hope that just as Jesus rose from the dead to sit at the Father’s right hand, we too have Jesus’ promise that all who believe in him will have everlasting life. Our response to this promise—this gift—is to worship God with praise and thanks for what God has already done for us through Jesus Christ.

As “Easter People,” we want to try to live lives that reflect our new lives. We are forgiven, healed and renewed through Christ and His sacrifice and we are called to share that Good News with the whole world. Our lives should be rooted in love. As Jesus himself has told us, love for God and love for our neighbour is the foundation of Christian living. Because God first loved us, loved us so much that we were given God’s only son for our salvation, our response to this love is not only to love God as deeply and fully as we are able, but also to love everyone else as deeply and fully as we love ourselves.

“Dear friends let us love one another because love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.”

1 John 4:7–10 NIV

We were created to love God and love others. This is so simple to say, but yet is so hard for us to do sometimes. We get so caught up in our lives that we forget our purpose in this life.

“The threads of our lives are significant to the grand tapestry of God’s love. With your life, He is writing a God-sized story that will affect another’s. He will take the small seeds of love—the tiny acts of kindness that we plant today – and cause them to bloom for His kingdom’s purposes.”

Diana Megan

HOW CAN I LOVE WELL?

1. Be Rooted in God

1 John 4:7–10 spoke about love coming from God. *“Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.”*

We need to be rooted in God, so that we can love others well. Knowing God is being in prayer, being in scripture, and spending time with Him. Sometimes this is hard. We get so caught up in our busyness, we don’t find the time for Him. We NEED to spend time with God and be rooted in Him in order to be able to love others well, as scripture calls us to do.

2. Pray for Others

In scripture, Jesus prays for all, including us!

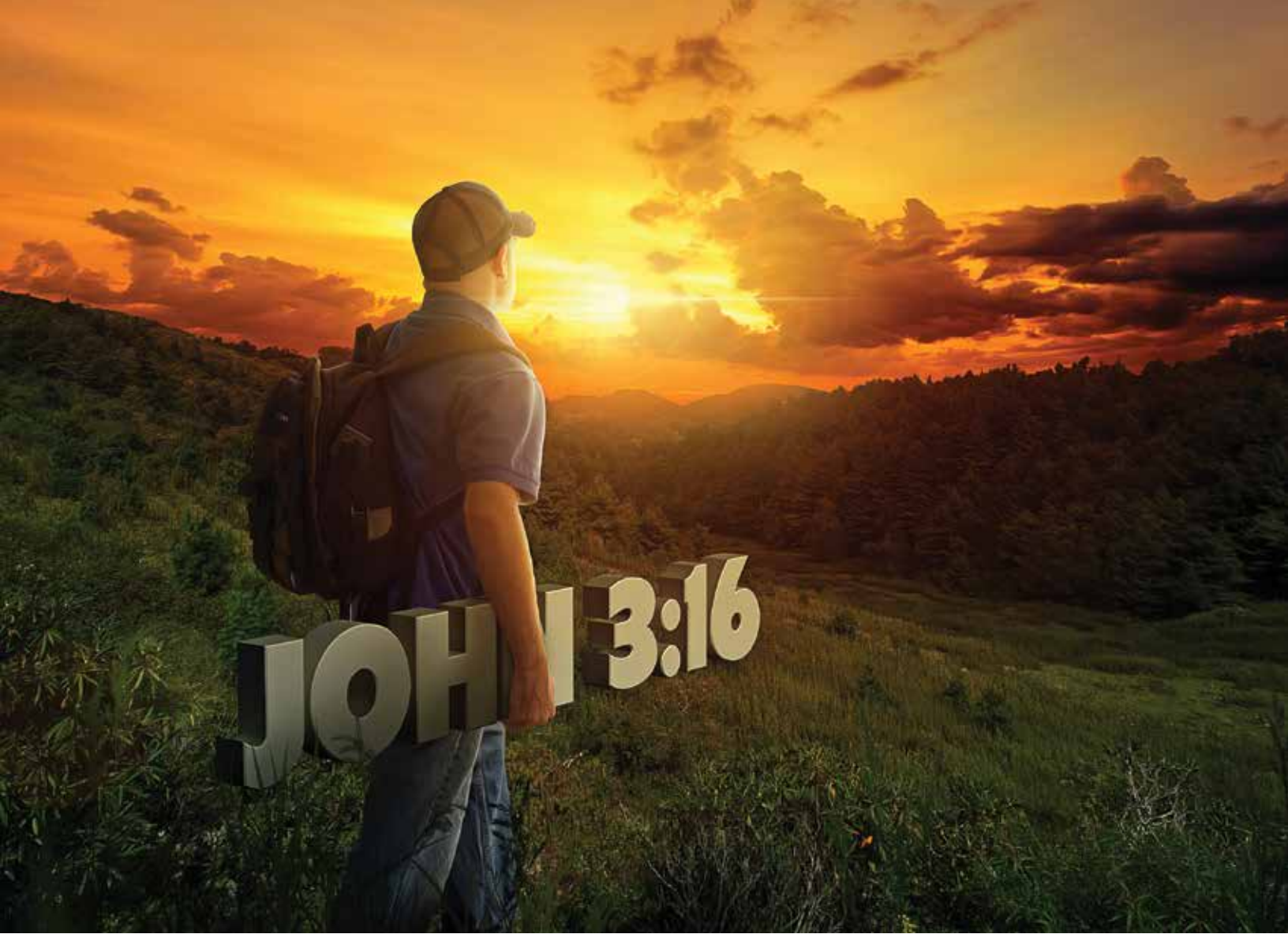
“My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.” – John 17:20–21 NIV

We need to be in prayer for others as well. Prayer for our relationships. Prayer that we are intentional in conversations into which God places us. Prayer that we can show love to those in our lives.

