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ON EARTH AS IT IS IN HEAVEN

THE
TABLE
ORDINARY TIME & ADVENT

Letter from the Editor

BY THE GRACE AND PROVIDENCE OF GOD, I have found myself immersed in the letters of Paul the Apostle during this season of my life and the world. In a time rife with angry debate, polarization, and fragmentation that only seems to increase the hatred, intolerance, and bigotry we are all too familiar with, I have found great comfort in the repeated themes of hope and unity found in these New Testament letters.

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose (Philippians 2:1-13).

Over and over again, Paul points out the possibility of being One in the Spirit because of our adoption into the family of God. This entrance was won through Christ's sacrificial love: a love which breaks down barriers and unifies people of widely different backgrounds, cultures, and creeds. The characteristics of God's family, and of the kingdom he is building through us, are unifying factors that can allow us to be uniquely ourselves while also being at peace with one another and with God.

In the 40 days between his resurrection and his ascension, Christ taught on the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:3). This emphasis on the topic of God's kingdom as being essential to believers' practical lives seems an important place to recenter in this divisive time in the history of our world. In our last issue of *The Table*, we explored personal stories of longing for God's kingdom to come to us. And as we experience election season in the U.S.—a polarizing and emotionally charged time—we want to focus our thoughts on that holy kingdom and its attributes, wondering at what it means for it to exist “on earth as it is in heaven.”

What is God's good purpose? How can we achieve unity in his Spirit when the outworking of faith is so debated among his people? What things might draw us together as one body even when disagreeing on methodology? These are questions I have been asking myself this year as it seems each month there is a new issue on which to be divided, even as believers. It is my hope in this issue of *The Table* to investigate a common pur-

pose that believers might find in the heart of the God we serve, and that by coming into alignment with the things on which he places highest value, we can find common ground, and even renewed affection for one another.

He is gracious to have given us wisdom for navigating this broken world. Scripture is vibrant, living, and relevant to all days and across all ages. But it has also been used for nefarious purposes by the sinful human heart. It is all too common to find ourselves using Jesus and his Gospel to support our ideology rather than generating our ideology from the Gospel. We are all guilty of this: using God to gain power, comfort, prestige, justification, career and family goals, or place in society. However, God's word uncomfortably reminds us again and again that the Gospel is subversive and unexpected—a story that elevates weakness and sacrifice over power and gain.

In seeking a thematic structure for this issue of the magazine, the Beatitudes came quickly to mind as a starting point for re-centering on the things that are of value and importance in the Kingdom of God—humility, suffering, mercy and purity, to name a few. Unsurprisingly, these things greatly challenge modern sensibilities and desires. In these pages, we seek to “get uncomfortable” with Jesus' words from Matthew 5, exploring the aspects he elevates in the Beatitudes and wondering at how we might move towards these values as his people, building the Kingdom of Heaven on earth that reflects his heart rather than our own.

In my contemplation about what to believe and how to live in a fractured and conflicted society, I have renewed gratitude for the groundedness of scripture. I have to believe it has words of life for all people—yes, even those I disagree with—and that it has something clear and important to say to us all that can draw us together as one people and one body. That it is indeed a word of life. Let us find unity and hope in it together.

With Joy,
Laura Fissel
Managing Editor

From “A Liturgy of The Hours: Daybreak”
in *Every Moment Holy* (pgs 3-4):

Leader: O children of the Living God, what is your Father's greatest desire for you this day?

People: **That we should love our eternal King with all our hearts, with all our souls, with all our minds, and with all our strength.**

And how would you show this love?

By remembering him at all times.

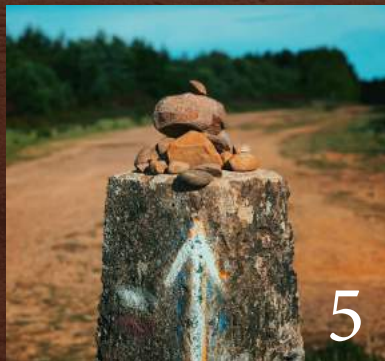
By cultivating thankfulness for his many blessings, and trusting his good providence for the meeting of our needs.

By loving all whose lives intersect our own.

By choosing to serve rather than to be served, to be wounded rather than to wound, and by bearing patiently with the failings of others, extending the same kindness, mercy, and compassion that God in Christ has so graciously offered us.

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ARE

the poor in spirit

BLESSED

B

About ten years ago, I was driving home and needed to stop for gas. With nothing in my checking account and only two dollars left on my credit card, I was hoping to get away with buying a bit of fuel since the credit card might not be charged right away. I hate that feeling of need and uncertainty, lack and dependency. I would be willing to bet that you've experienced that feeling at least once in your own life, even if it wasn't a financial or physical need, and perhaps even more so in the year 2020. Though we do not long for, and maybe struggle to appreciate, that feeling of need, I believe Matthew 5:3 has something to say to us about the value of being in that position. The primary theme I see present in this beatitude, "blessed are the poor in spirit," is that of humility.

Poverty is an experience of deficiency, whether material or otherwise, and humility is a near and frequent byproduct. Jesus was not a stranger to these things. Philippians 2 reminds us that his coming to earth was a kind of voluntary poverty--"though he was in the form of God, [he] did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross." Over and over again in scripture, we see Jesus displaying concern for the poor and disenfranchised. Though there are no examples of him fighting for the rights and wealth of the rich and empowered, we do see him frequently seeking the good and restoration of the sick, widowed, orphaned, and forgotten: those with little possession, power, or voice. And so where this same spirit of humility and generosity is on display in our world, that is where I tend to look to see God's kingdom coming to earth.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven": The poor will receive the richness that is the kingdom of heaven. This inverted value system should be familiar to Christians, who are saved by a Gospel in which God became man, weakness was defined as strength, and surrender and death led to ultimate victory. In light of these things, it makes sense that we are called to find our wealth in poverty of spirit. Think of it this way: when you empty things out of your life or your heart, you make space to be filled with something else, something new. When we open our lives up to God and make all things available to him, he will often choose to replace those things we once held dear with things of eternal value.

Through the pages of this magazine, you will get a chance to hear from the experience of one of our brothers in the East African congregation at Church of the Redeemer--Simeon Torozzi. I wanted you to get to know him because this spirit of humility is so vibrant in him, and he is one of the most joyful people I have ever encountered. In his story, I see God's wealth multiplying in him even as the things of this world diminished in his circumstances. He is a rich man, indeed.

Humility will require us to give away some of our security and standard of living, and so it is a rare and precious thing. In the example of Christ, those with the privilege of stability, wealth, power, and voice are called to choose lack and loss in their lives to give to those whose poverty and powerlessness is involuntary. Whether it is a giving up of our pride and position, or of our money, materials, and comforts, our poverty of life and spirit will always lead to the riches of God's kingdom in our lives and in our world.

by Rev. Alan Hawkins

MY NAME IS Torozi Ngadjo Simeon. I am a member of the East African congregation at Church of the Redeemer in Greensboro, North Carolina. I was born in Congo in the region of Bunia on January 1, 1955. I grew up in a big family. I have four brothers and three sisters and am the seventh child. Both my parents died when I was young. My father passed away when I was 10 years old, and my mother passed away two years later. My parents were Catholics, but my grandparents were Protestant. After my parents died, my grandparents raised us and we joined their church. My grandparents were very involved in the church and everyone looked after one another. During this time, I wasn't committed to church things at all.

All my family were farmers, and I did farm for a long time as well. I also used to sell cows all over the country. After selling cows for a while, I went into a business of selling gold and diamonds. I got married to my first wife in 1974 and we had seven kids--five boys and two girls. I ended up having a second wife and we had six kids together--three boys and three girls. During this time, I was young and immature and started having children with different women. I have thirty-five kids in total, and they are from nine different women; I was legally married to only the first two women. Thirteen of my children died, and twenty-two are alive.

