

Glorious Hope Slavná naděje

Vol. 44, N° 4, December 2018

Ročník 44, číslo 4, prosinec 2018

God with us

She will give birth to a son,
and you are to give him the name Jesus
because he will save his people from their sins.
All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said
through the prophet:

“The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son,
and they will call him Immanuel”,
which means: God with us. (Matthew 1: 21-23)

Boh s nami

Porodí syna a dáš mu meno Ježiš, lebo on zachráni svoj ľud z jeho hriechov.
Toto všetko sa stalo, aby sa splnilo, čo Pán povedal prostredníctvom proroka:
“Hľa, panna počne a porodí syna a dajú mu meno Emanuel,”
čo v preklade znamená: Boh s nami. (Matúš 1; 21-23)

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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 posláni 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.

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Every Christian Celebrates Christmas



Celebrating the birth of Christ probably began with the early Christians of the second century A.D. The Christmas tradition disappeared some time during the third century, only to reappear in the fourth.

In the early middle ages, the visitation of the three magi was the focus of the celebration of Christ's birth. The significance of this holiday also gradually grew thanks to the influence of Charles the Great, who chose this day for his coronation in the year 800.

In medieval times, Christmas was a public holiday. Advent was considered one of three most important times of the year. Houses were decorated with evergreens, and on Christmas Eve, carolers sang their way through the neighbourhood. Hospitality was another important tradition. In Bohemia, (and the rest of Europe) Christmas was accompanied by various folk traditions, some of which are still practiced today.

In the sixteenth century, nativity scenes became popular, with people building them at home. From 1562, they also started being built and displayed in the church. During the Reformation, from the 16th – 17th centuries, the day of gift-giving was shifted from December 6th to Christmas Eve (December 24th).

Before the 17th century, Christmas celebrations were held in churches. From the 17th century onwards, festivities progressively became a family affair. Christmas became an occasion not only to celebrate Christ's birth but also to have a happy, social holiday. The tradition of decorating the evergreen tree began some time during the 18th century.

In the 21st century, Christmas is celebrated all over the world in myriad ways. Each family has their own tradition, which doesn't necessarily correlate to the first Christmas. Often, the original meaning of Christmas gets lost.

Pastor John E. Karenko in his article, "At Christmas God Became a Man", goes into detail about who was actually born and why they were born. (The reprint, as part of a series of articles from previous GH issues, can be found on page 10).

Whatever the tradition, the true meaning of Christmas should never disappear. Something amazing happened two thousand years

📖 Continues on page 5

Vánoce slaví každý křesťan

Oslavování narození Pána Ježíše pravděpodobně vzniklo díky raným křesťanům někdy v druhém století. Během třetího století byla vánoční tradice opuštěna a znovu vytvořena ve čtvrtém století. V raném středověku byla oslava narození Páně zaměřená na návštěvu mudrců. Významnost tohoto svátku postupně vzrostla také zásluhou císaře Karla Velikého, který se nechal ten den v roce 800 korunovat.

Ve středověku byly Vánoce veřejné svátky. Období Vánoc se oslavovalo jako jedno z nejdůležitějších období v roce. Domy byly zdobeny chvojím jehličnanů a v předvečer narození Páně chodili koledníci. Významným zvykem byla také pohostinnost. V českých zemích (a v celé Evropě) Vánoce provázelo velké množství lidových zvyků, mnohé přetrvávající až do dnešní doby.

Od 16. století se objevují Betlémy, které si lidé stavěli doma, a od roku 1562 i v kostelech. Během reformace v 16. – 17. století bylo datum předávání dárků změněno z 6. prosince na Štědrý den (24. prosince).

Do 17. století se vánoční oslavy odehrávaly v kostele a od 17. století se slavení Vánoc postupně přesouvalo do rodin. Vánoce se vítaly nejen jako svátky narození Ježíše, ale jako svátek domácího štěstí a společenství. Tradice zdobení stromečku začala někdy v 18. století.

Ve 21. století se Vánoce slaví po celém světě různými způsoby. Každá rodina má své zvyky, které nutně nekorespondují s těmi prvotními Vánoce. Mnohdy se smysl oslav Vánoc vytrácí. Kazatel John E. Karenko ve své úvaze "O Vánocích se stal Bůh člověkem" podrobně rozebírá, kdo se to narodil a proč se vlastně narodil. (Přetisk v rámci naší série článků ze starších čísel *Slavné naděje* na straně 6.)

Ať už jsou vánoční tradice jakékoliv, skutečné poslání Vánoc by nikdy nemělo uniknout. Něco úžasného se odehrálo před dvěma tisíci lety. Tato událost—narození Páně—se zapsala do historie lidstva jako zázrak. Tento zázrak nese s sebou poselství, které nikdy nezapadlo do historických archívů, ale mocně oslovuje každého jednotlivce. Hovoří i dnes ke každému, kdo chce slyšet.

Přejeme našim čtenářům krásné Vánoce s vědomím si toho největšího a vzácného daru, který člověk kdy dostal: "Neboť Bůh tak miloval svět, že dal svého jednorozeného Syna, aby žádný, kdo v něj věří, nezahynul, ale měl věčný život." (Jan 3; 16)

Nataša Laurincová, šéfredaktorka

From the President



Christmas is a beautiful mystery. Each year it comes along and we welcome it as a familiar friend, with high hopes and expectations. December proceeds, a rising crescendo of emotion and events – so many, so much. Then at last, Christmas is here. The grand celebration climaxes, and suddenly it is over. When all the busyness, excitement and feasting are over, there can be a let-down feeling in the corner of our souls.

I wonder if Mary and Joseph felt this when the excitement of Jesus' birth had died down. There had been much to ignite their hope and strengthen their faith: the angel's visit to Mary beforehand, telling her she would bear a child who would be called the "Son of the Most High", the confirmation by an angel to Joseph in a dream, the wonderful visit of shepherds saying an angel of the Lord had appeared to them and said:

"Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger." Luke 2:11–12

But the shepherds had to go back to their fields and Mary and Joseph had a new baby to take care of. How do faith and hope, love and joy live on after the grand Christmas parade has passed?

Luke leaves an important clue as he relates in his gospel:

"But Mary treasured all these things and pondered them in her heart." Luke 2:19

There are treasures scattered throughout the Christmas landscape for those who are wise to gather them up. We cannot always live at break-neck pace nor remain long at the emotional mountain-peak. What we can do, however, as the marching band moves on and the music subsides, is take out and ponder afresh the treasures we have gathered.

"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given... and his name will be called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." Isaiah 9:6

These gems and jewels of Christmas are not for us alone. Our Convention has the happy mandate of sharing the *Good News* of Christ's coming, particularly in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. A Christmas gift to the Convention will help us continue supporting the proclamation and demonstration that Christ has come. For precious souls we are called to reach, it could be a signpost pointing to Bethlehem and the Saviour born to us all.

Wishing you the wonder of Christ's coming pondered afresh.

Rev. Stan Mantle

Editorial... Continues from page 3

ago. This event—the birth of Christ—has been recorded in the annals of human history as a miracle. This miracle carries with it a message that wasn't written into the archives of history but speaks powerfully to every individual. Even today it speaks to everyone who wants to hear it.

We wish a beautiful Christmas to all our readers, in the knowledge of that greatest and most valuable of gifts ever

given to humankind. *"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son; that whosoever believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life."* (John 3:16).

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



**CZECHOSLOVAK
BAPTIST CONVENTION**
of
United States and Canada

The Fall mid-year meeting of the Convention was postponed to give more time for the for the location and date of next summer's Convention to be determined. We are looking for a location in the north-eastern US in the vicinity of the Great Lakes, and aiming as usual for a July time-frame.

The mid-year meeting will be rescheduled in the new year, perhaps to near the end of Feb. or beginning of March. Please remember to uphold these matters in prayer.



Location and the date of 110th convention in summer 2019 will be announced thru our convention newsletter.



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God Became a Man at Christmas

Rev. John E. Karenko

Everyone celebrates Christmas (the birth), but who exactly was born and why? An important question! The Word of God clearly answers this and we know that his “Word is truth.” (John 17:17)

“For unto us was born a child; a son was given. His name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace.” (Isaiah 9:6) These words of the prophet Isaiah predicted the birth of Jesus Christ as God. The apostle Paul confirms who Jesus is with the words: *“God appeared in the flesh.”* (I Timothy 3:16) In another place he writes about this with these words: *“Christ Jesus, being in the form of God...came in the likeness of men.”* (Philippians 2:5–7) Note that Paul testifies: *“According to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.”* (Romans 9:5) *“The Word was with God and the Word was God...and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father.”* (John 1:1,14) Many other Scriptures corroborate this truth.

The Bible teaches and Christians believe that Jesus Christ is God in the flesh. That’s what Christmas and Easter are all about! *“We know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding that...This is the True God and eternal life.”* (I John 5:20) That’s awesome!