3. Have Compassion for Others

God shows compassion and comfort, so that we can then show the same to others. How can we extend compassion/comfort/love to someone today? God places people specifically in our lives each day. When God puts a person in our lives, we should show compassion and bring them encouragement.

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God.” – 2 Corinthians 1:3–4 NIV



4. Meet the Needs of Others (Sacrificing)

This is something Jesus showed us so clearly in scripture. Jesus met the needs of everyone, from the physically impaired to those who were hungry and poor. He is an amazing example of what it means to meet the needs of others.

I think sometimes we get so caught up in ourselves, that we forget our calling on this earth is to love others. One way Jesus did this was by meeting the needs of others. How can we set aside our selfishness and give generously to someone in need today? Just as He fed the 5,000 with five loaves of bread and two fish, He will multiply the effect of our giving when we provide what we can to share love and meet the needs of someone else.

5. Find Time for Others

In scripture, Jesus always found time for others. He spent time with believers and non-believers.

He pursued time with people to reveal His love to them.

In John 4, Jesus spends time with the Samaritan woman at the well. In Mark 2, scripture talks about Jesus eating with the tax collectors and sinners. In Luke 19, Jesus spends time at the house of Zacchaeus who was a tax collector and sinner.

Throughout the new testament, Jesus spent time with His disciples.

Ultimately, Jesus spent time with others. To show love to others, we need to find the time to spend with others. Pursue relationships with others, so that we can show love to them in the way Jesus did. Meet others where they are. Show them love. Show them the love of Christ, and hopefully one day they will experience His love and share it with others too!

In this time of violence, strife, argument and disagreement, God continues to call us to love, not to hate. What in a moment of anger or outrage might satisfy our pride is most probably not consistent with the loving future God wants for us. It is not God who has created the turmoil that surrounds us; it is turmoil of our own making, born from our love of self above our love of others.

This Easter, amidst the joy and celebration of our new lives in Christ, let us also celebrate the joy of new life with others. Let us begin to set aside our pride and petty differences that not only separate us from each other, but also separate us from God. Let us strive to become “Easter People”, who know and reflect God’s love through our love for one another as equals—equally beloved children of God.

Saturday Service

Nico Mulder

Old Wells and New – God Guides and Prospers His Servants (Genesis 26:17 – 33)



I am not in active ministry anymore, since 2010. I did more studies—never too old to study—and I sit in my psychotherapy office and talk to people, talk to young people. They say to me: I don't know how to go on anymore... I am talking to professionals that have a lot of financial problems, and then people are asking me, and Christians are asking me: where was God when I needed him? Why did that happen? Why did I have to go through all this pain? Why

did I have to go through all the pain as a child? Why did I have to go through all the pain and abuse and whatever that might be? Where was God when I needed him? And I can actually say, you know, I can associate with what you are saying because what you are saying is what I experienced in so many ways. You know what, I have to give you an answer but I don't know if I really have a clear answer, but tonight I want to give you a clear answer because I want to look at the life of Isaac and lessons

that we can learn out of Isaac's life.

The background was desert. Isaac was with his whole family and it was quite a bit. And his servants they have families and everybody. Water was not a very huge commodity; it was scarce, and without water you cannot really live and on top of that they have the Philistines. The Philistines were close to them; they were sea people, who migrated from the Aegean Sea via Crete and Cyprus and were used as mercenaries by the Canaanite rulers as well. They were fierce in battle and they lived on the southwestern coast of Israel. They were a fierce enemy of Israel, not in the time of Abraham and Isaac but in the time of Joshua, judges and King David. The king of the Philistines at that time was Abimelek. Abimelek was actually a Philistine dynasty name, like Pharaoh for Egyptians. The Abimelek in Genesis 26 was the one that came after the one in Genesis 22, when Abram was making treaties with him. Isaac was living at Beer Lahai Roi (literally "The well of the Living One who sees me") and actually Esau and Jacob were born there. They were farmers with a lot of sheep and camels and when there was a famine they moved up to Gerar. Abimelech was king of the Philistines in Gerar.

Now there was a famine in the land—besides the previous famine in Abraham's time—and Isaac went to Abimelek, king of the Philistines in Gerar. (Genesis 26:1). Interesting, there was a famine and it was not just others that suffered but



the children of God suffered as well, so they were not immune to hardships, not at all, and in verse 2: The Lord appeared to Isaac and said, “Do not go down to Egypt; live in the land where I tell you to live.” When Abraham had a famine the Lord said to go down to Egypt, but to Isaac, a different plan. Not to go down to Egypt, but—you have to stay where I tell you to stay. So God’s plan is sometimes different from human logic. You know, he was the son of Abraham so, one and one is two, so if there is a famine, the place to go is Egypt, so let’s go south. And God says no, stay where you are, I will show you where to go. Sometimes we are so into human logic that we forget God’s plans for our lives. And in Isaac’s life God was saying I will show you, trust me. Our cares should not dictate our actions. When we are suffering, when we are going through

difficult times, it should not dictate our actions, but it does. So what to do? We are human and we are saying: Please God, what is going on? Previously it went like this and now you are telling me to do something else?

Verse 3–5 is saying: *“Stay in this land for a while, and I will be with you and will bless you. For to you and your descendants I will give all these lands and will confirm the oath I swore to your father Abraham. I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because Abraham obeyed me and did everything I required of him, keeping my commands, my decrees and my instructions.”*

So what is God saying? He is saying—you obey me and I will bless you; you trust me, I will bless you. It’s all about blessing and it’s a lot about water in their future and in their existence, absolutely.