This was my life before I received Jesus as my savior.

During the time I was with my grandparents, I wasn't a strong-standing christian. I started a business and got a lot of money and that's when I had all my children and wives. In 1989, I turned my life around back to Jesus. Due to tradition, I chose my first wife, and she is now the only legal one. She is still back in Congo. After changing my life and receiving Jesus as my savior, my mind was clear and peaceful from the outside world.

I moved to the United States as a refugee fleeing war that was happening back home in Congo. Prior to moving to Greensboro, I was in a refugee camp in Uganda for ten years. I came as a refugee through UNHCR and IOM (International Organization Model). My experience has been difficult due to the fact that ever since I arrived, I haven't been able to work due to my body being weak from illness. This is a hard country to live in if you are not working. On the positive side, my children go to school for free, and we have some assistance from the government for single parents like me.

My joy, peace, and hope all comes from God. Through my everyday life, I look up to God. I know that I am who I am today because of him. I have no hope but in God, and each day I must trust him new as my only hope and provider.



BLESSSED ARE

those who mourn



by Hunter & Stephe Van Wagenen

Grief, broadly speaking, can come from two different sources. On the one hand, it can arise from the consequences of our own sin or sins committed against us; on the other hand, it can arise more “naturally” due to the fact that we are ignorant, fallible, and live in a world broken by sin. The blessing Jesus pronounces on those who mourn, therefore, is twofold as well: on the personal level, those who mourn over sin are blessed because they are one step closer towards finding healing at the foot of the cross. Those who mourn over the state of the world are blessed because they will be more at home in the New Jerusalem, where the Lord will wipe every tear from their eyes, than in this present darkness. In four short years of marriage and ministry together, we are beginning to learn how to fit our own griefs into the story that God is telling.

Four years ago, right after Easter of 2016, Hunter moved to Greensboro to be Redeemer’s curate (that’s a fancy word for priest-in-training), and the plan for us was simple: get as much experience as possible in different areas of ministry, develop prayer and financial partnerships to be part of our ministry in Spain, and when the time was right, be sent out as one of Redeemer’s home-grown missionary couples. The vision for ministry on the Camino in Spain had been growing in Hunter for nearly ten years at that point. Thanks to the generosity of many at Redeemer and in the diocese, we raised up a team of partners to support us financially; we were developing good relationships with the Anglican church in Spain and other ministries on the Camino; and we had a strong sense of purpose and were well supported by our mission agency, SAMS. By the summer of 2019, things were looking good for a move date in January, 2020.

One obstacle, however, loomed large in 2019: a routine cleaning and checkup at the dentist revealed that something needed to be done to correct Hunter's jaw alignment, which was making it harder and harder for him to chew. Left untreated, it would lead to severe health issues. Hunter got braces to prepare for the realignment procedure, only to have our insurance company rescind its initial promise to cover the surgery. After months of back-and-forth, we were forced to concede that we had no way to force them to fulfill their initial promise, which meant we had to postpone our move until we could find new coverage to allow for the surgery.

God came through, big time. By the first of the year in 2020, we had a new insurance plan, consulted with an in-network doctor, and were able to have the surgery at the beginning of March. Before the surgery, we completed all of our paperwork and applied for our Spanish visas for our family of three, so we felt like we had gone from a gridlock to the fast lane on the way to Spain. Everything was ready for us to arrive in Madrid in May, and with just a few weeks until our departure, we felt like we were practically there.

Then the quarantines began in response to the global pandemic.

In a way, Hunter's recovery period after his surgery allowed us the time and the space to begin to grieve this second and indefinite delay, and to mourn the loss of our carefully laid plans. We canceled our plane tickets and began to wonder what in the world might happen. We laid to rest the visions we had formed for our lives in the coming year--we had an apartment picked out in Madrid, and knew where we would be going to church--and faced the fact that we had no idea what God wanted from us next. The sudden uncertainty of our future after having been ready to move overseas forced us to our knees, and we began to grapple with unexpected questions, doubts, desires, and fears.

As a couple, we began to walk through a process of mourning what we had lost and honestly and fervently praying about what God might have for us next. Mourning a loss brings sadness, and yet we learned how to simply be with God and enjoy time with him rather than wait for him to confirm our plans. Some days, we felt close to him and joyful, other days we felt anxious and wondered if there was more we should be doing. It was scary, and at times emotionally demanding, to once again re-surrender our wills and raise open hearts to heaven in a posture of obedience. Always, the question of what was next remained on our minds, and for the first time since we started dating we wondered if God had intentions for us somewhere besides Spain.

By the end of May, after an anxious week of researching how to move to Spain, then wondering if Hunter should be applying to ministry positions in the ACNA, we reminded ourselves that we were in God's hands and re-committed ourselves to listening and waiting. We knew that if God wanted us to stay in the U.S., a job would come our way, and if he wanted us in Spain, we'd get there regardless of the obstacles. We hunkered down for what we knew could be months more of uncertainty and waiting, and prayed for a clear open door.

Just three days after that conversation, Hunter got a phone call, seemingly out of the blue, from an old friend asking him to consider moving back to Florida to be his associate priest. As we talked

with Fr. Keith and his wife about the church and the position, three things immediately stood out to us: one, the timing of the call was undeniable; two, not only has Hunter known Fr. Keith for a long time, but it was clear from our conversation that he and his wife have been praying for us for years; and three, the church is committed to helping us build a bridge from the ACNA to the Camino by sending us and others from the parish and diocese to Spain every summer. After much prayer and meeting in person with the vestry, Hunter accepted the position of associate priest at Christ Church Vero Beach and we will move down to Florida in October.