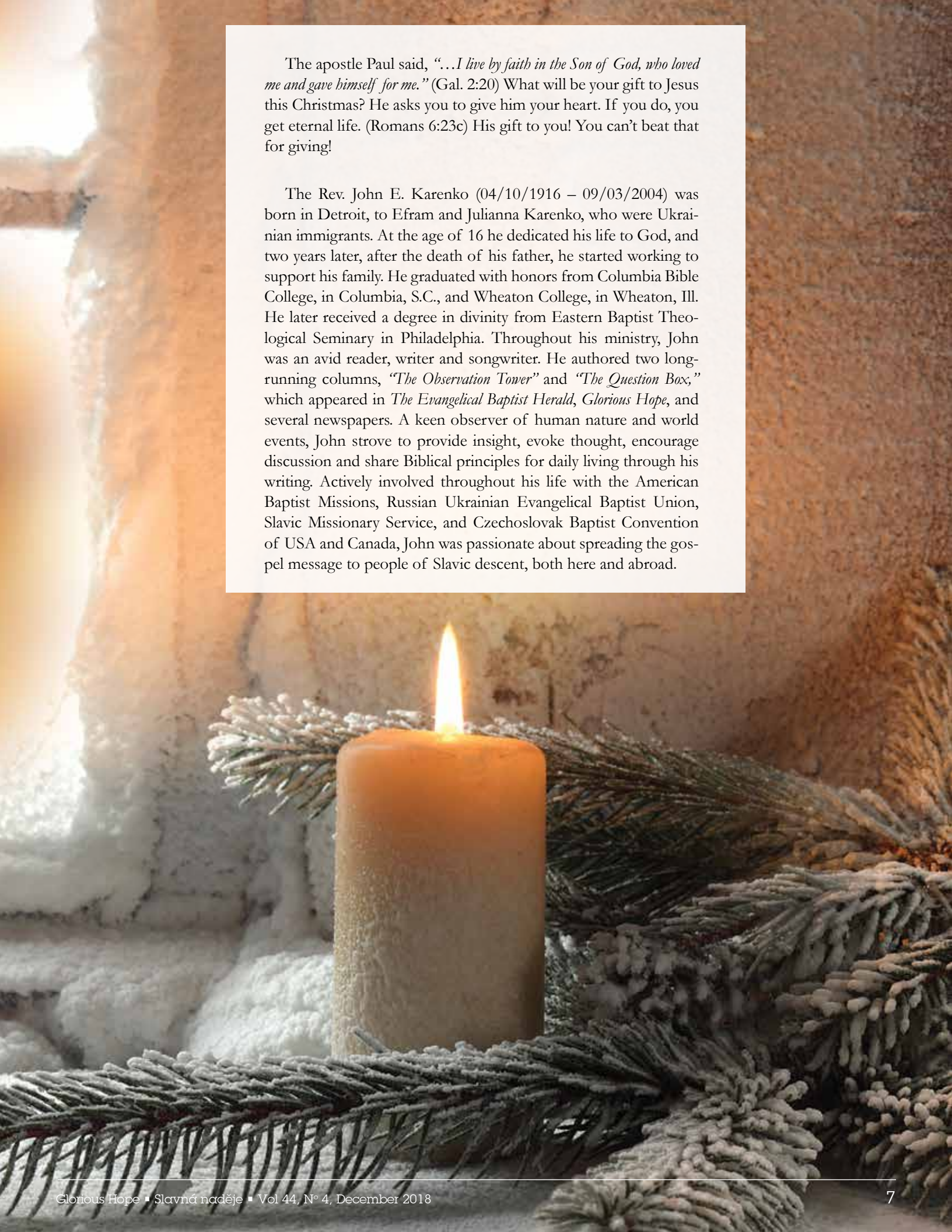
The apostle Matthew also writes of this: *“Behold, the virgin will be with child, and will bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, God with us.”* (Matthew 1:21) And an angel of the Lord told Joseph, *“...and you shall call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins.”* (Matthew 1:21) *The Bible says that in him: “We have redemption through His blood and the forgiveness of sins.”* (Colossians 1:14) *“For there is born unto you this day in the city of David [Bethlehem] a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.”* (Luke 2:11) It is clear that a Savior saves those who by faith accept him. It is written: *“Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved and all your household.”* (Acts 16:31)

Christ himself said: *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten son, that whosoever believes in him will not perish, but have everlasting life.”* (John 3:16) Jesus commanded: *“Search the Scriptures, for... they testify of me,”* and reprimands the listeners thus: *“But you are not willing to come to me that you may have life.”* (John 5:39,40) What shall we say to the words of *“Our great God and Savior Jesus Christ”*? (Titus 2:13) He still calls: *“Come to me....”* (Matthew 11:28)

Classic **REPRINT**
Series

Re-printed from our longtime
correspondent
Glorious Hope–Slavná naděje
November/December 2002





The apostle Paul said, "...I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20) What will be your gift to Jesus this Christmas? He asks you to give him your heart. If you do, you get eternal life. (Romans 6:23c) His gift to you! You can't beat that for giving!

The Rev. John E. Karenko (04/10/1916 – 09/03/2004) was born in Detroit, to Efram and Julianna Karenko, who were Ukrainian immigrants. At the age of 16 he dedicated his life to God, and two years later, after the death of his father, he started working to support his family. He graduated with honors from Columbia Bible College, in Columbia, S.C., and Wheaton College, in Wheaton, Ill. He later received a degree in divinity from Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Philadelphia. Throughout his ministry, John was an avid reader, writer and songwriter. He authored two long-running columns, "*The Observation Tower*" and "*The Question Box*," which appeared in *The Evangelical Baptist Herald*, *Glorious Hope*, and several newspapers. A keen observer of human nature and world events, John strove to provide insight, evoke thought, encourage discussion and share Biblical principles for daily living through his writing. Actively involved throughout his life with the American Baptist Missions, Russian Ukrainian Evangelical Baptist Union, Slavic Missionary Service, and Czechoslovak Baptist Convention of USA and Canada, John was passionate about spreading the gospel message to people of Slavic descent, both here and abroad.

Ladies Missionary Rally

Ruby Mikulencak



This was in 1999 after I returned from furlough and about a year before I would move from Chiana, my home of 20 years, to Accra. I wrote, "I am very discouraged and down. It's the first time since I returned from furlough in January. I feel like I am not doing much so far as the church goes."

"My ability to speak and understand Kasem is inadequate. I see I have been down before but this time it seems heavier." The next day my journal says, "There is nothing like being with my Ghanaian brothers and sisters to help me with my discouragements." Yes indeed, I think the greatest and most meaningful part of being a missionary is developing relationships with people from a different culture.

God uses many different things in our lives to help us see the beauty of Jesus in his Word and work. Difficulties come and go and we struggle for days and even weeks, but God keeps on working.

God has spoken to me through creation, people, circumstances, music and books. Some of my favorite authors that God has used are Henri Nouwen, Oswald Chambers and Dallas Willard.

But back to my journal entries. For me a quote from a book I was reading shows part of my discouragement. Kern, the author, talks about "a reluctance and frustration in our prayer life. We need to admit this and our inability to change the way we pray".

My journal goes on to say, "Again the question comes: do I want more or seek more of You for a consistent prayer life? Am I dissatisfied enough to say I need Your help? You will seek me and find me when you search for me with all your heart. (Jer. 29:13). Lord, I still struggle with these words and fear disappointment with prayer. But that is only if I use prayer to get things. What about increasing my fellowship or relationship with you rather than just asking for things?"

“You know my feelings of helplessness when I pray and You don’t answer. This discourages me from praying, but this Kern book reminds me that we need to ask for help even to pray.”

“Isaiah 30:19b reminds me how gracious He will be to you when you cry for help. As soon as He hears, He will answer you. I need your help in praying, in doing literacy with Simone. In talking with Gladys and doing contextualization properly. And to discern whether I should go back to school.” (There is a hint here of what I was contemplating, and a sense of uncertainty about my future in Chiana).

I continue to write, “As I made a tape to my sister Rachel, I realized how introspective I have started to become, which caused me to be restless here. It does seem my future in Chiana is limited but I am not sure if this is leading to school or to Accra.”

“I need to evaluate my behavior, attitude and work and then use the disciplines to improve or become more enriched by the Spirit. What would a fresh new, rekindled Ruby look like?” (An entry from my 1999 journal)

A week later I wrote, “Instead of being a peanut day it was a shell day. My computer crashed. Kwame, a mechanic, spent all morning working on repairing the puncture in my tire, only to have it go flat again after he left.”

“A friend, Grace, came and begged me to take a patient to the hospital. I couldn’t help but feel like a creep for saying no. Another friend came to beg for money. A couple from Korea who had only arrived a few months ago decided to go back home to Korea. Another couple who had been serving with us decided to go back to their country as well.” All of this shows some of the struggles we face in relationships as missionaries.

I continued to write, “How do we not judge them for what looks like running away?” I talked with those remaining behind and discussed how we would pick up the pieces and help the Church to adjust to their going as well. “I feel like a failure with these couples. It is hard not to be controlling but to remember that You, Father, have a plan and a purpose for each couple.”