Abraham and Isaac obeyed God and they were blessed. Obey me and watch what is going to happen. So Isaac stayed in Gerar. But shortly after that when he was on his way to Gerar he made plans, just like his dad, to lie and to deceive. I call it like father, like son. *“When the men of that place asked him about his wife, he said, “She is my sister,” because he was afraid to say, “She is my wife.” He thought, “The men of this place might kill me on account of Rebekah, because she is beautiful.”*

This man had a beautiful wife and as he has a beautiful wife, his fear causes him to act against God’s law, and that can happen to us as well. But you know what the interesting thing is, he saw it with his dad, his dad lied. Once when he went down to Egypt he said the same thing. Like father like son. I normally say to my clients, monkey see monkey do. And these kids they are

The Lord will restore our blessings, for sure. Just be obedient to him, no opposition, accusation or worst schemes of the enemies could stop the flow of God's blessing to those who obey God and trust in him.



...so what is God saying? He is saying —you obey me and I will bless you; you trust me, I will bless you.

little video recorders. They watch you very, very carefully and I can dare you, you are going to do just as your dad. And Isaac did precisely the same. He did precisely what his dad did. So moms and dads, and future moms and dads, I just want to say, you have to be so careful what you do with your kids and what you say in front of your kids: the things that we do, the choices that we make. It's embarrassing to be caught in a lie by non-believers and we learn about this in verses 8 to 11 and then we go on. Only God's providence protected the promises of God. Because Isaac did not even try. God does not want you to do his work with dishonesty. He wants you to trust God and be obedient to him and do what he is calling you to do.

Verse 12: *"Isaac planted crops in that land and the same year reaped a hundredfold, because the Lord blessed him."* Though you

lied, I will bless you, the Lord is saying actually—because the Lord blesses you.

Verse 13–14: *"The man became rich, and his wealth continued to grow until he became very wealthy. He had so many flocks and herds and servants that the Philistines envied him."* Well he was reaping because God blessed him. But his blessing brought him wealth, influence and prominence.

Verse 15 is saying: *"So all the wells that his father Abraham, the Philistines stopped up, filling them with earth."* Just think with me a little bit. You are totally dependent on water, it is a dry area and you really need it. And then the enemy comes and they throw rocks into that well and they throw sand into that well so what do you have? You have nothing. Where do I get water for my kids? From nowhere. It's down there. Previously it was an act of war. What is Isaac to do? With no

water, there is no future. Where's God in this situation? Here comes Isaac to a place where he feels, these are the wells that my dad left to me so I can use them and they will be plenty. And we will have enough and—they are full of sand and rock. But Isaac did not fight. He was patient.

Verse 16 is saying: *"Then Abimelek said to Isaac, 'Move away from us; you have become too powerful for us.' So Isaac moved away from there and encamped in the Valley of Gerar, where he settled.* Number one, they filled the wells. Number two, the king is saying: Get away, I don't want you close. Everything that can go wrong is going wrong. Where was God in this whole situation? He's in the present, he's omnipresent, oh, for sure, God is using conflicts and even broken relationships to test our priorities and our character. Wealth, prominence and influence

bring power. Abimelek was jealous and afraid of Isaac's power and Isaac values the relationship so much that he is not standing on his rights and his assets and saying: I wonder. He came to reclaim his inheritance and he found it full of stuff.

Verse 18: *"Isaac reopened the wells that had been dug in the time of his father Abraham, which the Philistines had stopped up after Abraham died. He tried to reclaim his inheritance."* In 1940 after Paris fell under Nazi control, German troops started to loot all the artwork and there was a lot of it. They gathered it from galleries and all over. And there was one particular artwork called *Shepherdess Bringing in Sheep*. It had been painted in 1886 by a French impressionist, Camille Pissarro. It was stolen by the Nazis from a Jew, Raoul Meyer. He was a businessman in Paris and years later, in 2014 I think, his daughter was suing Oklahoma University for having that particular painting of her dad, that had been stolen by the Nazis. She went to court, and she won. She reclaimed her inheritance; it is now in Paris in an art gallery. And you can go there and see *Shepherdess Bringing in Sheep* from 1886. Well, Isaac reclaimed his inheritance as well. He wanted his inheritance back, just as Leone Meyer would fight for what was hers. He wanted his back, but the Philistines had stopped the wells after the death of Abraham, which was a violation of the Treaty of Genesis 21 verse 23. And just think that you have to go in and you have to get all those big rocks out again, out of that deep, deep well. Hard and difficult work. When Isaac's servants dug, they discovered a well of springing water. Perhaps when you're disappointed in your life you have to dig again the former well. God is a God of restoration and new life. Never give up. Never back down. Keep trying and keep digging the well.

Wells were a tangible evidence of divine blessing in that particular time when Isaac was living in that very dry area. No matter where Isaac dug and

no matter how often the Philistines stopped up the wells, he reopened old, dirt-filled wells (Genesis 26:17). And he's just consistently going back, consistently doing what he should. God's blessing on Isaac could not be hindered. With consistency it was just going on, he was not proclaiming war; he was not saying "You did that to me, I will show you."

"Isaac reopened the wells that had been dug in the time of his father Abraham...."

Genesis 26:18

I said quite a few times when I got to know lawyers in my practice, they were saying to me "You know what, you can sue the church for what they did to you". I said, "Yes, I can, I am not angry but perhaps I'm going to do it."

At the beginning of December the Lord was saying to me: "If Isaac was not declaring war, how can you be declaring war? No, you can't do it." Was it painful to me? Of course. Was it painful to Isaac? Of course it was painful. It was his future, it was his pension. It was my pension as well. But you know what? He trusted in God. And God said to me: "Nico, do you think I'm sleeping? Well, I'm wide awake. Nico, do you know that I care about you?" "It's humbling, Lord, yes, thank you." I was saying to you tonight, somebody did something to you perhaps, I don't know, where was God to let that happen? Wide awake, omnipresent, omniscient—because he knows everything, just trust him. Is it difficult? It was difficult for Isaac, of course, it was difficult for him, as difficult as it is for me, but you know what? I know that God is in control. God is God of his promises. He said in Numbers 23 verse 19: *"Am I like men, that will change their minds?"* He said no, I am promising, and when God is promising you, God will stand with his promises as he did with Isaac. With water or no water, with dried up water or tons of springing up wells, God is saying I'm God.

