



The Reporter

December 2016

The Reporter

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"A Memorable Christmas"

by Pastor Proeber

Every year when the birth of our Savior comes around I try to make that celebration memorable. It may include music and lessons contained in a special order of service. It may be the "large as life" display of the manger scene. It may even be something extremely simple. While every year becomes memorable in one way or another, there are some that do stand out above the rest.

When I was in high school, there was a Christmas that definitely stood out. In the congregation where I grew up they had been given a huge tree. It required more lights than any other previous tree. It wasn't a problem. Then men simply added more lights.

At the Christmas evening service the unthinkable happened. All the lights went out. Not only the lights on the tree went dark, but every other light, as well as the organ. Everyone was literally in the dark. That Christmas became memorable when my father checked the source of the

problem. Not only had all the fuses on the main electric panel blown, they were glowing red hot. Most people never realized how close the church came to burning down that night.

A second memorable Christmas came my very first year in the ministry. I was excited. This was my first Christmas in my first congregation, along with the first opportunity to put together a Christmas Eve service. Unfortunately, the service never took place.

Christmas Eve was to be on a Thursday night. On Sunday afternoon it started snowing. It snowed all day Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday. That afternoon reality hit. The service would have to be canceled because of the twenty inches of snow that piled up and literally buried the front doors of the church.

A third memorable Christmas came right after we adopted our daughter. It was the first Christmas as a new family of three. While nothing unusual

actually happened, it was memorable because of the special gift my wife and I were able to enjoy.

Over the years there have been many Christmas celebrations. Some were more typical, others were more special. I'm sure everyone has had at least one memorable Christmas to hold and cherish. But, when we really think about it, isn't every Christmas memorable? Shouldn't every celebration of our Savior's birth fill us with awe and joy?

Every year we get to witness a miracle. The eternal Son of God left his glory in heaven to take on our flesh and blood and be born an infant. We know the words of the Gospel account. Maybe we know them too well, so that they have become routine, even mundane. There is an inherent danger which accompanies complacency. The devil is always watching and waiting, ever working to replace the joy of Jesus' birth with the pursuit of the world's celebration of

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the holidays. Now, it would be easy to bemoan the world's concerted effort to sanitize itself of Jesus' birth. It would be just as easy to complain it shouldn't be this way. Instead of looking with chagrin at the world, we should, first, take a look at our own hearts. We need to sincerely ask ourselves, "Do I still find myself in awe of what God has done for me? If the answer is anything less than an enthusiastic "yes," then I may need to do a little soul searching. In addition, I may have to change my habits and reorganize my priorities.

We all make preparations. Some of us go all out. Some of us are more subdued. I remember one year when my wife and I put up a small table-top tree. It became a wonderful tree, because every ornament told the story of Jesus' birth in a different way. This tree has affectionately been known ever since as the "Jesus Tree."

It is easy to become overwhelmed with everything that has been attached to the Savior's birth. Certainly all is done to create a lasting treasury filled with memories. Still, have we become so enamored on filling our treasure chests with worldly memories that we have left it void of the most precious memory?

Take time to think about what you do this Christmas, because it is the only effective way to get to the heart of the matter. Make the effort to allow extra time for more thorough devotional study. When you read "Meditations," or download the devotion from "wels.net," pull out your hymnal and read through a Christmas hymn as well. The familiar ones are precious. Even the less familiar are equally precious in the message they offer.

As we prepare for Christmas at Our Redeemer, 2016 will be memorable. This will be the first year with our recently purchased "chrismons." I for one am excited to see how they will add a unique beauty to our worship. Equally exciting is the message of good news each will offer. And, isn't this what the celebration of our Savior's birth is all about! It is the message the Lord announced to the shepherds and through which their lives were changed. It is the message that caused Mary to "treasure all these things and ponder them in her heart." It is the same message which brought Simeon to say, "Lord, now dismiss your servant. For my eyes have seen your salvation." For these people the birth of Jesus was memorable. It can be just as memorable for each of us.