A month after the tape I sent to my sister, I taught SS and this was my entry in my journal. “My Kasem language is a disaster, my teaching as well. I almost gave up and left and oh how I almost cried giving the teaching. After 19 years I still do not speak Kasem to be understood. Lord, I have had


enough. Let me leave Chiana and Africa.” I was totally discouraged! I wanted to quit!

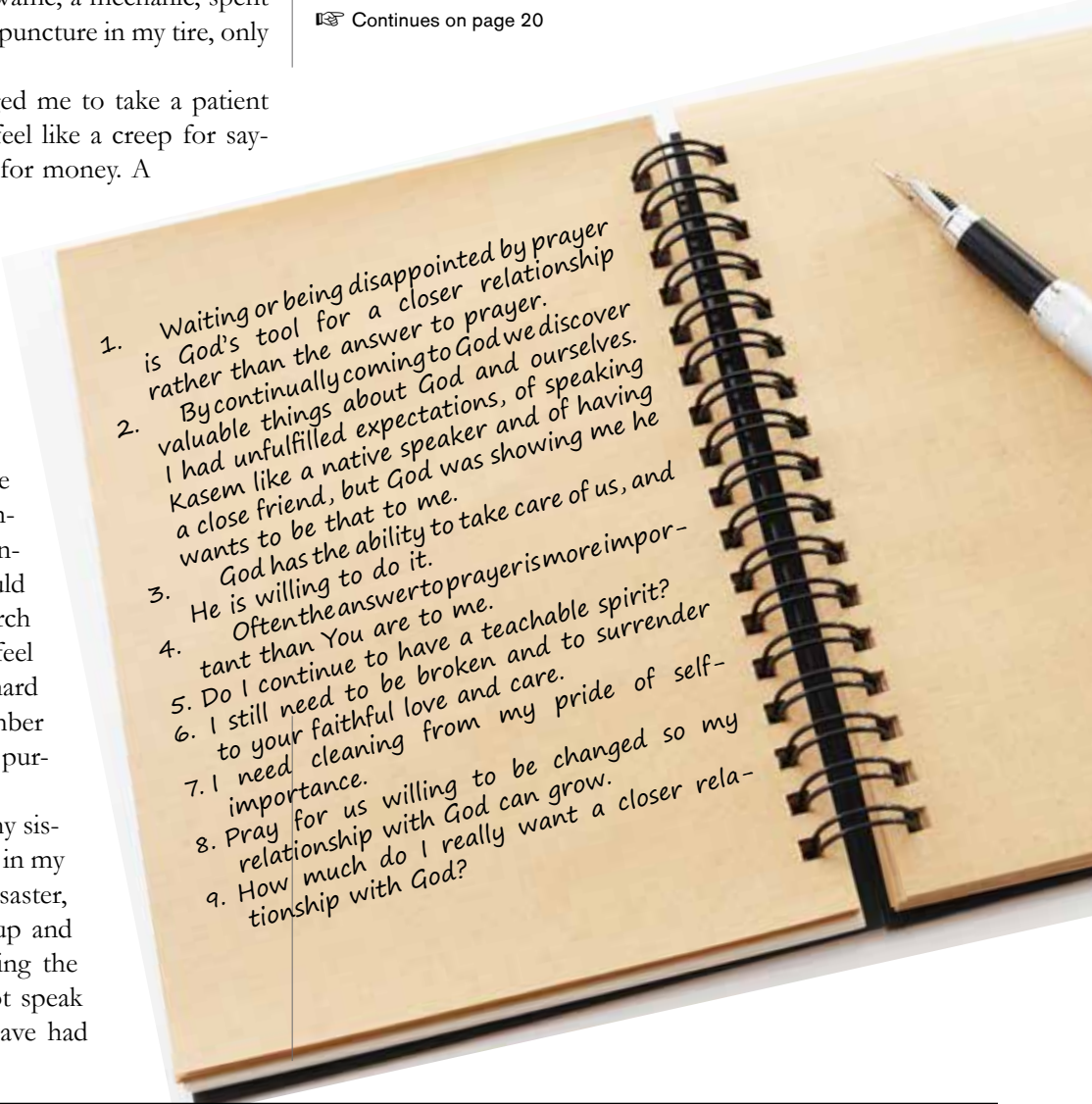
The next morning God spoke to me through his Word as I read about Elijah. “Elijah too said he had had enough let me die but in my case let me return home. Matthew Henry reminded me that God knows what He designs us for, though we do not, what service, what trials we are to bear. He will take care that we are furnished with His grace, which is sufficient. I do not have it in me how these people communicate or how to teach or communicate with them.”

Then, just when I thought I was doing better, that night someone stole a 12-volt pump that was used to pump water to the tank beside my house. It was a small thing, but it was enough that I broke down and cried. I cried for the lost pump, I cried for the devastating day I had had in trying to teach in Kasem and for feeling vulnerable.

After I cried I felt better and was able to have a good talk with a young woman whose mother asked me if I would talk with her about her faith. I hope you are following the ups and downs of my life in the midst of ministry.

The next day, in God’s faithful way of dealing with

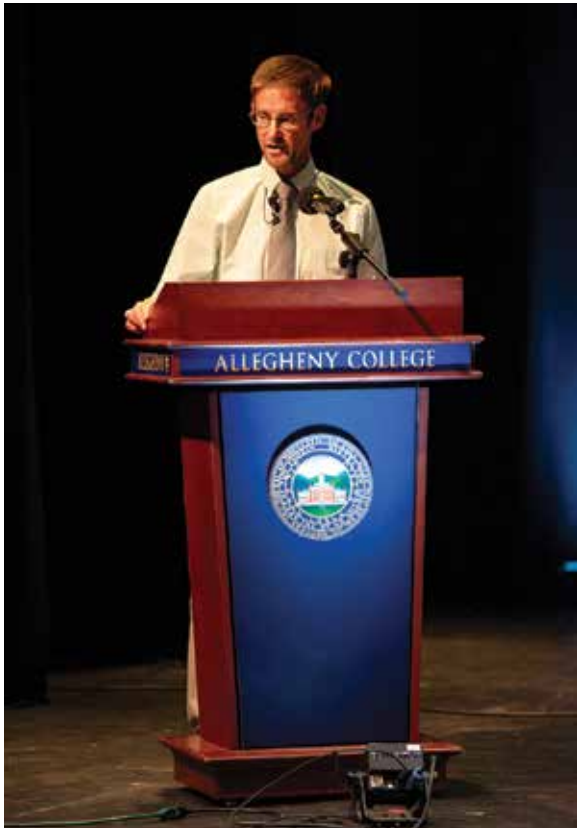
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1. Waiting or being disappointed by prayer is God's tool for a closer relationship rather than the answer to prayer.
 2. By continually coming to God we discover valuable things about God and ourselves. I had unfulfilled expectations, of speaking Kasem like a native speaker and of having a close friend, but God was showing me he wants to be that to me.
 3. God has the ability to take care of us, and He is willing to do it.
 4. Often the answer to prayer is more important than You are to me.
 5. Do I continue to have a teachable spirit?
 6. I still need to be broken and to surrender to your faithful love and care.
 7. I need cleaning from my pride of self-importance.
 8. Pray for us willing to be changed so my relationship with God can grow.
 9. How much do I really want a closer relationship with God?

Thursday Service

Steven Mattocks – First Baptist Church, Meadville PA

Quiet Water – He Restores My Soul (Psalm 23:2–3a)



My focus for this evening is just going to be on two phrases: “...*he leads me beside quiet waters*” and “*he restores my soul.*” (Psalm 23:2–3a) King David wrote this psalm and I tend to lean toward the view that he wrote it when he was older, near the end of his life. The perspective, the insights that are here in the psalm, are not those of a teenage boy, but from a man who has some experience in life. From tending his father’s sheep to slaying Goliath; from sitting on the throne to running from his rebellious son Absalom; from dancing before the Ark with joy to crying over the sins he’d committed, crying out for forgiveness for those sins – this is a voice that has been up the hills and then down into the valleys of life. And yet, though he has been through all those things, he can still proclaim with confidence: God is good and God can be trusted.

And as he writes here, David gives us two images that he and the ancient Israelites—his people who would have sung this in worship—would have been familiar with. In the first four verses he describes a shepherd tending the sheep, and at the end of the psalm he describes a host caring for his guests. Both of those images portray God as lovingly, faithfully, attentively watching over him. It was a common idea that God was the Shepherd over the nation of Israel, but here in Psalm 23, David makes it personal. The Lord is not just a Shepherd over the nation, but the Lord is his Shepherd, the Lord is *my* Shepherd.