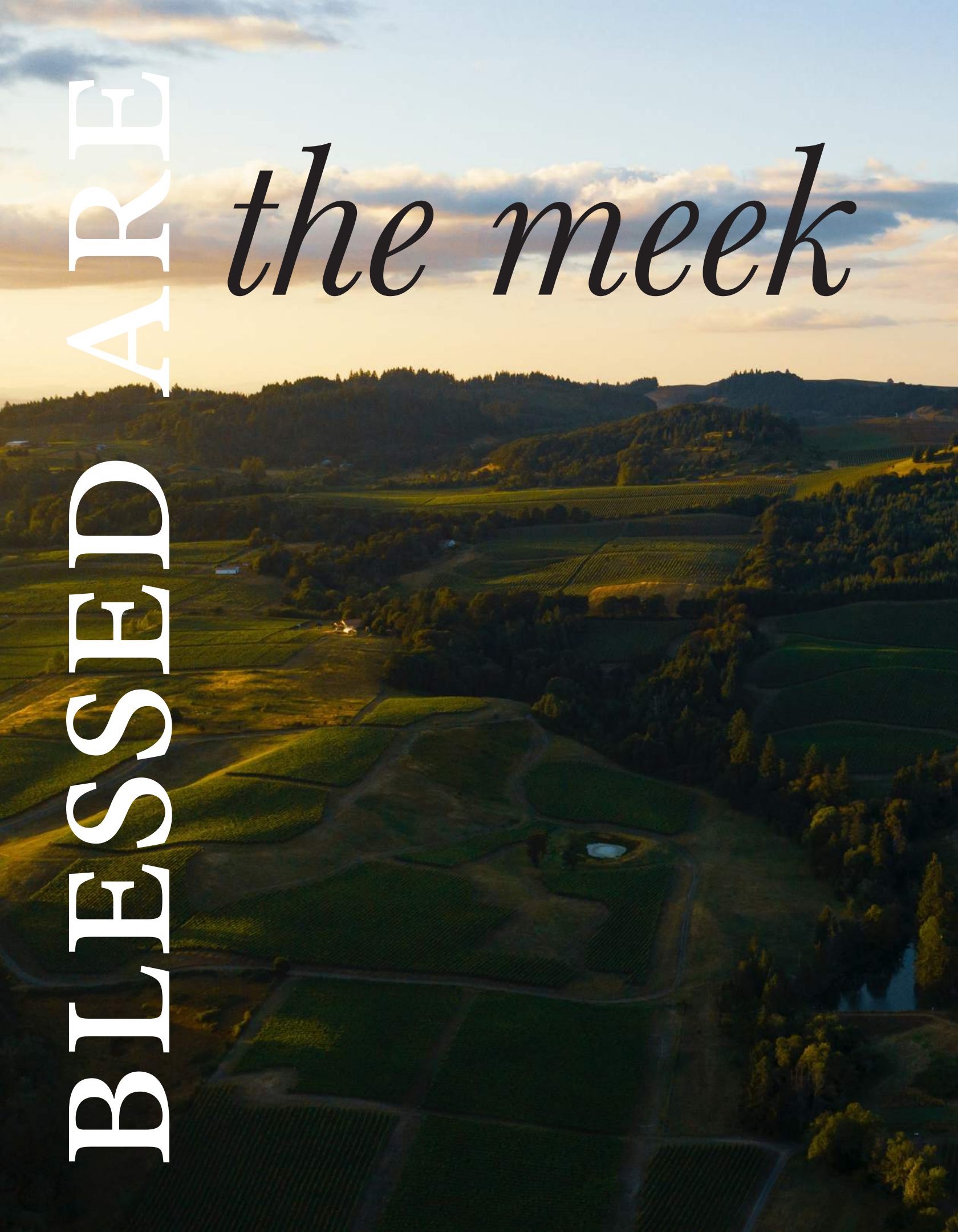
Are we still grieved by this change in the plan for our lives? Of course. But even as we grieve former hopes, we see many consolations and sense God's comfort. Had we moved to Spain in January as we originally planned, we would have been in Madrid during its quarantine, one of the worst in the world and a difficult place to live with a toddler and baby on the way. Had we moved in May, we might not have caught the fact that our son Jed was breech in time to do a procedure to alter his position before he was born in August. Furthermore, we feel that in this redirection to ministry in Florida, God has given us something far better than we could have imagined for ourselves. This calling will allow us to engage in parish-based ministry, something we are passionate about and gifted for, while at the same time continue to do missions on the Camino. There is much in this that is a gift for us personally, and we are amazed by God's faithfulness and goodness. Though these consolations do not erase the pain, they are reminders to us that we serve a sovereign God who will one day wipe every tear from our eyes.



ARE

the meek

BLESSED



Growing up in Oregon, caring for the environment was not a political hot topic, but a cultural norm—as customary as “don’t stick your gum under the table,” or “don’t belch at a dinner party” (at least not without profuse apologies afterward). To not recycle, for example, was an egregious offense, one that earned a stare-down from everyone watching in line at the coffee shop as you threw away your straw—or worse: asked for one in the first place. Case in point, every house was given a 32-gallon trash can and a 92-gallon recycling container, and rarely did you enter a store or street without a place to toss your Number 1 plastic bottles and Number 3 food trays. Three summers ago, I was walking downtown Portland as a petite 5’3” colleague of mine finished her last slice of a boxed pizza. She stopped aside a duo of street-side bins, one for trash with a 20-inch-diameter mouth and another for recycling with a 6-inch-diameter mouth. I watched fascinated as she folded, stomped, scrunched, folded, and stomped again on this large-sized cardboard pizza box until it narrowly fit into the opening of the recycling receptacle.

Like I said: in Portland, we take caring for the environment seriously.

This summer, I joined the online class “Let Creation Rejoice – Caring for God’s Creation, People, and Church,” facilitated by Adam Hubert as part of Church of the Redeemer’s Summer Growth Series. In it, we sought to gain a biblical worldview around creation care. We journeyed through studies and statistics showing the effects that human consumption, misuse and overuse of resources, and carbon emissions are having on our food, water, climate, and biodiversity. While the stats were foreboding, most devastating of all was learning how the effects of climate change and resource shortage will not be first felt by us here in the more affluent West, but by the poor and disenfranchised across the world. Those who, in fact, consume far less than any of us, will be the first to experience long-lasting droughts with no water for their crops, rising sea levels washing away their homes, over-mining poisoning their water supply, and irreversible soil loss rendering their land useless for cultivation.

Lord forgive us; we take and devour and give little thought to the cost of our taking.

In the United States of America, we are raised with an emphasis on our “rights.” But when I consider what the Bible says about the same, I wonder if our emphasis should be less on our rights and more on our responsibility. Apostle Paul says he sets aside his rights the moment they get in the way of the gospel (1 Corinthians 9). In surrendering to Christ, he sets aside his self-seeking, self-indulgence, and self-advancement to live within a new reality – one shaped by the way of living that Christ modeled. A life of loving others and giving himself up for them. Speaking to the Corinthians, a community focused on their rights, Paul instructs a gospel-alternative: “No one should seek their own good, but the good of others” (9:24).

Jesus put it another way, “**Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth**” (Matthew 5:5). The meek, as Bonhoeffer describes in his book *Discipleship*, are those who renounce any rights they might claim for the sake of Jesus. In the face of antagonism, they are quiet. Amid violence, they endure. When the world holds out pleasures and possibilities, they lay aside claim to any power and privilege available to them. Jesus says it is such as these that will rule over the new earth—the one promised in Revelation 21:5, when God says “I will make all things new.” In this life to come, God does not abandon the earth but renews it, and it will be home to God’s gathered people.

This renewal has already begun with us—the Church—who are called to anticipate what’s to come in how we live right now. Bonhoeffer writes, “Already here the powerless are given a piece of the earth; they have the church, their community, their property, their brothers and sisters.” The question is, how do we treat what we’ve been given? How can we become meek in our country, in our cities, in our privilege? How do we forgo our rights to seek the good of others above our own—in how we daily live, work, and consume?

This summer has taught me that our call to steward the earth is not just about our honoring that command given in the garden and being thankful to God for the gift, but more: it is a real and relevant way to rightly love and care for others. When we grow our food responsibly, draw upon the world’s natural resources ethically, and consume only what we need, we are putting first the care of the least of these. We begin to exercise what it means to be meek.

by Bethany Talbert

BLESSED ARE

those who hunger





This year, the infamous 2020, has been a year that on the surface seems to make a mockery of Jesus' Sermon on the Mount. Blessed are the poor, the hungry, and those who weep, as St. Luke records Jesus' words. Blessed, we ask? This pandemic has made the lives of the poor so much harder all around the globe, exacerbating unemployment and revealing the lack of safety net for most of the world's poorest people (in this country and abroad). The pandemic also has made food insecurity and hunger significantly worse globally. In April in the United States, 41% of mothers with children under 13 reported recent food insecurity, the highest level in 20 years, according to the Brookings Institute. The nonprofit Feeding America projects that some 18 million children could be food insecure in 2020 due to the trials of this year.¹ And as for those that weep: the relatives of the 941,000 people who have died globally of COVID-19,² the loved ones of the 183,000 people who have died in the U.S.,³ and all those who mourn the 3,180 people who have died in North Carolina alone⁴ (these numbers are as of September 17, 2020).

We ask, "How can those on the margins be blessed when they suffer so and when their suffering is made worse during crisis? How, Lord?"

But we take this to Jesus's feet and read his words again: "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when people hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their ancestors treated the prophets" (Luke 6:20-26).

It is clear that the blessing is a New Creation blessing. A seed of hope for those who suffer in this world. A promise that their suffering will not persist in the Kingdom He is making. Rather, they will be lifted up in the heavenly reality that turns this world on its head.

Far from dismissing the pain and suffering of the poor and persecuted, Jesus here issues a proclamation of resistance against the powers of Satan that hold God's children in bondage.