Yes, the story never changes. There are no alternate endings. There are no modern remakes. Yet, it remains the most wonderful story every told. A story which needs to remain memorable year after year—both for us and for all people.

In November of the year we moved to Santa Barbara, our family made a trip to Disneyland. As we were walking around one evening, snow flakes started falling to softly playing Christmas carols. While they were only soap bubbles, it was fascinating to stop and watch them fall, and even collect on hats and coats. What made this a memorable experience was the expression on my daughter's face. There was both fascination and awe mixed with a pure sense of joy. The look was priceless. Today, as I prepare for the birth of my Savior, I pray the Lord will lead me to experience that same priceless expression. I pray the Lord will bless you with the same.

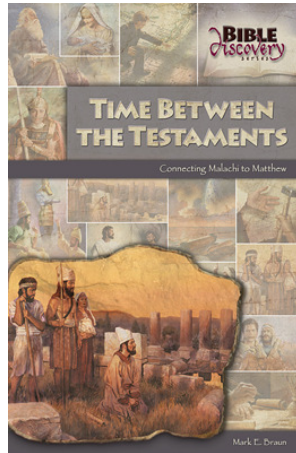
This can be a most memorable Christmas when we allow ourselves to be filled with fascination and awe at what God has shown us. We can also experience pure joy when we readily listen and believe those precious words —

**"Tonight in the city of David a Savior has been born to you,
he is Christ the Lord."**



“Book review: Time Between the Testaments”

By Alan Todd



Time Between The Testaments

"Connecting Malachi to Matthew"

Northwestern Publishing House; 106 pages; \$14.99

Mark E. Braun

Reviewed by Al Todd

Pastor Braun (WELS) teaches religion and theology at Wisconsin Lutheran College in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He has written an overview of the Intertestamental period from roughly 410 B.C. to 30 A.D. No books from this period are recognized by Protestants as part of the Bible. That is, the Old Testament Canonical books were completed before 410 BC, and New Testament canons were penned after 30 AD.

The period is notable, however, as Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox added 6 to 18 books, written between 410 BC and 30 AD, to the Canonical books of the Old Testament though they are not part of the original Hebrew Scriptures. Lutherans and most Protestants call them Apocrypha; i.e., biblically related writings not part of accepted Biblical Canon.

Braun's book is organized in three chapters:

“The Story” (covering the geo-political players during the Intertestamental time) explains the effect on the Jews in Judea during the Persian Period (450 – 330 B.C.), the Hellenistic Period (330 – 166 B.C.), the Hasmonean Period (166-63 B.C.), and the Roman Period (63 B.C. to the time of Christ).

“The Books” summarizes the Apocryphal books and is further organized into works of history (including 1-2 Maccabees); works of fiction (including Judith and Tobit); wisdom literature (including Sirach (aka the Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach or Ecclesiasticus) and the Wisdom of Solomon); and Apocalyptic (including 2 Esdras).

“The Groups” summarizes key groups prominent in the daily life and governing culture of the Jews. This includes the Pharisees, Sadducees, Zealots, and Essenes.

This book helped me understand challenges Jesus faced from the ruling class of Jews. It clarified why they acted as they did, their mindset and how it was formed. It explained clashes among groups of Jews vying for political power even as they were under Roman rule (except for a brief period under the Maccabees).

I also resolved to read a few key books of the Apocrypha as several leaders in the Christian church have commended many of these to believers. Nevertheless, as Braun points out: “...we find all our good news in the Scriptures we already have, and from them we learn to believe 'that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing [we] may have life in his name'.” (John 20:31)

“Thanksgiving Supper”

By Alan Todd

There was another excellent Thanksgiving supper on Sunday, November 20th. Twenty-two members showed up at 5:30 P.M. in the Fellowship Hall to partake of a wide variety of hors d'oeuvres, main dishes, wine, soft drinks, and juice brought to the “pot-luck” supper by church members.