Now, if God, if Yahweh, is the Shepherd, then his famed warrior king David casts himself as a sheep. How humbling is that? The one who took on a giant with a stone, the one who killed bears and lions and pagan Philistines, portrays the great I Am as the shepherd, but then he sees himself as a sheep: a bumbling, vulnerable, defenseless and pathetically stupid sheep. I don’t have anything against sheep, but sheep are like that. Anyone with a basic knowledge of how sheep act will tell you that. But the focus in this psalm is not on David, the focus is not on the deficiencies of sheep. David’s focus as he writes this is on the Lord God. You notice how the psalm begins and how it ends. The name of the Lord is at the start of it and the name of the Lord is at the finish. So in between those bookends, David describes how the Lord is active, how he is doing all these things that a good shepherd and a good host do: “*He makes me lie down in green pastures, ... he leads me... he refreshes me... he guides me*”...and then David switches pronouns, and starts to say you. “*You are with me... You prepare a table before me... You anoint me.*”

So He, the Almighty God, not David, not the sheep, is the focus of this Psalm. He is the one doing these things. He’s the shepherd tending his sheep, He’s the host that’s graciously caring for and serving his guests. And because of the Lord’s work in his life, David, at the end of his life—and he has known hardship and sorrow and loss—still can proclaim that he lacks nothing, that God’s steadfast love will follow him throughout his life. So the focus is on God, the Almighty God, and his activity. He is the one who leads beside the quiet waters, and He is the one who refreshes the soul.

Now, the quiet waters could be waters of calmness, of stillness. To such places as these the shepherd will lead his flock of sheep. He leads them to those places because he knows where they can be found and he knows that his sheep need such places to drink and quench their thirst. Turbulent and fast waters frighten sheep. They won't drink from water like that. The shepherd takes them to calm waters where their need for water can be satisfied. And David goes on to say the shepherd *"refreshes my soul."* The refreshing has to do with restoring, reviving, reinvigorating, lifting up, giving life back to. The shepherd does that for his sheep: he takes them to the green pastures where they can eat and lie down. A sheep won't lie down unless its stomach is full. And because the physical need has been met, the sheep is at rest, it's refreshed.

David experienced that in his own life. He saw God in his needs. He had real events in his life as he composed the psalm. David wrote this wonderful psalm, so familiar, so treasured by us, before the time of Christ: before God's son put on flesh and walked among us, before the crucifixion, before the resurrection of our Lord. We, on the other hand, live on the other side of the cross. We exist after the crucifixion. Because we do, our view on this psalm is going to be different from the view David had. Jesus took up the shepherd metaphor to apply it to himself during his ministry. He declares in John 10, 11–14, *"I am the good shepherd."* A good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. *"I know my sheep and my sheep know me—just as the Father knows me and I know the Father—and I lay down my life for the sheep."* Other writers in the New Testament also picked up on this imagery. At the end of Hebrews, the author in his benediction describes Jesus as the great shepherd of the sheep, and then Peter, in 1 Peter 2:25, says: *"you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Keeper of your souls."* And then in his address to pastors, when he is warning them to do and care for the flock, he refers to Jesus as the chief shepherd.

Early believers understood this; they picked up on this imagery and they realized that Jesus was in actuality the good shepherd. When we read the psalm today, we instinctively think of Jesus, the one crucified, the one dead, buried and risen, and the one who is coming again. We understand that he is our shepherd. So we can say that Jesus leads us, Jesus leads me, beside quiet waters. We can say that Jesus refreshes my soul. We can say that Jesus satisfies our most basic and deepest needs. We can say that Jesus rescues us, lifts us up, brings us back, and puts us on our feet again. And we can say those things with confidence because we know they are true. They were true in the lives of the earliest followers of Christ; they were true, they were real, in the experience of



the believers down through church history, since the time of the first church. And if we would take the time to reflect on our own lives, we would see that those things are true in our own stories as well. It's true that he is the good shepherd who loved us enough, even though we are stupid, helpless, wandering sheep. He loved us enough, despite our deficiencies, to lay down his life for us. And it is true he knows us by name, he knows what we need and exactly when we need it. It's true in my life experience and it's true in yours as well.

The psalm is a piece of art, a piece of poetry. It is David's personal response to the Lord's faithfulness. What David has given us is his outpouring of praise to the shepherd who has been faithful to him. I don't have three easy steps to locate quiet waters, or five steps to refreshing yourselves. But I do have, as King David had, the proclamation that Jesus is our good shepherd and we can trust in his good care. He leads us by still waters and he restores our souls.

I would like to close with a few words from the old hymn by Henry W. Baker, *The King of Love My Shepherd Is*:

*The King of love my shepherd is,
Whose goodness faileth never;
I nothing lack if I am his
And he is mine forever.
Where streams of living water flow,
My ransomed soul he leadeth
And, where the verdant pastures grow,
With food celestial feedeth.
Perverse and foolish oft I strayed,
But yet in love he sought me
And on his shoulder gently laid
And home rejoicing brought me.*

Dilema proroka Habakuka

Ana Lomen Franka

3. kapitola–Žalm proroka Habakuka



Kniha proroka Habakuka pozostáva iba z troch kapitol. Prvá kapitola je vlastne **Dilema proroka Habakuka**. Jeho dilema je podobná mojej a tvojej dileme. Ide tu o starý problém–nič nové pod slnkom. Moje a tvoje tápanie, problémy a otázky nie sú nové–sú staré ako dejiny ľudstva.

Habakuka trápila otázka–ako vysvetliť dejiny? Ako si vysvetliť situáciu, v ktorej sa práve nachádzal. Ako vysvetliť Božiu suverénnosť, jeho spravodlivosť, jeho spravovanie dejín v koncepte zla, ktoré sa pácha pod slnkom. Vie vôbec Boh o tom, čo sa deje tu na zemi? Ak vie, prečo mlčí? Prečo dovolí, aby horší trestal zlého?

Druhá kapitola dáva **Božiu odpoveď** Habakukovi. Hospodin mu dal možnosť poznať svoje princípy, podľa ktorých riadi dejiny. Hriech nezostane bez trestu a spravodlivosť bude vždy odmenená. Každý, kto pácha zlo, už či prelieva ľudskú krv alebo si privlastňuje to, čo mu nepatrí, alebo zháňa mrzký zisk či napája blízkych z čaše svojej zlosti, alebo sa klania rukou učiněným bohom, sa dočká odplaty. Pochybujeme o Božom riadení dejín, o jeho dejinných princípoch? Dejiny a archeológia svedčia o ich nezmeniteľnosti.

Tretia kapitola sa nazýva **Žalm alebo modlitba proroka Habakuka na šigjonót**. Táto pieseň bola sprevádzaná hudbou. Hudba nebola ani veselá, ani smutná, ale vyjadrovala silné a hlboké city. Tretia kapitola vyjadruje vlastne reakciu, čiže odozvu proroka Habakuka na Božiu odpoveď. Pohľad do

dejín z Božej perspektívy a na situáciu, v ktorej sa nachádzal Júda, sa hlboko dotkol Habakukovho vnútra. Habakuk pochopil filozofiu, zmysel a cieľ dejín. Pochopil aj vlastnú úlohu a zodpovednosť v dejinách ľudstva. Takto bol pripravený na všetky zmeny, ktoré sa mali cez neho veľmi rýchlo prevaliť. Nezabudnime, že kým Habakuk písal slová tohto proroctva, babylonská armáda pochodovala smerom na judskú zem. Na ceste do Egypta Nabuchodonozor so svojou dobyvateľskou vojenskou výpravou roku 605 vošiel aj do Jeruzalema a Judsko zaťažil daňou. Z kráľovských synov si vybral mladú inteligenciu a odviezol ju do zajatia. Druhýkrát prišiel do Jeruzalema roku 597. Vtedy olúpil chrám, vzal poklady z domu kráľovho a kráľa, kniežatá, vojenských hrdinov a remeselníkov odviezol do zajatia. Tretíkrát prišla chaldejská armáda do Jeruzalema roku 587. Tentoraz zbúrala a spálila chrám, kráľovský palác, Jeruzalem i jeho hradby. Do zajatia odviekla všetok zvyšný ľud okrem pastierov, roľníkov a vinohradníkov, ktorí mali dorábať potraviny–najmä obilie a hrozno.

Podrobné údaje o Habakukovom živote nemáme, a tak ani nevieme, čo sa s ním stalo potom. Môžeme iba predpokladať, že sa díval na teror kráľa Nabuchodonozora nad judskou krajinou, a zrejme, ak bol dostatočne silný, bol odvedený do zajatia. Nebolo to ľahké prežiť, ale vopred sa na to pripravil, pochopiac Božie riadenie dejín. Prežiť politické, ekonomické, etické, etnické, filozofické a podobné zmeny s pokojom v srdci môže iba ten, kto si život postavil na princípoch viery v živého Boha. Len pochopením biblickej filozofie dejín si môže človek zachovať vnútorný pokoj i napriek všetkému, čo sa vo svete deje. História riadi Boh, uskutočňuje svoje zámery a vedie ju k svojmu cieľu. Preto tretiu kapitolu tohto proroctva môžeme pomenovať aj **Triumf viery**. Je to víťazná pieseň spravodlivého, ktorý si život postavil na viere v živého a suverénneho



Boha, ktorý riadi dejiny, veky, kráľovstvá, národy i jednotlivcov. Takého Boha vidí Habakuk v svojej víťaznej piesni a hovorí: "*Hospodine, počul som o tebe zvest' a videl som Tvoje dielo, Hospodine.*" Spomína si teda na to, čo počul o Bohu od svojich otcov, dedov, a na to, čo sa dočítal v Knihe zákona. Počul o Abrahámovi aj o tom, ako riadil Boh jeho život. Vždy verný svojim sľubom z otca viery si vytvoril Boh pre seba zvláštny ľud. Habakuk počul aj o patriarchoch, o otroctve v Egypte, o Mojžišovi, o tom, ako Boh vyviedol ľud z Egypta rozdeliac Červené more. Spomínal si i na to, čo sa dialo so susednými národmi, napríklad s Filištíncami, Madijanmi, Edomcami a Moabmi. Spomínal si na Božie riadenie životov jednotlivcov, na jeho riadenie izraelského národa a na jeho spravovanie všetkých národov. No nielen že počul správu o Hospodinovi—hovorí, že jeho dielo aj sám videl. Poznal Božiu ruku nad svojim životom, nad svojím ľudom i nad situáciou, v ktorej sa práve nachádzal Júda. Teda veľa toho počul o Bohu, ale veľa toho aj prežil a videl na vlastné oči. Vieru v Boha získal z počutia a v živote sa presvedčil o jej pravdivosti, čo vzbudilo jeho osobnú dôveru v Boha a jeho dielo.