Verse 19–20: *"Isaac's servants dug in the valley and discovered a well of fresh water*

there. But the herders of Gerar quarreled with those of Isaac and said, "The water is ours!" So he named the well Esek, because they disputed with him."

It's hard work to dig a good well. Esek means dispute and it can develop into opposition for sure. Isaac gave the wells to them. He said okay you can take it. Can you believe it? He is not standing on his rights and saying: "this is the line, come, let see..." Sometimes we act like that. Because we want to take things into our own hands. I am not saying that you have to be somebody that everybody can trample on. I am not saying that. What I'm saying is, we have to trust God in the things what are happening around us.

Verse 21: *"Then they dug another well, but they quarreled over that one also; so he named it Sitnah."* So they dug another well, and they emptied the wells that were stuck, got water and that was taken from them. They dug a new one, that was taken from them, and every time Isaac was saying, "Okay, you can have it." Because Isaac remembered that God made a promise to him and God made that promise to his dad as well.

Verse 22: *"He moved on from there and dug another well, and no one quarreled over it. He named it Rehoboth, saying, "Now the LORD has given us room and we will flourish in the land."*

Sitnah means opposition. Isaac endured accusation and he gave the well up. God's blessing outdistanced the opposition. One person with God is a majority, and God outdistanced the opposition. Don't stop digging, you may be one step away from the very best that God wants for you. Rehoboth means open space and breakthrough after the test and trials. Three times Philistines took his wells. God bless those who never give up and keep digging to find God's will for their lives.

Isaac refused to fight back, and continued to relinquish one well after another until the Philistines in frustration let him alone. Remember sometimes through trial comes victory. God

Wake up and listen to God. What is God's goal in what was happening and is happening in our lives? God sent Isaac there. God had a plan for his life. And God has a plan for what happens in your life. God is omniscient—that means he's all-knowing. God knows your circumstances; he knows precisely what is going on in your life. God is not sleeping (Psalm 121)



is bigger than the opposition.

Verse 23–24: *“From there he went up to Beersheba. That night the Lord appeared to him and said, ‘I am the God of your father Abraham. Do not be afraid, for I am with you; I will bless you and will increase the number of your descendants for the sake of my servant Abraham.’”*

Because I made a promise to your father and I will see this promise through because I am the God of my promises. When I say I will take care of you, I will take care of you. Trust me. God woke him up and said to him, this is what's going to happen, don't be afraid, keep going. God showed his grace to Isaac, revealing his presence, proclaiming his character, comforting his servant: fear not for I am with you, and he is renewing his promises and God's gracious

interventions always at the right time and the right place in the right way. Isn't that interesting? If you keep standing on your knees and ask the Lord, Lord, please help, he will. His time, his place.

What I've learned from my God: my God is never late, never. When I need it, when I ask the Lord, he is on time. What did Isaac do? Isaac built an altar and called on the name of the Lord. verse 25: *“Isaac built an altar there and called on the name of the Lord. There he pitched his tent, and there his servants dug a well.”* Isaac's gratitude was one of personal devotion. It was an act of devotion, an act of worship. He worshiped God, invoking God's name, and he remembered God's mercies and he trusted God. And he said: I trust you, I absolutely trust you. And pitching his

tent, he ended up digging another well with no water. He was digging and he found water: that's trust.

What is our responsibility? Gratefully acknowledge God's past mercies and blessings in your life. Publicly celebrate God's mercies and blessings in your life in the present and hopeful expectation of future mercies and blessings of the Lord. Trusting God. That is what he is asking from us.

Verse 26–27: *“Meanwhile, Abimelek had come to him from Gerar, with Abuzgath his personal adviser and Phicol the commander of his forces. Isaac asked them, ‘Why have you come to me, since you were hostile to me and sent me away?’”*

Well they came to him. They could see it. Isaac's testimony was so strong the Philistines could not help but notice

God's blessings on this man and therefore they answered: *"We saw clearly that the Lord was with you, so we said, 'There ought to be a sworn agreement between us'—between us and you. Let us make a treaty with you that you will do us no harm." Why? And then they lied: "Just as we did not harm you but always treated you well and sent you away peacefully. And now you are blessed by the Lord."* Verse 28–29

Liars. It is interesting how politicians can lie. These politicians lied. They lied because they took Isaac's wells though Isaac did not want that to happen. And he did not say—no, no, no, your facts are a little bit wrong. Remember how many wells you took from me, remember how many wells you filled up with sand—he did not do it, he did not even refer to that. When a man's ways please God, God will make even his enemies be at peace. If we never give up, even those former enemies are going to turn out. Isaac then made a feast for them and they ate and they drank and Christianity requires of the Saints to be as careful of their neighbors and their interests as of their own. You know that's the one thing that Jesus said in Matthew 6—you have to love your enemies—and Isaac did it. He did not even complain.

Verse 31: *"Early the next morning the men swore an oath to each other. Then Isaac sent them on their way, and they went away peacefully."*

Like Abraham. Again like his dad. Like his dad he blessed those nations who sought him now; like his dad Isaac trusted God and lived in peace with his neighbors.

Verse 32–33: *That day Isaac's servants came and told him about the well they had dug. They said, "We've found water!" He called it Shibah, and to this day the name of the town has been Beersheba."*

Isaac named the well Shibah, for they made a treaty by an oath similar to the earlier treaty of Abraham. It will just be a reminder to the enemy.

I want to talk about God's blessing. God's blessing was on the seed of Abraham. Isaac was the rightful heir.