As Christians, when we are in the midst of a global crisis of weeping, of hunger, of poverty, our call is to live out Jesus's proclamation in the present as a sign of its ultimate fulfillment in the time to come. We bless the hungry, the poor, the mourning, not out of some tepid pity, but because we believe that our Lord speaks truth. That they are blessed, they will be blessed, and that they are deeply deserving of blessing. Not because we have and they have not, but because we are all in desperate need of God's provision and are all the family of God.

As Christians, all our acts of mercy are meant to be signs that point to this Kingdom that Jesus is bringing. We know that we cannot wipe every tear, fill every belly, and provide for every monetary need. The need in this broken world is too great. Only the Lord can do that. But as his servants in this time, we act in generosity because we are channels of His promise.

This is the truth that grounds our Free Farmers Market that we are hosting for twelve weeks this fall, funded by our church and by a grant from the CARES Act administered by Guilford County. Though we have been donating all year long from what we harvest weekly, we prayed for God to open up a more direct way to bless folks who are hurting during this pandemic. He answered our prayers in an amazing way by providing \$28,500 from the grant for us to buy produce from other local farmers to add to what we grow on our land, to host a feast of nourishing food each week at no cost to our guests.

The food we are having at the market is the most well-raised food we could find in the central NC region. It is expensive, pasture-raised meat and eggs by regenerative farmers who love their animals and shepherd them daily across lush pastures. It is locally-grown, organic produce from small family vegetable farms who take such care to cultivate the soil in a way that yields vegetables filled with micronutrients and minerals. It is medicinals crafted by local herbalists to glean the best medicine from God-gifted plants.

Too often, the poor only get the leftovers. We wanted to make this market about giving them the best Creation has to offer.

This is not to diminish the work that food banks do to make sure the leftovers get to those who need them. Not at all. We bless them for their work. But it is a particular calling of the church to host the poor as if they were royalty, because that is the Kingdom we believe in. Where the lowly are lifted up and “filled with good things” and the powerful are sent away empty, as Mary sings in the Magnificat (Luke 1:52-53). The church is called to be a reminder to the world that those who suffer, who hunger, who live in poverty, and who mourn are beloved by Jesus with an ardency that is impossible for the world to understand.

The passage that inspired this market, Isaiah 55, paints the same vision of New Creation that Jesus does in the beatitudes. It is a vision of God welcoming His people to His feast. God welcomes them to “come buy and eat ... without money and without price. [...] Listen diligently to me, and eat what is good, and delight yourselves in rich food.” In Isaiah 55, our Heavenly Father speaks of



a time when there will be no more curse, where Creation will produce abundantly, and where even the “trees of the fields shall clap their hands” (vs. 12).

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return there but water the earth, making it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower and

bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes out from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty, but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and shall succeed in the thing for which I sent it” (Isaiah 55:10-11).



In Christian readings of the Old Testament, guided by John 1, we read the “Word” of God as Jesus, his Son, the Word become Flesh. Read that passage again and think “Jesus” where Isaiah says “word.” We believe that it is Jesus who the Father sends out to accomplish God’s Kingdom, Jesus who will succeed in bringing New Creation to completion.

We feast and delight ourselves in the richest of food because in this, we give ourselves and our guests a taste of what is coming for those God blesses.

by Lena Van Wyk

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- 1 <https://www.usnews.com/news/healthiest-communities/articles/2020-06-16/coronavirus-heightens-threat-of-child-hunger-food-insecurity>
 - 2 <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/geographical-distribution-2019-ncov-cases>
 - 3 <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/nvss/vsrr/covid19/index.htm>
 - 4 <https://covid19.ncdhhs.gov/>



The church is called to be a reminder to the world that those who suffer, who hunger, who live in poverty, and who mourn are beloved by Jesus with an ardency that is impossible for the world to understand.

”

INTRODUCTION

THE REV. CANON DR. DAN ALGER

HELLO REDEEMER FAMILY,

My family and I have now been in Greensboro for 15 months--two of which I spent out of town traveling and seven of which have been during lock-down due to a global pandemic. The other six sure have been great! It feels like we should be settling in at this point, and in many ways we are, but at the same time, we feel like we are still just getting to know folks at Redeemer. I have seen many of you digitally more than I have in the flesh! To make things even more complicated, I have been a tangential part of the life of Redeemer for many years as Alan and I have been close friends for almost 20 years. I even preached at Redeemer when the church was still meeting in a hotel conference room. The timeline of the Alger family with Redeemer is a long and winding road!

A few months ago, I stepped into an important role here at Redeemer as I began serving as Senior Associate Rector. In light of this strange year, our forced separation, and my new ministry at Redeemer, the editors of *The Table* thought this may be a good place for me to introduce myself a bit. I am happy to do so. I could not be more excited to be a part of this amazing church, and even though getting to know each of you individually will take longer than we originally hoped, I am looking forward to the journey together. So, if you will indulge me, let me introduce myself.

I grew up in Morehead City, NC, fishing and sailing on the Crystal Coast. I went to college at UNC-Chapel Hill where I met my wife Karen through our involvement in Campus Crusade for Christ. College was a highly formational time for me in my story of faith. In my youth, I was raised in a gospel-centered Episcopal Church in which I grew to love the liturgy and sacraments as well as the living words of the scripture. Then, through Crusade at Carolina, I was exposed to mission, evangelism, and discipleship on an even deeper level. I spent time wondering if these two passions (Anglicanism and discipleship/evangelism) were antithetical or complimentary. I learned through prayer, study, and lots of conversations with wise people that the Anglican tradition is a gift to the missional work of the church. Anglicanism brings the historic roots of Christianity and a life lived in sacred rhythm to bear on a culture that is often rootless and scattered. Our sacramental tradition makes the inconceivable tangible and experiential. Our polity system provides accountability and oversight that is godly and good. Our history of strong preaching is a foundation for the contemporary practice of proclaiming God's word boldly and effectively. For me, when a high value on the least and lost (as I learned in Crusade) crashes into a love for the church (which I learned as an Anglican), a natural result is church planting.

My wife and I, along with our two sons Eli and Silas, have planted two churches in the last 18 years. The first is outside of Fayetteville, NC, where the former longtime Redeemer staff member

Elijah Lovejoy is now the rector. The second church is outside of Atlanta and is flourishing under the care of a leader we shaped and loved in the church. I serve as the Canon for Church Planting for the Anglican Church in North America through which I lead the Always Forward Church Planting Network to facilitate the work of church planting throughout North America and the world. We also started the Always Forward Institute to train and coach church planters and do all that we can to see them succeed and stay healthy in the process. To become better equipped to serve our planters, I studied and received my Doctorate from Asbury Seminary with a concentration in church planting. This has opened the doors for me to teach in various seminary settings, and I am currently working on a book on the work of planting churches in the Anglican tradition.

My role as Sr. Associate Rector is to oversee the staff and work closely with Alan on shaping the vision and strategic implementation of the ministry of Redeemer. I hope my service on the staff team of Redeemer will be marked by a hunger and thirst for righteousness, a fervor for preaching the word faithfully, and a focus on helping our leaders be effective and healthy in their work. I love Jesus and I love his bride, the church. I am passionate about the development of strong, healthy leaders, both ordained and lay, that will be equipped for service to Christ. I pray I may serve you and our Lord well.

My family and I would love to get to know each of you better in time. As your conscience and social distancing allow, I'd love to connect with you and grab coffee, or a colder beverage, and chat. Feel free to reach out to me at dan@redeemergso.org. May we serve the Lord well together for many years!



BLESSIED ARE

the merciful

I am a registered nurse here in Greensboro, NC. I work at Moses Cone Hospital in the Neuro/Trauma ICU as well as the Covid-19 ICU at GVC Hospital (Green Valley Campus, formerly Cone Health Women's Hospital). I care for the sickest patients in their most vulnerable state. I was asked to relate my work to Matthew 5:7 when Jesus says "Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy." After agreeing to write this piece, I realized how hard it is for me to see my work as "merciful." I follow orders written by physicians and provide compassion to patients and families in difficult situations. I use my hands to provide physical care, but how does that make me a merciful person?