Habakuk neprosí o vyslobodenie z ťažkej situácie, ani o úľavu vlastného bremena. Prosí Boha o to, aby sa jeho zámery vyplnili. Aby konal podľa svojich spravodlivých princípov a

vykonal svoje dielo. Hovorí: "*...oživ ho v najbližších rokoch. V najbližších rokoch urob ho známym, v hneve pamätaj na zľutovanie.*" Teda Habakuk neprosí o vyslobodenie alebo úľavu, ale prosí, aby Božia suverénnosť bola známa medzi deťmi Izraela i medzi národmi. Prosí o oživenie, o zachovanie Božích princípov. Boh je spravodlivý a každý jedinec i národ si zaslúžil Boží súd pre ním páchané zlo, hoci sa to vzťahuje i na vyvolený Boží ľud. Veď páchali zlo, namiesto Hospodina uctievali pohanských kamenných a drevených bohov. Zmizol strach z ich srdca—hlboká úcta voči Bohu. Každý konal, ako si sám zaumienil, podľa vlastnej spravodlivosti. Jestvuje na svete niečo škaredšie než ľudská spravodlivosť? Natoľko zatvrdili svoje srdcia voči Bohu, že sa už ani hanbiť nevedeli za svoje činy a svedomie im zmŕtvelo. Po dlhej zhovievavosti a volaní k návratu nasledoval spravodlivý Boží súd. Tentoraz Boží súd nad Júdom vykoná Babylon. Habakuk prosí Hospodina, aby pokračoval v svojom diele, *ale v svojom hneve si spomenul aj na zľutovanie.* Habakuk poznal Boha ako zvrchovaného Pána, ale aj ako ľútostivého Otca. Prorok Jeremiáš, Habakukov súčasník, ktorý tiež niesol ťažké bremeno v svojom srdci pre situáciu, v ktorej sa mal ocitnúť Jeruzalem a Júda, zapísal: "*Káraj ma Hospodine, ale s mierou, nie v svojom hneve, aby si ma nezničil.*" Hriešnik má pred Bohom iba jedno východisko—pokánie. To znamená

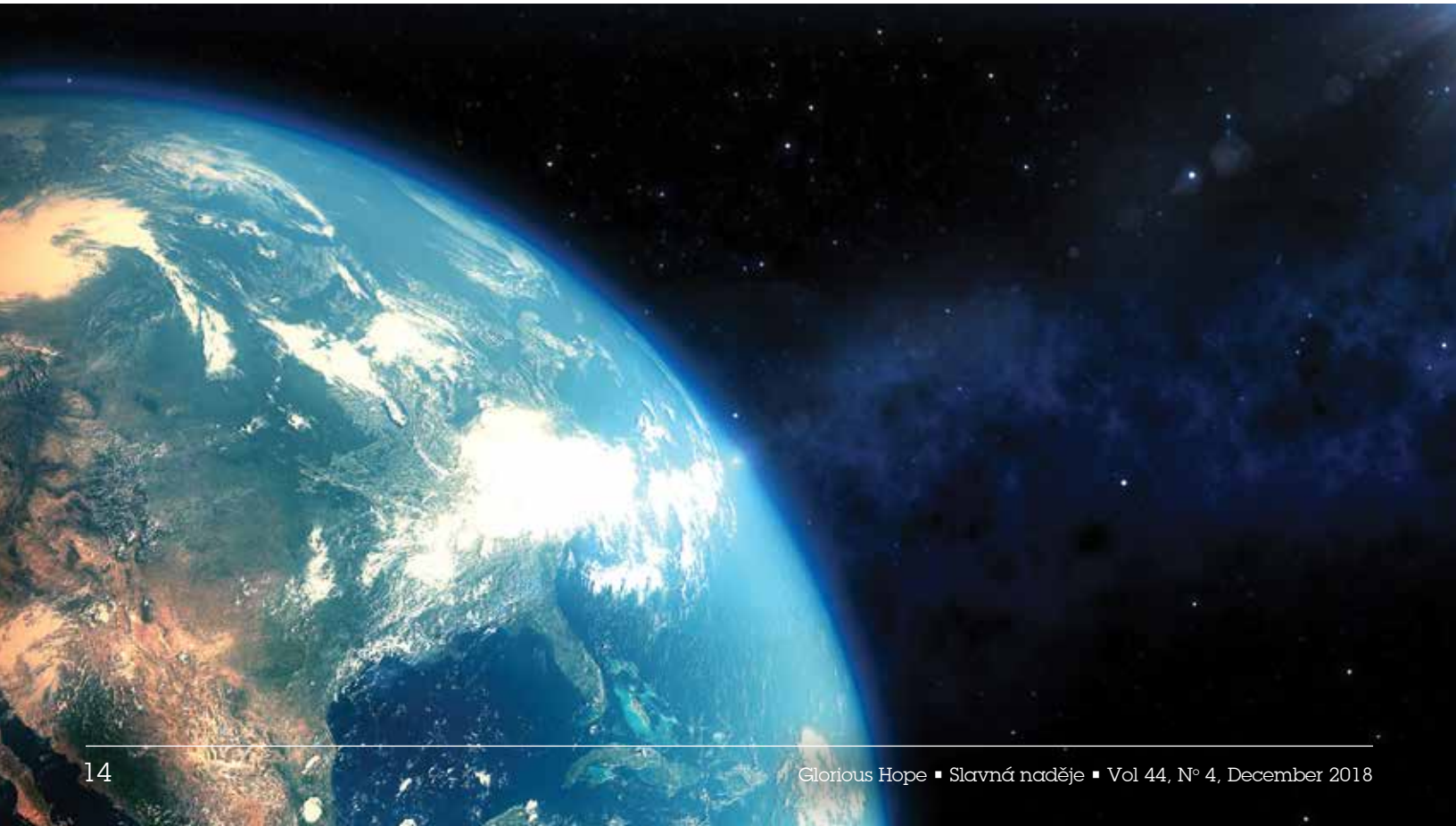
dat' za pravdu Bohu a pokoriť sa pred Ním. *Tebe Pane, patrí hlboká úcta a nám a našej sebaspravodlivosti patrí len zahanbenie a Tvoj súd.* V mene ľudskej spravodlivosti sa dnes vo svete bojuje. Bojuje sa o práva človeka za cenu ľudskej krvi.

Habakuk si spomínal aj na to, ako vznikol izraelský národ. *Vidí Boha prichádzať z Témanu a z vrchu Páranu.* Sú to dve geografické miesta, ktoré svedčia o zrodení Izraela ako národa. Témán sa nachádza severne od Edona a Páran v smere Sinaja.

V svojej oslavnej piesni Habakuk vidí Božiu velebenie, ktoré je také veľké, že *zakrylo nebesia.* No nielen nebesia sú plné jeho velenia, ale aj zem je plná jeho chvály. Hospodínovi patrí večný triumf. Triumf nad dejinami, nad národmi, nad celým vesmírom, nad zlom, nad Satanom, nad smrťou a nad hriechom. *“On žiari ako svetlo, líčce mu z ruky slabajú, a tým je zahanbená Jeho moc,”* píše Habakuk. A Ján apoštol napísal v svojej epištole: *“Boh je svetlo a niečo v ňom nijakej tmy.”* Hospodín je spravodlivý a svätý, čo znamená, že nemá hriech, žiadnu chybu, je neomylný a pravdu má vo všetkých svojich slovách i skutkoch. *Pred jeho tvárou kráča mor a vzápätí nasleduje náказа.* Všetko má pod svojou kontrolou. Podriadení sú Mu aj najväčší nepriatelia ľudí, ako je mor a náказа. *Zastane, premeriava zem, pozrie a pobne národmi.* Podľa jeho zámerov sa odohráva všetko v celom kozme i na zemi aj medzi národmi. Jemu patria cesty večnosti a pred ním sa všetko musí pokoriť, hoci aj večné vrchy a odveké kopce. On je nado všetkým a nikto ho neprekoná ani nepremôže v moci. Či môže byť niekto alebo niečo silnejšie od Toho, kto stvoril prírodné zákony? *On riekami zbrázdil zem.* Usmernil ich tok. Dal hranice moru a silu jeho vlnám. Nad

tým všetkým sa vznáša Pán vesmíru akoby *na víťazných vozoch.* Všetko mu slúži, všetko ho poslúcha: vrchy, vody i hlbiny. Jasnosť slnka a mesiaca mizne v blízkosti Boha, ktorý je sám večným svetlom. Oblaky, hromy, blesky, celá príroda sa klania pred svojim Pánom, ktorý rázi svoju triumfálnu cestu. Tí, ktorí sú proti Bohu a jeho Pomazanému, budú porazení. Hospodín premôže všetkých nepriateľov. V čase súdu *v hneve šliape národy, zrazí strechu z domu nešľachetníka a obnaží základ až na skalú.* Zničí ich a odhalí ich skutky. Veď nič nie je také tajné, aby nemohlo byť zjavené. *Zruší vládcov, ktorí sa prihrali v svojej pýche, aby pohltili bedára,* aby pohltili spravodlivého. Hospodín porazí všetkých pažravých násilníkov, každého, kto si zamočil ruky v krvi, všetkých, čo hromadia to, čo im nepatrí, i tých, čo sa modlia obrazom alebo sochám.