No matter how much opposition they experienced, God still blessed them. Because of the blessings of Israel, other nations sought peace with him. The Lord will restore our blessings, for sure. Just be obedient to him, no opposition, accusation or worst schemes of the enemies could stop the flow of God's blessing to those who obey God and trust in him.

How can we maintain the blessings of God?

Number one: by patience. When Abimelek requested him to leave the town of Gerar, he left. When the Philistines filled up his father's wells, he quietly dug them out again. When the herdsmen of Gerar wrangled with his shepherds about a spring, he simply gave it up and sought another. When the new well was disputed, he retired and sank a third, and all the while his flocks and herds kept on multiplying. Patience. You know we say patience like Job, I think we have to perhaps say patience like Isaac. How do you maintain the blessings of God?

Number two: perseverance. Isaac diligently selected pasture grounds and dug wells. He didn't allow himself to be discouraged by the opposition of his neighbors. Isaac was quiet, determined and unwearied.

Number three: beauty. Beauty of the grateful recognition of God's hand putting an end to the irritation and annoyance of his neighbors and giving him at last a comfortable settlement at Rehoboth. Never give up. Keep digging the wells. Be consistent. God is in control.

Wake up and listen to God. What is God's goal in what was happening and is happening in our lives? God sent Isaac there. God had a plan for his life. And God has a plan for what happens in your life. God is omniscient—that means he's all-knowing. God knows your circumstances; he knows precisely what is going on in your life. God is not sleeping (Psalm 121). God will take care of His children even if the wells

dried up or might be plugged, and even if all is messed up and filled with rocks. God will take care of His children.

God is also omnipotent, he is all-powerful. God can bring new life in the drought where there is no life: everything against you, all odds against you. God is in control because he is omnipotent. There is no other God as powerful as our God, the Triune God. He can take care of you. But God is also omnipresent: he sees everything and he stay with you in your difficult situation, when your wells are plugged, where it's dry, when you don't know where to go to, he is there, he sees everything, God knows what you need. Don't be afraid. Sometimes God is humbling us so that he can be King. And that is difficult to bend our knees and say God. Because we want to be somebody we have to let our pride go so that God can be King. Our limitations and dilemmas don't limit God. You think you cannot speak, you think you are too old, you think you have limitations? Moses was eighty and the Lord said go and God gave him many years after that. Our limitations and dilemmas don't limit God, but ask from us to choose to live by faith. Our past is dealt with. When you have guilt about what happened, Jesus died on the cross for that. Your past has been dealt with. Your present is in God's hands. Your future—God is in control. God's faithfulness in the past can be counted on in the present and the future as it was with Abraham, as it was with Isaac, as is for us the spiritual descendants of Isaac. God is in control. God holds the universe, not just the Earth, in his hands. Trust God. Isaac did it. God blessed him, because he trusted God and knew that God was in control. God is in control even if there is a dry well in your life. Even if you said today that the well that should bubble up with new life was stuffed with rocks, God will take care of that. Trust him.

Fragments from History

"...bless, for to this you were called..." (1 Peter 3:9)

Visiting different historical monuments is a popular activity for many people. In the Czech Republic, history lovers come into their own. Medieval buildings stand as witnesses to Central Europe's turbulent history. After the Battle of White Mountain in 1620, approximately 250,000 Protestant emigrants fled the country. Among them were thirty families of Protestant Bohemian noblemen, and three hundred (free) middle-class families. Their property was confiscated. It is a strange feeling to walk through a great castle and discover that the original owners left everything because of their faith. These emigrants left not just their homes, but also the large plots of land, villages and towns with which these castles were connected. They left with the hope and prayer of returning one day. The subjects who were not free to leave had to convert to the only permitted religion. Many did not abandon their Protestant faith, but instead kept it secret. This is evidenced by many well-preserved literary works of the period. It is not difficult to imagine that these faithful followers of the Bible's teachings and of Christ prayed for their neighbors, and for freedom of religion. They prayed and blessed future generations, just as Jan Amos Comenius had.

Castle Velhartice in Šumava, between the towns Sušice and Klatovy, was founded between 1290 and 1310 by the favourite

chamberlain of the King and Emperor Charles IV. A unique, large stone bridge connects two parts of the castle. It is 32m long, 3m wide and nearly 10m high, with four arches on massive cylindrical pillars. The castle is also known today as having been, for some time, the hiding place for the Bohemian Kingdom's crown jewels.

Majestically situated on a rock with a small stream visible below it, the castle is surrounded by forest. For over thirty years a castellan, along with his family, has been living in one section of the castle. It is an idyllic environment. The castellan is responsible not only for the general maintenance of the castle, but also for the management of its entire operation. During the summer season, the castle is lively with various activities. These include many social events and weddings. The castellan's family are people of deep belief. On the weekend before Christmas, a prayer retreat took place at the castle. It ended with Sunday worship. The conclusion of the assembly was unique: the whole congregation sang Aaron's blessing, and the lands to the far corners of the earth were blessed. The beam of prayer that had appeared a long time ago (according to the castle's records) has shone again.