Recently, I was the primary nurse for a patient suffering greatly from the Coronavirus. Her organs were already shutting down and she was on the highest settings a ventilator could reach. Multiple IV medications were running, regulating blood pressure and heart rate as well as pain medications and sedatives. She was not making any progress, but we were still doing everything we could to preserve what little life she had left. It came to the point when her family had decided to withdraw care and take her off of "life support." Due to pandemic protocol, they were not able to visit or be physically present in the last few moments of her life. It was my job to explain to them the dying process and what they would witness as they stared at her through a computer screen. None of this was fair or pleasant. I had only known this woman for two days of her lifetime, yet here I was stroking her face and gently telling her, "it's going to be okay" as she left this world. Her family shed soft, quiet tears from their iPhones as I looked up at them and nodded my head. I tried my best not to allow my own emotions to get in the way of their grieving, but sometimes that is exactly what's needed. I do not tell this story searching for pity or a "pat on the back." This is my job and is something that I cherish.

But how am I offering mercy in these moments? In answering this question, I first contemplated ways that I am showing mercy, but as I prayed about what to share, I heard God saying that it's not in fact about me at all. It is not the mercy that flows from me but rather God's mercy that he offers through me. I am a vessel that he can use in these moments. I can be his hands here on Earth to offer relief and comfort in these circumstances. In similar ways, I have received mercy through others in my own painful experiences.

These are just glimpses into the ultimate mercy that God offers through his Son. I have received mercy in this life, but I look forward to the grander, fuller mercy that is promised through salvation for eternity. What an intricate and Mighty God we serve. We would have nothing if it weren't for the mercy of the Lord through salvation and forgiveness. The compassion, empathy, and love that I offer to others is only learned through the love of Jesus and my relationship with him.



by Sarah Hocutt
RN, BSN, SCR.N

& the pure

Music begins as congregants are ushered to the table of the Lord. All has been prepared. The adults are solemn. The priest is standing at the front. A verse or two into the hymn and the row of our little friend, Abby, is finally reached. Her mother calmly walks out with a baby on her hip. Then Abby breaks free. Her sparkly ballet flats tear down the aisle and she's front and center for Eucharist. She kneels and holds her little hands in a cross-shaped cup above her head.

Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel. There was under his feet as it were a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness. And he did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; they beheld God, and ate and drank.

Exodus 24:10 – 11

This summer in my Level 3 training for Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, we spent a lot of time reading and talking about the Exodus. When we got to this verse, I was completely amazed! These seventy-four people of God hear the book of the covenant; they promise to obey and are sprinkled with the blood of the covenant. After this, they are able to commune freely with God and see God. They eat and drink with him! I had often heard the verse from Exodus 33:20, "But, he said, 'you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live.'" How had I not heard this before? How is this happening here in Exodus 24?

In Ex. 24, the people of God desire obedience: they have heard the words of God's promises and commands; they have remembered this very particular relationship that God has with them.

In this instance, they have been cleansed. They have been purified. Anything that they had desired, individually or as a people, beyond this has become subject to this one pure and ultimate desire. In this moment of absolute clarity of heart, they fellowship with God. They sit and eat. They drink. They see the shining ground under the God of Israel. This is all they wanted and they are welcomed to the table of God. They were welcomed to be with Him.

Kierkegaard said "purity of heart is to will one thing." In the case of Exodus 24, these elders have willed one thing and it has been fulfilled. What did it take for their wills to be purified? Remembering the covenant. Hearing those words of God. Sacrifice and purification with the Blood of the Covenant.

A clear, pure foundation. Clear, pure water. Clear, pure heart. This is who God is and, as the men of Israel discovered, the closer our hearts are to this purity, the closer we are to God Himself. When we are pure, we see His very face – in relationship. We



share His table. We eat the bread of Heaven and drink the living water that is only a blessing away from the best wine. We are welcomed to be with Him on earth as it is in heaven.

Take a moment to wonder with me. When has this been true for you? When have you known Him most fully and been refreshed by His nourishment? When we share the table of God, are you able to see His face? At that moment, what is your most central desire? And where, in that moment, is the fulfillment of that?

Through the years, children like Abby have shown me essential truths in a fresh and clear way. When we look to children and observe the way they respond to God, they can be our guide. Like Abby, when we run to Him, He will welcome us. When we hold our hands so far up we can't even see what's happening, and receive the bread: there is God. *Amen*. When we drink His blood: there He is with us and in us. *Amen*. When we enter into this fellowship with single-minded joy and then turn our eyes to the congregation, there is the face of God smiling. We wave and smile as we find a place and continue in that fellowship. We can eat and drink together in the presence of God in a new way, just as the elders experienced at the Mountain of God. And, as we are sent out to love and serve the Lord, we know that there, too, we will continue to see the face of God because He has promised: "Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God." *Amen*.

by Leah Wall



BLESSED

Redefining Peace

“BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS”: these words of Jesus offer us an important rule of life, and a glimpse at the kind of kingdom he is building. The blessing Jesus speaks of is of one’s place in God’s kingdom, which is characterized by peace. The hearers of Jesus would have been familiar with the concept of shalom, which is characteristic of God’s rule. Peace is not just the absence of conflict, but a sense of wholeness—of all matters in life being set into right relationship. If we think about it, we’ve never really experienced this type of peace. Something is always out of place; something is always going wrong. Yet this perfect shalom is the nature of God’s presence and kingdom. When we turn to Jesus’ words “blessed are the peacemakers,” we can see why blessing rests on these types of people: they mirror the intentions of God to set this world to right and bring true peace.

Peacemakers reflect the activity of God himself. But things in our world, as in Jesus’ day, are not the way they ought to be. Our lives are more oriented towards the language of “blessed” than of “peacemaking.” We often don’t think of it this way, but sin is the disruption of God’s shalom. As theologian Cornelius Plantinga Jr. has put it, “sin is the vandalization of shalom.” Sin has broken God’s good world, and God himself is invested in restoring shalom to the world. Throughout the Old Testament, this concept is connected to both justice and judgment. The prophets call out the people of God for allowing injustice and oppression within their midst, and for failing to reflect the shalom of God in their community. God doesn’t pass over or turn a blind eye to injustice, he uses prophets to highlight the oppression and suffering. The prophets call forth justice from God’s people towards all they meet. For in God’s kingdom, there is no peace without justice. This brings us to the sermon on the mount, and Jesus’ blessing to those who are bringers of peace in their communities. Jesus is our peace, and by offering us his peace, he calls us to conform to his

image and be active peace-makers as a reflection of the kingdom of God.

This is likely a different sense of peace than we are used to, if peace means everyone will like me and call me blessed, and I can live a calm and comfortable life. Through the example of his own life, Jesus shows that this is not the type of peace on offer. Peace in this context is not the avoidance of conflict, confrontation, unrest, or persecution. Throughout Matthew’s gospel, Jesus is engaged in conflict with a variety of figures, and yet can still claim to bring peace to the world, and call us to be peacemakers in like manner.

Some of us really want the type of peace that Jesus says he did not come to bring. We far too often have a false sense of peace: Jesus disrupts this. We might look at some of the recent protests as an example of this. Some are very uncomfortable with these protests. Some of us might argue, “we just want peace, and this is a disruption of that harmony.” In fact, sometimes we can use the word peace to get us out of some pretty important conversations. Often peace is code for avoidance or silence. We want the protests to stop because it makes us anxious. But here’s the thing Jesus’ peace has in common with the protests: Peace without justice is oppression. Peace built on injustice is no peace at all. The Roman Empire achieved “peace,” but it was gained through brutal oppression. This is not the type of peace Jesus is claiming to bring. It is actually the type of peace he rejects. Jesus brings peace through a reconciled and reconciling community. Just as God’s people have experienced the love, grace, and forgiveness of God and are reconciled to him and have peace with God. So too are they to go out and offer reconciliation to one another to have peace with one another. The inner counters of that reconciliation are the same, they involve telling the truth, stopping evil, repenting, and asking forgiveness for true reconciliation, and therefore peace, to occur. God asks us to be peacemakers because this is what we have experienced with him.