Pri takomto pohľade Habakuk nie je viac v intelektuálnom zmätku. Pochopil Božie konanie vo svete a v dejinách. *Predsa sa poblo celé jeho vnútro. Pery sa mu chveli, hniloba a slabosť vnikli do jeho kostí, až sa mu podlamovali kolená.* Prečo? Veď cez Boží súd musí prejsť aj on spolu so svojím národom. Prichádzalo utrpenie, bôľ, sklamanie, hlad, choroby, zrúcaný mu bude dom, Boží dom spálený ohňom, jeho rodinu rozdelia, možno pobijú, z vlastnej zeme ich odvedú do zajatia. Stratí osobnú slobodu, možno aj život, stratí rodinu, svoj majetok a istotu, stratí svoju vlasť. Básnik a chrámový spevák sa stane otrokom. V zajatí každý deň bude bolestný, dlhý, smutný a túžba po domove bude hľadať v duši. Habakuk pri týchto myšlienkach v duchu klesol: *Ako to prežijem? Je to nad možnosti človeka. Pane, Tvoj súd bude aj nado mnou, následky Tvojho trestu ma zasiahnu a urobia zo*



mna nešťastníka. Ako prežiť všetko to, čo sa má prevaliť cez moju mňa?

Keďže Habakuk vedel, aká bude odpoveď, teraz ju už musel len prakticky uplatniť. Pochopil, že spravodlivý zo svojej viery bude žiť, a tá viera nie je slepá ani to nie je viera v prázdno, je to praktická viera. Viera overená katastrofami, rôznymi poraneniami, zlou úrodou a zničenými stádami, ekonomickými kolapsmi aj morálnou dekadenciou.

Nakoniec Habakuk prichádza k pevnému rozhodnutiu. Je to jeho vlastná rezolúcia o praktickom uplatnení viery. Bohu bude dôverovať. Aj keby nastal hlad a bieda a nebolo by potraviny—ovocia, hrozna a vína, a keby sa nevydarila úroda olív, takže by nebolo oleja, a ani polia by neprinesli zlaté zrná, z ktorých sa robí chlieb, a k tomu by ešte nepriateľ vzal všetky ovce a kozy z košiaru aj všetok dobytok zo stajní, Habakuk hovorí: *"Ja sa jednako budem radosť v Hospodinovi a jasat' v Bohu svojej spásy. Hospodin Pán je moja sila, On jeleními urobí moje kroky a vyvedie ma na moje výšiny."* Habakuk týmito slovami vyjadril svoju odhodlanú vieru v Hospodina, ktorý riadi vesmír, svet a dejiny, ako aj životy jednotlivcov. Nejde tu o junáctvo, o nebojácnosť voči nastávajúcim problémom, nejde tu ani o sebakontrolu alebo o zachovanie duchaprítomnosti. Ide tu o pokoj v srdci, o súlad v duši, o vnútorné šťastie, ktoré nezáleží na materiálnych statkoch ani na okolnostiach a situácii. Taký pokoj a také šťastie prináša iba viera, ktorej objektom je Hospodin, zvrchovaný Pán všetkého. Pán vesmíru, Pán, zeme, Pán dejín, Pán večnosti, Pán môjho života. V ňom je prameň i tajomstvo sily. No nie je len mojím Pánom, ale aj mojím osobným Spasiteľom. Jeden zo starozákonných mužov povzbudzoval raz Izrael slovami: *"Radosť zo spasenia je vašou silou!"* A Pán Ježiš povedal hlasne a jasne pred celým Izraelom: *"Ak neuveríte, že JA SOM, zabýniete v svojich briedoch."* Kráľ Dávid hovorí: *"Hospodin je môj pastier, nebudem mať nedostatku. Na pastvách zelených ma pasie a k vodám osviežujúcim ma privádza. Dušu mi občerstvuje, po spravodlivých cestách vodí ma pre svoje meno. Keby som kráčal hoci temným údolím, nebojím sa zlého, lebo Ty si so mnou: Tvoj prút a Tvoja palica ma potešujú. Stól mi prestieraš pred mojimi protivníkmi, hlavu mi pomazávaš olejom, je preplnený kalich môj. Len dobrota a milosť bude ma sprevádzať po všetky dni môjho života a bývať budem v dome Hospodinovom dlhé časy."* (Žalm 23)

Čokoľvek by sa stalo, nestalo by sa bez príčiny a bez Božieho vedomia o tom. To znamená jednoducho mať dôveru v živého Boha. Taktom môžeme chápať i verš v liste Rimanom: *"Milujúcim Boha všetky veci slúžia na dobro."* Habakuk končí svoju oslavnú pieseň i svoje prorotvo slovami: *"Hospodin Pán moja je sila, On jelením robí moje kroky a vedie ma na moje výšiny."* Prameň a tajomstvo jeho sily je v Hospodinovi. Dôvera v Boha dáva mu silu povzniesť sa nad problémy, nad neprajné okolnosti, nad súženie a všetky zemské neresti. Hospodin robí vraj jeho kroky rýchlymi a ľahkými ako kroky jeleňa po končiaroch vrchov. Habakuk nemusí zostať v údolí strachu, neistoty, depresie a zúfalstva—viera v Boha ako intelektuálna záležitosť a dôvera v Boha ako praktické uplatnenie

viery pozdvihujú ho na duchovné výšiny. Tam na výšinách prežíva hlboký pokoj a šťastie. Žije tam v prítomnosti Pána a má široký rozhľad na Božie dielo.

"Len v Bohu utíš sa moja duša; od Nebo pochádza moja spása. Len On je moja skala, moja spása, môj brad; veľmi sa neskláťim. Na Bohu spočíva moja spása, moja česť; i skala mojej sily, moje útočisko je v Bohu. Dúfajte v Nebo, ľudia, v každý čas; vylievajte si pred Ním srdce. Nedúfajte v útlak, neskladajte márnú nádej v lúpeži, ak rastie majetok, neprikladajte srdce.

Raz prebovoril Boh, dve veci som vyrozumel: U Boha je moc a u Teba je i milosť, Pane!

Lebo Ty odplatíš každému podľa jeho skutku. (Žalm 62)



Friday Service

Tim Racinsky

part 2

Living Water – He Satisfies My Thirst (John 4:13–14)



Let's pick it up on verse 19 and see how this progresses: *The woman said to him, "Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. ²⁰ Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, but you say that in Jerusalem is the place where people ought to worship."* ²¹ *Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father. ²² You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. ²³ But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such people to worship him. ²⁴ God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth."*

Let me stop there. So, it's not clear from the woman's response whether her conscience was pricked and so she changed the subject, or whether she is truly responding positively to Jesus. Either way, she now asks this prophet a religious question: where should we worship? And this starts a conversation that exposes, I believe, the third barrier to eternal life, and that is our own religion. In fact Jesus actually deals with two types of religion: false religion and merely external religion. And we're going to look at these very briefly. First,

let's think about false religion. Jesus says that the Samaritans worship what they do not know but the Jews worship what they know. I believe this is mostly about the accuracy of the Old Testament scriptures and the importance of relating to God in the way that he revealed through scripture. We can't worship God any way we please. And when I refer to worship I don't mean primarily our Sunday morning music but really all our entire life, how we approach God and how we relate to God. So even if individual Jews failed to worship God as they ought to, I think Jesus is saying here that the Jewish people as a whole were recipients of the oracles of God and thus were the possessors of true worship through revealed scripture. And contrast that with the Samaritans, which had a corrupted scripture, and a corrupted view of worship. That's the first thing, false version. Secondly, with respect to external religion, the woman's question was about the particular place where God is to be worshiped. Jesus says that even though salvation is of the Jews, there will come a time when what was thought of as a physically sacred place of worship will not be important.