"The Lord bless you and keep you; the Lord make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you; the Lord lift up his countenance [c] upon you and give you peace". (Numbers 6: 24–26)

Natasha Laurinc



Castle Velhartice

...žehňte. K tomu jste přece povoláni... (1. Petr 3:9)

Navštěvování různých historických památek bývá oblíbenou činností mnohých lidí. V České republice si milovníci historie přijdou na své. Středověké stavby jsou svědky pohnutých dějin střední Evropy. Po bitvě na Bílé hoře (v roce 1620) opustilo Českou zemi zhruba 250 tisíc emigrantů protestantského vyznání. Mezi nimi bylo na třicet rodin vyšší šlechty a tři sta rodin nižší šlechty. Jejich majetek byl zkonfiskován. Je to zvláštní pocit, když při prohlídce velikého hradu zjistíte, že se původní majitel všeho zřekl kvůli víře. Nejednalo se jen o střechu nad hlavou, vztahovalo se to na velké pozemky spolu s vesnicemi a městy. Tito lidé odcházeli s modlitbou a vírou, že se vrátí. Poddaní odejít nesměli, ti museli přestoupit na jediné povolené vyznání. Svou víru mnozí neopustili, ale drželi ji v tajnosti. Svědčí o tom mnohá zachovalá literární díla. Není těžké si představit, že se tito věrní vyznavači Bible a následovníci Krista modlili za své bližní a za svobodu vyznání. Modlili se a žehnali budoucímu pokolení, stejně jako Jan Ámos Komenský.

Hrad Velhartice na Šumavě, mezi městem Sušice a Klatovy, byl založen mezi roky 1290 – 1310 oblíbeným komorníkem krále

a císaře Karla IV. Unikátní je velký kamenný most, který spojuje dvě části hradu. Je dlouhý 32m, široký 3m a vysoký téměř 10m, se čtyřmi lomenými oblouky na masivních válcovitých pilířích. Hrad se do historie zapsal také tím, že na něm nějakou dobu byly ukryty korunovační klenoty Království českého.

Majestátně rozložený na skále naslouchá hrad šumění okolních lesů a toku malé říčky pod sebou. Již přes třicet let působí na hradě kastelán, který bydlí se svou rodinou v jedné části hradu. Velmi romantické prostředí. Kastelán se stará nejen o údržbu hradu, ale organizuje celý jeho provoz. Během sezóny hrad obživne různými aktivitami. Patří mezi ně i mnohé společenské akce a svatby. Kastelánova rodina jsou hluboce věřící lidé. O víkendu před Vánocemi proběhl na hradě modlitební pobyt. Byl zakončen nedělní bohoslužbou. Závěr shromáždění byl unikátní. Za zpěvu Áronova požehnání žehnilo celé obcenství krajíně do všech světových stran. Zazářil paprsek modlitby, který se objevil kdysi dávno, jak vyplývá ze záznamů hradebních knih.

“Ať ti Hospodin žehná a obrání tě! Ať Hospodin nad tebou rozjasní svou tvář a daruje ti přízeň! Ať Hospodin k tobě obrátí svou tvář a obdaří tě pokojem!” (Numeri 6:24–26)

Nataša Laurincová



Velhartice - Castle stone bridge

Don't Look a Gift Horse in the Mouth: Be Grateful

Petar Vlastic



I recently received a gift from a friend and a former consultant. It was a nicely wrapped, heavy box. As someone with a pretty bad sweet tooth, I got excited over the thought that this box felt like it could be delicious toffee bark. I unwrapped the box to find my suspicions to be true... score! I examined the

box a little more: the lettering on it was gold AND in cursive, which we all know means it is fancy; and at the bottom it said "Handcrafted in small batches", another indicator of a potentially high-value item. Intrigued by these clues and driven by my curious human nature, I went to google just how valuable this almond toffee was, an act that almost immediately made me feel embarrassed. Embarrassed that instead of being thankful to my friend for thinking of me during this Christmas season, I became too curious about the value of the gift he gave me. Embarrassed that instead of being grateful that someone took the time, effort, and money to find a gift, wrap it, and send it, my mind became occupied with the analysis of the box and the price of their effort.

But I have a feeling I'm not the first, nor last, person to look a gift horse in the mouth – we will get back to that phrase later. I would guess all of us have, at some point, received a gift and wondered just how much it cost. We received a compliment or a kind word and questioned their motives or sincerity. Humanity as a whole has received so much, and yet managed to miss out on the joy of receiving those gifts as we, in our hearts and minds, have always been too concerned with figuring out the gift value, gift-giver's motive, effort level, or the honesty of their actions.

I don't blame us really. We are human, we are curious, we

are proud, and let's just be honest, there truly are bad gift-givers out there, wrong motives certainly exist, and some people put little effort into getting the perfect gift. But here's the thing: their attitude toward gifting is on them; our attitude toward receiving gifts is on us, and it is this portion of the gift exchange we are here to discuss today as we slowly exit the most gift—and gratitude—oriented season of them all.

What got me thinking about all this is the phrase I heard from my awesome brother-in-law Ethan (Mr. Pickles) this past Thanksgiving: "Don't look a gift horse in the mouth". For whatever reason, the phrase and its meaning have been captivating me ever since that evening in the living room of Mom and Dad's house in Philippi. The phrase appeared in English print in 1546 by John Heywood, but it is postulated that the true origin comes from St. Jerome's Letter to the Ephesians (around 400 AD), in which he stated to "Never inspect the teeth of a given horse". The technical background of the phrase is that as horses develop, they grow more teeth and their existing teeth begin to change shape and project further forward, so one way to figure out the horse's age and its value is to inspect the teeth. While the act itself has its place and time, doing so to a horse presented as a gift would be considered bad manners, as it implies one is trying to assess the value of that gift instead of just accepting it, therefore showing ungratefulness.

While it's hard to imagine too many of us are receiving horses as a gift these days, the message is clear and still valid: when receiving a gift, we should be grateful for the gift we received and not assess its value to make sure it matches our standards. Beyond its call to be grateful for a gift we get, I believe the phrase has a deeper challenge for us all: to develop a thankful heart, one not changed around by the winds of circumstances, but rather unshaken and rooted in gratefulness in every situation we face and for every good thing we receive (yes, even an imperfect gift).

Yet this is hard, so how do we do it? Keeping in mind a thankful heart starts with us willingly changing our mindset from one of cynicism and analysis to one of thankfulness.



The ultimate source of wisdom has a few pointers for us.