Peacemaking & Tension

WE HAVE INVESTIGATED a new definition of the concept of peace, but what exactly does this peacemaking look like? Often, we confuse peacemaking with peacekeeping. What is the difference? It all comes down to their relationship with tension.

Peacekeeping is about lowering tension, suppressing conflict, and maintaining a fragile peace in the midst of a volatile situation. It stops external conflict without resolving the underlying issues that have created the conflict in the first place. While there are times that this is a valid and necessary goal, it is not the same thing as peacemaking. Peacemaking is not about maintaining the status quo or eliminating tension. In fact, sometimes it requires tension to fulfill its work: the restoration of shalom.

But why would tension ever be necessary for peace? Perhaps nobody explains this more powerfully than Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. in his Letter from a Birmingham Jail. Writing on newspaper margins in a jail cell, Dr. King was responding to a statement from several local white clergy who opposed his practice of nonviolent resistance because of the tension and “agitation” it created. The title of their statement was “A Call To Unity”—it could very well have been called “A Call to Peacekeeping.” Dr. King explains in his letter: “I must confess that I am not afraid of the word ‘tension.’ I have earnestly opposed violent tension, but there is a type of constructive, nonviolent tension which is necessary for growth.” He helps them, and us, to realize that not all tension is the same: there is violent, deconstructive tension that does nothing but tear down; and there is nonviolent, constructive tension that creates the possibility for new life.

Like soap cleaning a wound, or sharp tweezers removing a splinter, constructive tension hurts in order to heal. In fact, King says that constructive tension actually serves not to fabricate conflict, but to “bring to the surface the hidden tension that is already alive. We bring it out into the open, where it can be seen and dealt with. Like a boil that can never be cured so long as it is covered up but must be opened with all its ugliness to the natural medicines of air and light, injustice must be exposed, with all the tension its exposure creates...before it can be cured.” The kind of nonviolent

protest that Dr. King initiated in Birmingham and that many initiate today does not seek conflict for conflict’s sake—instead, like pain in our own bodies, it raises the alarm that something is wrong and must be healed.

The Apostle Paul recognizes this dynamic when he writes that: “Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death. See what this godly sorrow has produced in you: what earnestness...what readiness to see justice done” (2 Cor 7:10-11). He sees that there is one kind of tension—what he calls “worldly sorrow”—that merely tears down, but another kind of tension—“godly sorrow”—that creates the possibility for repentance and greater obedience to Jesus Christ.

We see that not all tension is the same. But we must also see that not all peace is the same. Dr. King goes on to describe the difference between “a negative peace which is the absence of tension,” and “a positive peace which is the presence of justice.” King’s critics wanted a negative peace--the kind of peace defended by peacekeeping, which may be maintained by law and order but is indifferent to the kind of law and order being maintained, whether or not it is just. Positive peace, on the other hand, is the presence of shalom—the flourishing of all people and creation which was present in Eden, shattered in the Fall, redeemed in Christ, and which will one day be consummated in the New Creation. Too often we confuse these two and are willing to settle for a tension-free arrangement that “keeps the peace” but allows for no healing, no repentance, no flourishing, no shalom.

Supplied with this context, again I ask: what does peacemaking look like? It looks like working for the flourishing of all by exposing and resisting whatever deals death to God’s good creation and vandalizes shalom. This is done, however, not through violence, but by following Jesus obediently in the way of the cross. This is a journey not away from danger, but into the heart of the sinful tensions that plague us as humanity, speaking and embodying the truth in love no matter the cost, so that shalom might be tasted and seen once more. This nonviolent way of self-sacrifice is what led Dr. King into a jail cell in Birmingham in 1963, and ultimately to the sacrifice of his very life just a few years later.



Peacemaking as Action

IN TIMES OF TURMOIL, protest, and injustice, the Christian might ask the question “what does it mean to be a peacemaker in this current moment?” A fair question that is not easily answered. But perhaps the greatest American example of living out this Biblical peace can be found in the Black church.

Leading up to the year 1963, Birmingham, Alabama was widely considered one of the roughest cities in America. Once a pillar of the industrial south (some calling it the “Pittsburgh of the South”), it had become known as a place of tense violent racial tension. To be clear, this violence was waged against any attempt towards racial integration. With no Black representation in any public service, voting was essentially non-existent. To ensure this matter, terrorist violence took the shape of bombing the houses and churches where Black leaders would hold meetings. Between the years of 1955-1968, there were at least 21 recorded bombings on Black households and institutions, leading to the city being known as “Bombingham.”

The most famous of these horrific terror attacks was the 1963 16th St. Baptist Church bombing. This glorious three-story brick building had become a pillar of the Black community. A place to worship, pray, and to mobilize around collective political action. In a campaign to ensure Black voter turnout, and to rally in numbers to stand against Jim Crow voter restriction, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference and other groups hosted meetings in this church building. In the spring of 1963, this collective action led to walk-outs and marches, which were met with violence and arrest. Yet they persisted. Standing on the foundation that “we, too, were created in our Father’s image,” they demanded state-sanctioned rights. As history has told us, this type of political action was met with horrific pushback.

On the morning of September 15th, 1963, four Klansmen set time-

rigged dynamite underneath the steps of the 16th street Baptist Church. The attack injured 14 congregants and killed four young girls: Addie Mae Collins, Cynthia Wesley, Carole Robertson, and Carol Denise McNair, all aged 14 and under. This attack ignited a myriad of lament within the city. Some rioted, leading then Governor George Wallace to bring in 300-plus police officers to the city, only furthering the violence. These four beautiful Black girls did not deserve to be murdered on that day. But similar to the death of Jesus and the fiery proclamation of Pentecost, their deaths brought an added proclamation of the *imago dei* and a cry for justice across our country. In fact, the peacemaking resistance that predated this horrific attack was only intensified in these girls' names.

Neither this tragedy nor these protests were met with timely justice or peaceful words. It was not until a year and a half later that this country finally decided to crawl towards its Declaration and passed the Voting Rights Act of 1965. To the surprise of many, MLK was not lauded in his day. Amongst many white Americans (specifically evangelicals), he was hated, and many disagreed with the Civil Rights Movement’s push towards progress. Mark Twain once said, “history doesn’t repeat, but it does rhyme.” If this is true, America is rhyming like 1998 Jay-Z. We tend to focus on how we might have responded during slavery or the Civil Rights Movement, but God is more greatly concerned with how we are responding now. Just like in times past, our inaction, silence, and dismissiveness can and will lead to further violence. We have seen that to be the “blessed peacemaker” is not to sit quietly or critique every move the oppressed group is making. In fact, to be a peacemaker means to actively usher in God’s shalom, walking alongside one another as children of God in one family (Matthew 5:9), and calling on our Heavenly Father to bring forth his new heavens and new earth through us.

Authors Adam Hubert, Jason Myers & Judson Van Wyk also collaborated on a 2020 Summer Growth Series for Church of the Redeemer entitled “The Gospel and Racial Justice.” To access the materials and resources for this class, visit <https://redeemergso.churchcenter.com/groups/summer-growth-series/the-gospel-and-racial-justice> and contact Jason Myers at jason.myers@greensboro.edu.