And although Jesus anticipated this in saying a time is coming, he even said yet it is here already, I think, I believe, it was actually always true. All through the Old Testament, God condemns purely external forms of religion, of worship, that cover up hearts that are far from him. There are several passages we could turn to in Isaiah and other places that show us that. And that was certainly characteristic of Jesus' day too. Their problem wasn't so much false religion but a focus on the external to the exclusion of true inner worship. So then Jesus brings both of these concepts together, I believe, and says that the Father is seeking those to worship him according to spirit and truth. Truth is about dealing with false religion, and spirit is about dealing with merely external religion. God wants us to relate to him with our inner spirit and our inner person and according to what he has outlined to us in his word as well. So there are two extremes that are barriers to a true relationship with God. On the one hand you have dead orthodoxy, that is, believing rightly but not having any heart behind that, and the other extreme is sincere heterodoxy, that means being sincerely passionate about something but what you're passionate about is wrong. And both of those things are dangers and so, I believe, Jesus exposes this in the woman, and in us as well in so doing.

Let's read the next couple of verses and see what happens in the story. ²⁵ *The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things."* ²⁶ *Jesus said to her, "I who speak to you am he."* So after Jesus deals with all these areas, the woman makes an astonishing statement. She's waiting for the Christ, the Messiah, and Jesus really basically says almost literally *I am*. It's a declaration of his own divinity even in that response, and you can almost imagine seeing the light bulbs coming on in her mind as she hears that. So she leaves and she goes to tell the people in her town about this conversation she had, and could this be the Christ? And the disciples return and are confused: why has Jesus been talking to this woman? And Jesus explains the work that he was sent to do and their work too.

And we're going to, just for time's sake, skip that part, and jump down to verse 39 and see how this account finishes. ³⁹ *Many Samaritans from that town believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me all that I ever did."* ⁴⁰ *So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them, and he stayed there two days.* ⁴¹ *And many more believed because of his word.* ⁴² *They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is indeed the Savior of the world."*

So now we see that the testimony of this woman leads many of the Samaritans coming to acknowledge Jesus as the Christ and the Savior of the world. And many who were



despised by the Jews of the day were the recipients of this living water. And now the one who was initially refused the drink becomes the source of eternal life for many people. And we see a beautiful picture, that John was trying to convey, that Jesus was not just a Jewish man in the first century but actually the promised Messiah, the son of God, and that true life is available in him and only in him. And we also see that salvation came to a woman who in many ways was the least likely to receive that salvation. But also I want to say in very many ways she is like everyone else as well, dealing with maybe differences in the particulars, but the same barriers exist for all of us, and all who ever lived.

I want to return just briefly to the idea of living water, because that runs through our theme of this convention. And why did Jesus use that terminology? I mean yes he's at a water



well and is engaging this woman in a conversation about eternal things. So there was certainly a relationship there. But let me suggest a few other reasons why this imagery might have been used.

First of all, water represents one of our most fundamental needs, and we can understand that. We can go for quite a long time without food but only a few days without water. That which is so fundamentally required for us physically is a good image of what is most needed spiritually as well. The Bible also uses this and shows that God is the ultimate source of our needs through the same imagery. In Psalm 36:9, the psalmist says *for with God is the fountain of life*. And in Jeremiah 2:13, in a negative sense, God says of Israel that *they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters*.

And there are other passages that speak to this as well. And it's living water, to be contrasted with what we see in a well. Yes, water in a well can provide nourishment and water to sustain us, but the water that Jesus provides is actually living. It's inherently different. And secondly, water represents our cleansing from sin, and the scriptures speak to this too, in several places. One example is in Ezekiel 36, where we read: *I will sprinkle clean water on you and you shall be cleaned from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.*²⁷ *And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.*

And this is really a picture in the Old Testament of new covenant salvation, and so we have a cleansing of sin that we see through water as sprinkling. And thirdly I would suggest to you that we have here Jesus, referring to a spring of water that pictures something that never ends. Now you think of a physical water spring. It tends to be something that is always reliable and it continues on. Notice that Jesus says in verse 14 that the water he gives will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life. Then later in John 7 the imagery of living water is used again, this time in reference to the promised Holy Spirit. Jesus says that something happens at the point of salvation that not only saves us but transforms us and continues on. This would be the Holy Spirit's indwelling us and working within us. So there are a few reasons why I think maybe living water is a good point of imagery. Now I'm going to close it up: in this account we've seen John portray Jesus clearly as the only source of eternal life, and I think it's pretty easy to see the implications of the story for one who isn't a believer, and the implications mean that Jesus is the only source of eternal life. He is the only giver of living water and he requires a knowledge of him that goes beyond simply intellectual knowledge but also includes a heart change dealing with our sin and also worshipping him as he has called us to, in spirit and truth. But what about the believer?

What are our takeaways for those of us who have already received this living water? Well, I think the points are just as



applicable to us who believe as well. I also want to end with a few questions I'll put out there for us to ponder as we come to close with this passage and consider its meanings for us. So here are four questions just to ponder in your own heart as we think of this passage that we just read. First of all, do you truly grasp that Jesus is the only one who can truly satisfy my deepest needs? Are you continuing to live that out day by day, not just remembering a one-time event in the past, but continuing to grow in that? Paul says to the Colossians: *Therefore as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving.*

It isn't enough simply to receive Christ. We are to be rooted and built up in Christ as well. We are to be growing in Christ. John uses the imagery in John Chapter 15, when Jesus talks about the vine and the branches. We are to remain in Christ, he is to remain in us, and his word is to remain in us, and therefore we will bear much fruit. And so we are to continue on, allowing Christ to be enlarged in our hearts as we grow in our faith and our walk and our maturity. So let's continue to go to Christ all the time and see him and not be ignorant of who he is and what he brings to us. Secondly, a second question, are you turning to sin as a substitute for what God has to offer? That sin may be small or great, clearly manifest or secretive, but whatever it is, it's ultimately a lack of trust in Christ as the source of living water that alone satisfies. Thirdly, are you more concerned with outward appearances than you are of inner transformation? Other people can be impressed with outward appearances, but God looks on the heart. And the last question I'll leave with you is: are you worshipping God according to your own ideas, or are you seeking

to know him more through his Word? And that really brings us back to that first question, abiding in Christ, allowing him to abide in us and his words to abide in us as well, and being rooted and built up in him. There are other questions than these, but I hope these are some that we can just think about as we look at this passage.

And I close with this verse at the end of Revelation, at the end of Scripture, after all that Scripture points to, exalting Christ: the Old Testament leading up to the work of Christ and waiting for this Messiah, and then a whole New Testament revealing who this was and the implications for all of us. And almost one of the last verses in the book of Revelation says this, and I believe it says it to all of us, and it echoes the song that the team sang for us as well. It's an invitation to living waters: *¹⁷ The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come." And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.* (Rev.22:17)

Let's close in prayer: *Father, day by day open our eyes more clearly to who Christ is, and what he has done, that we would grow in him, rooted and built up in him, that we would remain in him and his words would remain in us, Father, that we would not see our sin as a substitute for true living water and true satisfaction that comes from you and from you alone, that we would worship you in spirit and in truth, bringing honor and glory to your name. If there is one here in our convention that does not know you, Father, may this be an opportunity to come and receive the true living water that brings eternal life, and for all of us who believe, Father, may we continue to examine our hearts before you, allowing you to change and transform us, even as you did the Samaritan woman in this Samaritan town 2000 years ago. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.*

Helen M. Wilcox

June 3, 1917 – April 2, 2018

Helen M. Wilcox, 100, of Sun City, went home to be with the Lord on April 2, 2018, in Surprise, AZ. Helen was born 100 years ago on June 3, 1917, in her parents' farmhouse in Donald, Wisconsin. She was a strong woman and beloved and cherished by her family and friends. An accomplished organist and pianist, she played both instruments in her church for 25 years. She was looking forward to the day she would go to Heaven and be reunited with her husband, Victor, and son, Gerald. We celebrate her life and her passing to our Eternal Home where we will



be together, again. She is survived by her daughter Gerri, grandchildren David, Sarah, Victoria, Jennifer (Stephen), and Jonathan (Rebecca). Her great-grandchildren Olivia, Nicholas, Parker, Abigail, Drew, Lauren, Jade, Emma, Reece, Kellan, and Shepard. She will be greatly missed.

Victor and Helen Wilcox were actively committed to the convention in years past, and regular supporters too (although in later years she may have designated most of her giving for Bibles to be sent to the Czech Republic and Slovakia).

Ladies Missionary Rally... Continues from page 9

discouraged children, the Lord gave me a gold mine again through Kern's book. I close this part of my journal with this entry:

1. *Waiting or being disappointed by prayer is God's tool for a closer relationship rather than the answer to prayer.*
2. *By continually coming to God we discover valuable things about God and ourselves. I had unfulfilled expectations, of speaking Kasem like a native speaker and of having a close friend, but God was showing me he wants to be that to me.*
3. *God has the ability to take care of us, and He is willing to do it.*
4. *Often the answer to prayer is more important than You are to me.*
5. *Do I continue to have a teachable spirit?*
6. *I still need to be broken and to surrender to your faithful love and care.*
7. *I need cleaning from my pride of self-importance.*
8. *Pray for us willing to be changed so my relationship with God can grow.*
9. *How much do I really want a closer relationship with God?*

As I have shared, I hope you can see that working in missions is no different from your life in North America. There are discouragements, people do not get along with each other, we struggle with prayer and with our walk with God. Often we feel vulnerable and uncertain about the way forward.