James gives us one clue: to remember that **all good things come from God** (James 1:17). This is a deep, all-encompassing reminder that every good thing in our life—the job we have, the family we have, the house, the car, the gifts, the encouragements—are all gifts from God. Perhaps, instead of thinking of gifts we get as something a friend or co-worker gave us, it would do us good to remember it is God gifting us through them. Since He so freely gives to us, we can also freely give to others without ever running out of the endless supply of good things that come from our Lord.

Secondly, Paul reminds us in 1 Thessalonians 5:18 that we can **be grateful in all situations**, as that is the will of God for us. Paul's remark is not so much about our duty to be grateful as it is an encouragement that a thankful heart is possible to us who follow Jesus. As people seeking to fulfill His will, we CAN gravitate our mind and soul toward the attitude He wishes us to have...a grateful heart.

The third step on our path is to be grateful in plenty and in want (Philippians 4:12–13). We tend to be grateful when we have something. We tend to be less grateful the more we have of it since we start getting a little prideful. And we tend to be less grateful when we are in need as we are too focused on the fact that we are lacking. Yet we are encouraged that because God is with us through all situations—good, bad, mountain-

top, valley, in abundance and in hunger—we can make it! Because we have the author of life and gifter of eternal life in heaven as our underwriter, guaranteeing our support, we are blessed and can be thankful in every stage of our life!

Paul strikes yet again when he reminds us that we can change our mindset by being **thankful for things that don't benefit us** (Ephesians 1:15–16). Yeah, it's easy to be grateful when we receive gifts, but a bit more difficult when someone else benefits and we get nothing out of it. Yet time and time again in the Bible, we are encouraged to look past ourselves and focus on others. The more time we spend practicing gratefulness for all good that happens to us AND our neighbors, the less time we must focus on what we have (or don't have). It sounds weird, but it works: the more we focus on others, the less we think about us and the happier we are.

We live in a wanting world where nothing is ever enough. We want better cars, we want more travel, we want and want some more, and often it becomes too easy to get caught up in that unhappy cycle instead of being thankful for all the gifts we have received. So as we start this 2019, I want to encourage us to develop a grateful heart and start living the rich and happy life that comes through the knowledge that our Lord is with us, loves us, and has great gifts for us, if we just let Him do what he does the best!



Jesus Appears to Thomas

(John 20)

Fill in the missing words:

24 Thomas (called Didymus) was one of the twelve, but he was not with the other followers when Jesus came.

25 They told him, "We saw the Lord." Thomas said, "That's hard to believe. I will have to see the nail holes in his _____, put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side. Only then will I _____ it."

26 A week later the followers were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. The _____ were locked, but _____ came and stood among them. He said, "Peace be with you!"

27 Then he said to _____, "Put your _____ here. Look at my hands. Put your hand here in my _____. Stop _____ and believe."

28 _____ said to Jesus, "My Lord and my God!"

29 Jesus _____ to him, "You believe because you _____ me. Great blessings belong to the people who _____ without seeing me!"

JESUS
HANDS

DOORS
SIDE

THOMAS
SEE

DOUBTING
BELIEVE

FINGER
SAID

Charles Spurgeon's Devotion



Charles Haddon Spurgeon
by Alexander Melville

I know that my Redeemer Lives

Job 19:25

The foundation of Job's comfort lay in that one little word my —“my Redeemer”—and in the fact that the Redeemer truly lives. Oh, to take hold of the living Christ! We must have a claim to Him before we can enjoy Him.

What good is gold still in the mine? There are plenty of beggars in the gold regions of Peru and California. It is gold in their pockets, not in the mine, that will satisfy their necessities by purchasing the bread they need.

So it is with a redeemer who has not redeemed me or an avenger who will never fight for my life. Of what value are they? Therefore, never rest until by faith you can say, “Yes, I have cast myself upon my living Lord and He is mine.”

Perhaps you find yourself today with a weak and feeble grasp on Him, thinking it presumptuous to say, “He lives as my Redeemer.” Yet remember, “if you have faith as small as a mustard seed” (Matt. 17:20) you are entitled to say it.

Two additional words here also express Job's strong confidence—“I know.” There are thousands of believers in Jesus who never go beyond saying, “I hope so” or “I believe so.” But to experience true peace and comfort you must be able to say, “I know.” And words such as if, but, and perhaps are sure murderers of that peace and comfort.

Doubts are nothing but gloomy clouds in times of sorrow. Like wasps they sting my soul! If I have any suspicion Christ is not mine, I experience the bitterness of “vinegar ... mingled with [the] gall” (Matt. 27:34 KJV) of death. But if I know Jesus lives for me, darkness is no longer dark, and light surrounds me even at night.

If Job could say, “I know,” ages before the coming of Christ, we should never be less sure. And God forbid that our positive statement should be presumption. May we see that our evidence is true lest we build our faith on false hope, and may we never be satisfied with stopping at the mere foundation, for it is from the upper floors we have the greatest view.

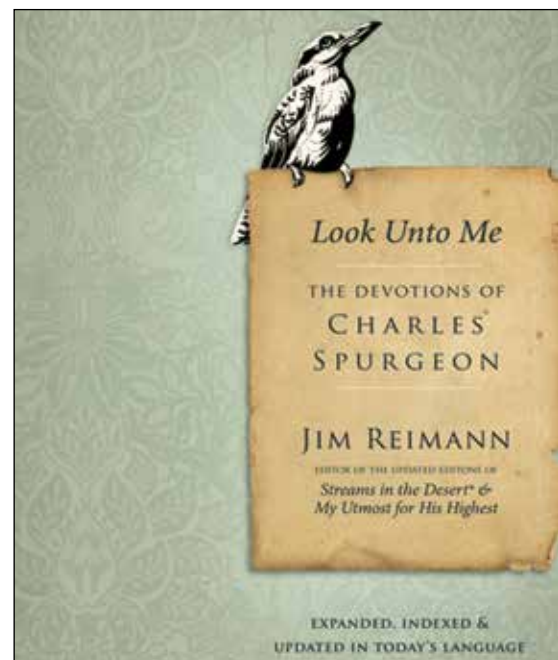
A living Redeemer who is truly mine is “inexpressible and glorious joy” (1 Peter 1:8).