BLESSED ARE



This may be surprising to hear, but Christian persecution around the world is one of the biggest human rights issues of our modern era. According to Open Doors USA, an advocacy group for persecuted believers, 260 million Christians experience high levels of persecution among the 50 countries on their World Watch List¹. The top 12 countries on the list are North Korea, Afghanistan, Somalia, Libya, Pakistan, Eritrea, Sudan, Yemen, Iran, India, Syria, and Nigeria. Worldwide, 1 in 9 Christians experience high levels of persecution with some researchers citing as many as 90,000 Christians martyred for their faith every year.

In light of this reality, how do we interpret the beatitude in Matthew 5:10 that says "**Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven**"? Obviously, those who are martyred instantly receive their heavenly reward by being eternally in the presence of Jesus. But, how can those persecuted "receive blessing" in the midst of their suffering here on earth?

In my work with New Wineskins Missionary Network, I have the privilege of hearing the stories of many persecuted Christians. Consistently, I hear them say "Don't pray that the persecution will end; pray that we can stay faithful to Christ in the midst of the suffering, and bear witness in a manner worthy of the Gospel!" They ask for prayer that their persecutors will become believers because of the joy of the Lord that exudes from their faces and is evident in their actions. This idea of blessing in persecution is also referenced in Acts 5:41 when "the apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name."

We think the "kingdom of heaven" is something that we

enter after we die. However, the kingdom of heaven is a present reality for believers, though we often don't truly grasp this concept. In our culture in the West, even among Christians, we place a high value on personal safety and are consumed with self-promotion and materialism. In the Global South, where Christianity is growing fastest despite persecution, we see believers taking more risks to stand for the Gospel, exhibiting humility and selflessness when confronted with threats from oppressors. During Covid-19, many Islamic governments tried to force Christians to convert to Islam before they could receive governmental food distributions. These dedicated believers refused to deny Jesus, even though it may cost them their very lives. Their joyful witness that comes from being citizens of the kingdom of heaven here and now often results in Muslims converting to Christianity--not through coercion, but through the power of God breaking into and transforming the kingdoms people have built for themselves here on earth.

Our brother Max, whose story of persecution and witness brought his life into intersection with our congregation at Church of the Redeemer in 2019, is just such an example of the power of those who rejoice in suffering for the sake of His Name. If you want to stay connected with Max, or if you want to become more involved in learning about and advocating for our persecuted brothers and sisters globally, consider joining the Anglican Persecuted Church Network.

Website: <https://newwineskins.org/apcn> &
Facebook Group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2566281176727900>

by Jenny Noyes

¹ <https://www.opendoorsusa.org/christian-persecution/world-watch-list/>

the Journey of a persecuted brother

by Max Graham*

Fleeing Home

In 2013, I was a pre-med college sophomore in Karachi, Pakistan, when extremist terrorists wrote threatening slogans on our church walls and attacked my family in our homes. The perpetrators had all our family's names on their target list and threatened to kill us if we didn't convert to Islam. As 4th generation Christian leaders in Pakistan, my extended family's lives were all in danger.

Even after relocating to a different part of the city, we realized that if we remained in Pakistan, we would be killed. We decided to flee to Thailand since it was easy to enter that country on a tourist visa, and to seek asylum there as persecuted Christians.

False Imprisonment & Persecution

I fled along with 13 members of my extended family to Bangkok. We immediately filed for refugee status with the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR) upon our arrival in 2013. Sadly, our cases were never approved after five years of appeals, even though people of other religions were routinely given legal refugee status. The Thai people did not like Pakistani Christians being in their country. After about 18 months, five members of my family and I were falsely accused of a noise violation, arrested, and imprisoned in a criminal jail in horrific conditions.

While incarcerated for an entire month, I began to share my faith with the Buddhist prisoners in my cell. My heart was broken for the lost, and I realized that my calling is as an evangelist. Right then, I dedicated the rest of my life to spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ in whatever circumstances the Lord places me!

The false charges were finally dropped because our accuser never showed up at any of the hearings. There was never any evidence of wrongdoing to begin with! Finally, after a month of mistreatment, my 82-year-old grandfather, uncle, two aunts, a cousin and I were exonerated and released from the prison.

Round-up, Illness & Deportation

I was determined to be a light and a witness even as an asylum seeker in Bangkok. I helped plant a secret church for Pakistani believers and started an underground school for Pakistani children who weren't allowed to attend school in Thailand. Then, in 2017, I met Jenny Noyes, Executive Director of New Wineskins Missionary Network, during her short-term mission trip to Bangkok. After hearing about my plight, she agreed to mentor me and do what she could to help me and my family find refuge in a third country.



However, in 2018, most of my family and I were arrested in our homes in the middle of the night and thrown into the Immigration Detention Center (IDC). I ended up in an 800 sq. ft. room with 100 other men for a month! In unsanitary and inhumane conditions, disease spread rapidly and I became ill. My family members and I decided we would rather return to Pakistan than face certain death in the IDC in Thailand. We were deported back to the same city we had fled five years earlier, only to face new threats of human rights violations by new extremist groups.

We resettled in Karachi, Pakistan, where Christians are forced to live in a sort of Christian ghetto. I quickly returned to my evangelistic work, joining the leadership team of Praise and Prayer Church. At Jenny's invitation to be a presenter and a scholarship recipient at the New Wineskins Global Mission Conference in the fall of 2019, I accepted to come and then miraculously received a visa to travel to the U.S. for a multi-week stay.



Threat to Life

At the New Wineskins Conference and in schools and churches afterwards, Jenny and I helped raise awareness about the persecution of Christians. When I shared my story, hearts were touched, and children and adults were moved to action to help our suffering Christian brothers and sisters overseas.

Then, an invitation came for me to share at an international religious freedom advocacy event in Washington, DC. However, after I shared my testimony about the truth of how Christians and other minorities are persecuted in Pakistan, my life was threatened publicly by someone in attendance from an opposite ideology. After this incident, I had nightmares about being arrested, tortured, and even beheaded if I returned to my country. It was determined that it was unsafe for me to return to Pakistan and I was advised to file for asylum in the U.S.

It took six months to get my 500-page asylum case filed. My legal team consists of Redeemer's own Jeff and Leigh Ann Weber and their son Daniel Weber who started The Wilberforce Center to work with asylum seekers like me. Many people from the Redeemer congregation helped support me by giving clothing, shoes, coats, gift cards, donations towards my legal fees and even paying for me to get a U.S. cell phone! I am so grateful for the community of believers at Redeemer who accepted and cared for me with such love and compassion.

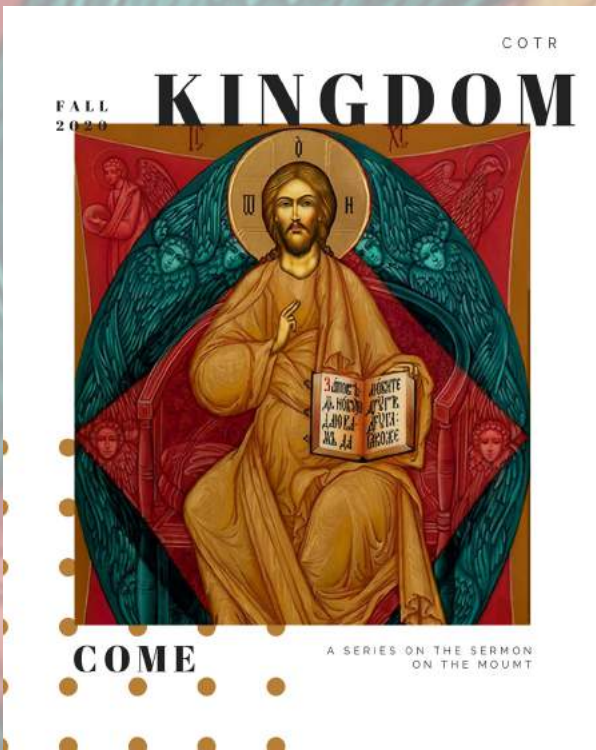
I lived with Jenny, Larry, and Kelly Noyes for 11 months and they are like my U.S. family! I ran a service in Urdu from their sun-room every day through Zoom to continue to help lead my church community back home. As Christians, my family and church

community were hard hit by the Covid shutdown. They couldn't even receive governmental food distributions unless they converted to Islam, which they refused to do. Now, torrential flood waters have ruined what little they had. Even crocodiles have come into the streets from the coast and the situation for them is dire. With New Wineskins help, we were able to get a grant from the Anglican Relief and Development Fund to provide for some Covid-relief and many others whom I have met here have helped me support my people back home. My people are depending on me!