God does not ask us to be perfect; He asks us to be faithful. I never became perfect in speaking Kasem, and people on our team left, but God never left us. I failed in so many ways, but God was always there to walk with me, just as he will walk with you.

Our daily life is where we find God despite the difficulties. Our responsibility is to be faithful to God and to allow Him to work in us and in those around us. I share some of these struggles so that you will not glamorize my life but rather know how to pray for your missionaries. But most of all I pray it will help you seek after God with your whole heart.

Let me close with a wonderful reminder of what God would like of us. I Cor. 15:58 *"So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless."*

Charles Spurgeon's Devotion



Charles Haddon Spurgeon
by Alexander Melville

I have exalted a young man from among the people

Psalm 89:19

Why was Christ chosen “from among the people”? I will speak from my heart, for its thoughts are best. Wasn't He chosen “from among the people” in order to be our brother through the blessed bond of kindred blood? What a wonderful family relationship there is between Christ and believers! A believer can actually claim, “I have a Brother in heaven. I may be poor, but I have a Brother who is rich and who is a King. Will He allow me to be in need while He sits on His throne? No! He loves me—He is my Brother!”

Dear believer, wear this blessed thought like a diamond necklace around the neck of your memory. Slide it onto the finger of your remembrance as a golden ring and then use it as the King's own seal, stamping your petitions of faith with confidence of success. He is your Brother, born for adversity, so treat Him as such.

Also, Christ was chosen “from among the people” so He would know our needs and sympathize with us. “[He] has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin” (Heb. 4:15). Therefore in all of our sorrows we have His sympathy. He knows them all—temptation, pain, disappointment, weakness, weariness, poverty—for He has felt them all.

Remember this, dear Christian, and allow it to comfort you. Despite how difficult and painful your path, it is marked with the footprints of your Savior. Even when you “walk through the valley of the shadow of death” (Ps. 23:4) or the deepest waters of a flooding Jordan River, you will find His footprints are there.

Wherever we may go, He has gone before us, and every burden we must carry has already been laid upon the shoulders of Immanuel.

His way was much rougher and darker than mine.

Did Christ, my dear Lord, suffer?

Should I still whine?

John Newton, 1725–1807

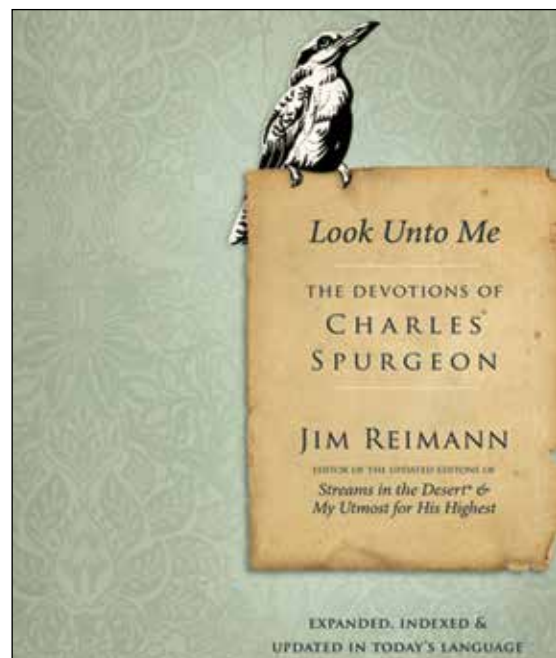
Take courage! Royal feet have left a bloodstained trail upon your road and thereby consecrated the difficult path forever.

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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*I revealed myself to those who did not ask for me;
I was found by those who did not seek me.
To a nation that did not call on my name, I said, 'Here I
am, here I am.'*—Isaiah 65:1

Potma Family News



Our summer visit in Ontario with Luke and Noemi, and extended family in Minnesota, passed by too quickly. We didn't have to feel too lonely back in Prague, though, as Mark's mom came to visit us for most of September. This

fall Luke is enjoying a work-term at an engineering company in Windsor, and Noemi is in her 2nd year of university in business. Ben and Elise are still with us in Prague and continuing at the same schools they attended last year. We are already looking forward to all being together for Christmas in Prague.

Celebrating 100 Years



Czechs are celebrating the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Czechoslovak Republic, on October 28, 1918. Before then, the Czechs had been ruled by the Austro-Hungarian Habsburg empire for

400 years. The first Czech president, T.G. Masaryk (right), planted the seeds of freedom and democracy in 1918, but it lasted only 20 years. Czechoslovakia was dismembered by the Nazi Reich in 1938, taken over by Communists in 1948, and

invaded by Soviet armies in 1968. The Communist oppressors were overthrown in 1989, and three years later Czechoslovakia peacefully divided into two independent countries, the Czech Republic and Slovakia. Despite this past century of upheaval, there has always been a faithful remnant. Since 1989, Czech believers have been able to worship, witness, and plant churches without restriction – the longest period of freedom and legality in Czech history!

Opportunities to Celebrate



At Ládví Church, we are also making the most of this 100-year commemoration. On Wednesday evenings we are studying heroes of the Czech Protestant faith and the Christian virtues that made them great. On October 28th, we will gather with Christians from other churches to plant a new linden tree, a Czech national symbol (left), in the neighborhood of our church, as a 100-year testimony to future generations. In November we have invited two guest speakers to Ládví Church to challenge believers and unbelievers alike to return to the rich Christian roots that defined the Czech people for many centuries, and to proclaim that through salvation in Christ alone we can experience freedom, truth, faith, and human dignity.

Celebrating God's Mercy

Three months of prayer and fasting for Vít, South City Church's new pastoral intern, ended on October 21st with an evening of praise and worship for God's mercy in not only saving Vít's life after his rock-climbing accident in July, but also sustaining him through many surgeries and the recuperation that has followed. Korean believers in Prague wanted to bless the Czech church in some way, so they gave a gift to pay Vít's salary for the first eight months of his pastoral intern-



ship. We invited them to our praise evening, and Czechs and Koreans sang in each other's languages and encouraged each other through interpreters. Vít's wife, Markéta, thanked everyone and brought greetings from Vít.

Vít is hoping to begin in-patient physical therapy next month. Lord willing, he will begin his 2-year pastoral internship in January under Mark's supervision. (If you would like to contribute to the costs of Vít's pastoral internship at South City Church, you can send your tax-deductible gifts to TEAM, marked: National Workers Support – Vit Account # 117218-N Gifts can also be sent to this fund online in the U.S. or in Canada.)

Bohnice Church Plant



Our Bohnice church-planting team has been meeting once a month for prayer and fellowship, and we spent two days together with part of the team at our second M4 church-planter training at the beginning of October. Diet Schinder, our TEAM co-worker from Germany, was the guest speaker, and we had time to pray and strategize together as a team. A group of church planters from Minnesota were with us for the training and it was a blessing to learn from each other at

M4 and throughout the week. We were honored to host them at our house for Canadian Thanksgiving!

Women at Ládví

Gretchen and Christina, our TEAM co-worker, are focusing on building up the women of Ládví Church, (which has a higher than typical proportion



of men who attend). The Mother's Club is continuing weekly, and in October, we hosted our first monthly craft evening for women of all ages. One woman commented, "This is the first time there has been something planned here just for women." We have identified nearly 30 women who have attended a service or activity at Ládví Church in the past couple of years, so we will continue to intentionally reach out to them.

Prayer Points

PRAISE God for the remnant of Czech believers who have been faithful despite the upheaval of the past 100 years of the Czech nation.

PRAY that as we proclaim the gospel, many more Czechs would seek after God and be found by Him. Please continue to PRAY for Vít's full recovery and for a smooth transition into his pastoral internship. Please PRAY for Jarďa and the other members of the Bohnice church plant as we prepare for the next steps.

Mark had a successful trip to Janské Lázně on Monday to solidify the location and dates for next summer's **Family English Camp**. The couple we have always worked with at Hotel Siréna has moved a little ways up the mountain to a slightly smaller lodge. They are eager to have us back and are working on ways to meet our camp needs. Please begin praying now for the sunshine of God's blessings for July 6-12, 2019, and that the Lord would bring the right people together on the team that will be coming from Ontario.

Please pray for our future co-worker, **Becky Ferguson**, as she completes her support-raising (16% to go) and waits for her long-term visa to be processed by the Czech government. Pray that the Lord will direct us to the right apartment for her in the Prosek neighborhood to be ready for her arrival in January or February 2019.

So that more Czechs may call upon the name of the LORD,

Mark and Gretchen Potma



Bůh je s námi

Porodí syna a dáš mu jméno Ježíš, neboť on zachrání svůj lid od jejich hříchů. To vše se stalo, aby se naplnilo, co Hospodin řekl ústy proroka: „Hle, panna počne a porodí syna a dájí mu jméno Immanuel,“ což se překládá: Bůh je s námi. (Matouš 1; 21-23)