Charles Haddon (C.H.) Spurgeon (19 June 1834–31 January 1892) was a British Baptist preacher. Spurgeon remains highly influential among Christians of different denominations, among whom he is known as the “Prince of Preachers.” He was a strong figure in the Reformed Baptist tradition, defending the Church in agreement with the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith, and understanding and opposing the liberal and pragmatic theological tendencies in the Church of his day.

Spurgeon was pastor of the congregation of the New Park Street Chapel (later the Metropolitan Tabernacle) in London for 38 years. He was a prolific author of many types of works, including sermons, an autobiography, commentaries, books on prayer, devotionals, magazines, poetry, hymns and more. In his lifetime, Spurgeon preached to around 10,000,000 people.

Look Unto Me represents some of Spurgeon's most powerful devotions.

...Spurgeon preached to around 10,000,000 people.
Look Unto Me represents some of Spurgeon's most powerful devotions.



Taken from “*Look Unto Me*”
The Devotions of Charles Spurgeon by Jim Reimann
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February 2019



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...so that we can preach the gospel in the regions beyond you.
 2 Corinthians 10:16

Czech Church-Planting Conference



Mark and the seven other members of the CB church-planting task force organized and hosted a first-ever church-planting conference by a denomination in February with about 50 people in attendance. The conference covered the history and vision of church planting in the Czech Republic; creating a climate of church planting; developing church-planting leaders; passing on a missional and discipleship lifestyle; and what our new church-planting task force can offer during this process. We have identified about 32 places in the Czech Republic where church planting is taking root in various stages, and we are ready to step in



wherever we can be of help through what we have identified as the seven priorities of our new task force, or the seven Czech “Z’s”:

Zasévání: We need to prepare the soil through prayer and biblical teaching as God sends and empowers us to plant new churches.

Získávání: We need to seek, find, and raise up new church planters from every generation, social and ethnic group in the Czech Republic.

Zrcadlo: We need to evaluate and assess church planters’ giftedness and consult with churches that are sending out teams.

Základy: We need to teach the biblical call to plant churches and to learn from previous mistakes in order to avoid them in the future.

Zázemí: We need to coach, mentor, and accompany church planters, because it is a difficult and lonely endeavor.

Zdroje: We need to discover practical tools, human resources and financial partnership, and encourage generous giving.

Zkušenosti: We need to pass on what we ourselves practice, through stories, articles, case studies, literature, and conferences.

Vít's Pastoral Internship

Six months after an 18-meter (60-ft) fall while mountain climbing, South City Church's new pastoral intern, Vít, stood before the congregation, thanked everyone personally for their faithful prayers, and preached an excellent message. All of Vít's injuries and bones have healed, although his ankle bones in one leg are at risk of fusing together. Vít will undergo seven more weeks of in-patient rehabilitation outside



of Prague before he begins to minister full-time at South City Church on May 1st, Lord willing. Under Mark's supervision, Vít will be sharing in the preaching and teaching schedule, gaining experience in children's and youth ministries and worship arts, and furthering his pastoral training.

Becky's Arrival



We have a new TEAM co-worker – from Windsor! Within one year, Becky Ferguson was accepted with TEAM, raised her support, went through missionary training, arrived in Prague and joined the ministry at Ládví Church. She is living in the Prosek neighborhood of Prague's North City, where our church has committed to plant a new daughter church. Becky has already begun Czech language studies, and we have had the privilege of helping her with her apartment, Czech residence visa, banking, transportation, communication, and orientation.

Marriage Courses

“We're inviting the Czech Republic on a date!” That is the theme of a new nation-wide advertising campaign aimed at inviting Czech couples to attend the Marriage Course at one of 60 locations in the country, seven of them in Prague. We are currently ministering to eight couples at two of these locations: Mondays at South City Church and Tuesdays at Ládví Church. Although many come from a non-Christian background, they are eager to learn together about communication, conflict resolution, forgiveness, love in action, and other topics from a biblical perspective.

TEAM Czech Conference

TEAM Czech Republic met from January 18–20 in the Czech-Moravian Highlands for our annual conference. Once

again Mark served as conference chair and Gretchen was conference secretary. We heard reports from our co-workers, we prayed for each other, and we enjoyed times of fellowship together. Ben and Elise helped with the children's ministry, and Mark led worship. We're glad that Becky was able to join us after having arrived only two days earlier!

Potma Family News

One of the fun things that we did while Luke and Noemi were with us in Prague over the Christmas holidays was to try our skill at getting out of an escape room—an actual Public Security van used to round up dissidents under Communism before 1989. Nowadays it is owned and operated by a couple of entrepreneurial Czech Bible college students from Prague. It took us 75 minutes to escape, and once we were done we got to try on real Communist-era uniforms.

Prayer Points

PRAISE God for church-planting efforts in more than 32 places in the Czech Republic. PRAY for Mark and the seven Czech pastors who are leading the CB church-planting task force.

PRAISE God for new people attending Ládví Church, including Martin, who is preparing for baptism. Pray for him as he works through difficult family issues and life choices.

Please PRAY for a good start for Becky as she begins learning Czech, and also for the rest of our TEAM Czech co-workers in several church-planting initiatives in Prague.

Please PRAY for Luke, Noemi, Ben and Elise as they continue in their studies and as they grow in their faith.

With warm greetings from the regions beyond,

Mark & Gretchen