After praying for months about what God would have me do next, I recently accepted an invitation from another pastor in the Christ Our Hope diocese, The Rev. Dan Claire, to live in the DC area and become part of his family and church community, Church of the Resurrection on Capitol Hill. Having access to public transportation will help me have more independence. Pastor Alan came and prayed with us and I know Pastor Dan Claire will be a great mentor to help me develop as a minister of the Gospel as I await the outcome of my case. Pastor Jeff Weber tells me that there is a 40,000-case backlog at the Arlington, VA courthouse where my case was assigned, so only God knows when my case will be heard.

Even though I have been persecuted in three different countries for being a Christian, I have learned through all these trials that God is always with me. I have hope because he is my true rescuer and redeemer. I believe God is now using my story to mobilize Christians to act on behalf of their persecuted Brothers and Sisters around the world. Maybe God has called me here to reach people in America with the love of Jesus, too. Wherever He leads me, I will go!

*this is an alias



Church of the Redeemer
Fall Sermon Series

KINGDOM COME

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Voices and Views on Paul

by Dr. Ben Witherington III & Dr. Jason Myers

IN THE FIELD OF PAULINE STUDIES, much has changed over the last twenty years. Since Ben Witherington III first published his influential book *The Paul Quest*, monumental works have appeared from scholars such as James D. G. Dunn, N. T. Wright, E. P. Sanders, and John Barclay. The New Perspective is no longer new, and the flurry of publications continues across a range of specialized studies. Those interested in exploring trends and issues related to Paul may find themselves in need of a map.

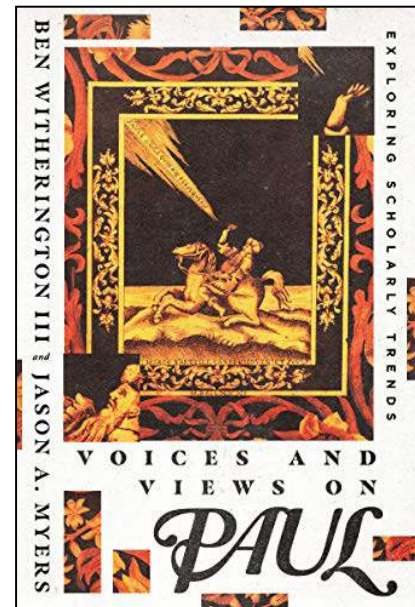
With *Voices and Views on Paul*, Ben Witherington and Jason Myers have teamed up to provide a reliable guide

to the major terrain of Pauline scholarship. Through a distinctive combination of survey and evaluation, they explain and analyze the thought of recent major Pauline interpreters and track developments over the past two decades. They conclude with an assessment of how these studies have advanced our understanding of Paul and where further work is needed.

Voices and Views on Paul offers a helpful service to students, pastors, and anyone seeking to keep up with this dynamic field as scholars continue to wrestle with Paul and his work.

THE BOOK N

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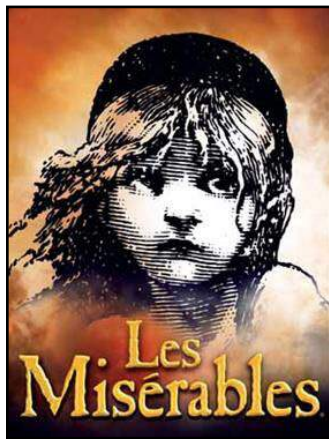


“HOW WE UNDERSTAND PAUL (and certainly scripture at large) impacts the way we view what God is doing in our world today. Does God care about the suffering around us? Does God hope for a community of multi-ethnic people to bear his image? In one way or another, answers to our questions of the day are built on how we interpret key issues in Paul’s letters such as Romans, Galatians, or Ephesians. What was Paul doing in the first century? What did his world look like, and what did his words mean in that context? These are questions this book seeks to answer. Additionally, those that find Paul puzzling, *Voices and Views* offers significant insight into more recent scholarship that has made sense of Paul and his theology.”

--Dr. Jason Myers

REEL WORLD REVIEW

by Mikey Fissel



IN SEARCHING FOR A FILM that represents the beatitudes, I came to realize that they (by inclusion or intentional omission) are found in nearly every piece of cinema. The truths that Christ upholds, whether we practice them or not, are written on all of our hearts as desirable and fulfilling for life. We long for them and notice the absence of them, even if subconsciously, when we watch our favorite movies and shows. With this in mind, I decided to

focus on a story that has spanned a variety of mediums because of its inherent power and beauty: Victor Hugo's *Les Misérables*.

In terms of film adaptation, both the 1998 Liam Neeson *Les Misérables* (my personal favorite) and the 2012 musical version, featuring Hugh Jackman, have their pros and cons. The 1998 is impeccably cast and nearly flawless from start to finish. However, the 2012 film features the transcendent score of Claude-Michel Schönberg and enduring lyrics of Alain Boublil and Jean-Marc Natel (originally translated into English by Herbert Kretzmer), both of which have contributed to *Les Mis* being one of the longest running musicals in the world.

This well-known story needs no synopsis from me—likely you have read the book, seen the musical, the BBC series, the movie, the other movie, or have become familiar with it through your rec-



Reel World Theology

It is our hope that by examining the entertainment that is prevalent in our culture, we may better understand and engage the narratives that are shaping it, being aware that story is powerful and entertainment is not mindless.

tor's annual use of it as a sermon illustration. Regardless of your exposure, the theme of protagonist Jean Valjean's life is widely understood as one of mercy, forgiveness, and redemption. It pulls at our heartstrings not just because of its beauty as a piece of art, but because we ache for stories like this—of compassionate priests and hopeless mothers and broken people who are trying to do what is right and finding redemption despite their failures and imperfections.

In this story, we encounter the Gospel embedded in scripture; the hope found in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ and proclaimed by his friends and followers. It is one we can stand to be reminded of again and again because it is the story that actively captures our hearts, and transforms our lives and those with which they intersect. In the words of Martin Luther: "The devil is ever on the alert to insinuate all kinds of wickedness into our hearts, and would fain make them as cold as ice. Where God's Word is not repeatedly proclaimed in sermons, in hymns, in private conversation, so that we may not forget it or become callous towards it, there it is impossible for our hearts, which are burdened with many an earthly pain and sorrow, with wicked purposes and the devil's malicious instigations, not to fail and to fall from Christ. Thus it is an urgent necessity that the preaching of the Gospel continue among us, that we may hear and retain it, otherwise we would soon forget our Lord."

So, grab some popcorn (and a box of Kleenex), and enjoy this one again. It does us good to be reminded of the Gospel of hope that makes us transformed people, and beautiful art is a great way to do so.



DIocese OF CHRIST OUR HOPE

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Convocation & Synod 2020
Nov. 5-7 // Online

REGISTRATION IS NOW OPEN for the 2020 Convocation & Synod of the Diocese of Christ our Hope. It will be held via Zoom and also live-streamed November 5-7.

Although there is no cost to non-clergy or non-delegates, we are asking participants to register at <https://www.adhope.org/copy-of-convocation-synod-registrat>.

This year, Synod will feature the nomination process for the new Bishop Coadjutor. Information pertaining to this process can be found at <https://www.adhope.org/bishop-coadjutor>.

We hope you will consider joining us for this wonderful event that yearly connects us as a worshipping people within our Diocese.



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