The Fellowship Hall was beautifully decorated by Karolyn Hanna and Linda Williams with a Thanksgiving theme. There was time for some pre-supper meeting and greeting before the singing of the Doxology (“Praise God...”) started off the buffet style supper.

After the main course was completed (12 items on the menu – including Turkey and Ham!), Karolyn Hanna handed out a Thanksgiving quiz and we were allotted a great deal of time and allowed to use the internet to answer some 20 questions ranging from the historical to the arcane. It was good to review some of the facts and myths about Thanksgiving to better appreciate what Thanksgiving has come to mean today.

Desserts were brought out including coffee and tea; a very enjoyable way to wind up the evening.

The supper wound down about 8:00 P.M. and the volunteer clean-up crew had the fellowship hall back to normal in about 30 minutes. What a blessing it is to be able to gather together as brothers and sisters in Christ and celebrate by thanking God for His unfailing goodness and mercy.

Hope we see you at next year's celebration!

“The Power of Invitations”

By Alan Todd

Thanks to Karolyn Hanna for providing this short “parable” to remind us how important it is to proactively invite and keep inviting folks!

On Monday a friend met me on the street and said “I noticed you were absent from our club meeting last week. Will you be there next week?”

“No,” I replied. “I can't make it. Don't look for me.”

Two men then asked me the next day if I would attend. I told the first, “I wish I could, but I can't next week.” The second man I answered, “My schedule looks impossible, but I'll try to find a way to attend.”

The morning of the meeting in the post office a fourth man asked if I would attend that evening. “I'll try to come,” I replied, “but I may not make it.” Before I got to my car, a fifth man stopped me, and I promised to attend.

I don't know whose official duty it was to contact me, but I couldn't resist the invitation from five people. We all want to go where we are wanted!

If we want the lost, the indifferent, and the inactive to come to know our Savior, we must let them know. If we really want them to attend our church, we must find the opportunities to invite them. This is a joyful undertaking for every member of Our Redeemer.

“Kneeling at the Manger”

by Barbara Grunewald

Have you ever wondered what it might be like to see baby Jesus in his humble manger? What if you had arrived minutes behind the shepherds to gaze upon our Savior’s sweet face? Surely, you would have joined them as they fell to their knees in awe and reverence at this most amazing sight.

A Lutheran (Missouri Synod) pastor and lyricist, Jaroslav Vajda (1919-2008), wrote the touching words of a Christmas hymn entitled *Where Shepherds Lately Kneelt* that described this incredible event. Pastor Vajda was a prolific lyricist who wrote the texts and translations to over 225 hymns, including several we sing in our worship services. You may recognize songs such as *Then the Glory, Now the Silence*, and *Go My Children, With My Blessing* from our Christian Worship.

Where Shepherds Lately Kneelt is a unique and moving song, which is composed in the first person perspective. Pastor Vajda explained his intent saying: “A request from Augsburg Publishing House for a Christmas song for their Christmas Annual prompted the composition of this hymn on the adoration of the Christ Child in the manger. I wondered what fresh approach and contemporary application could be made of that central event in history. Rather than report the event again in the third person, as so many Christmas songs do, I placed myself in spirit at that poor manger bed and reviewed the implications of that visit in my life and future and in that of my fellow human beings. I have struggled, and more so as I grow older, with the incomprehensibility of that event and of my connection with it, and with each commemoration of that miracle becoming more routine, though its impact on God’s heart remains the means of my salvation. I pictured myself at the opposite side of the event from Isaiah and his prophecy (Isaiah 9:6, 7) applying the same promise to myself as a late-arriving pilgrim.”

Pastor Vajda selected Isaiah’s prophetic verses from the Old Testament for the basis of his Christmas hymn. Isaiah 9:6 begins, “For to us a child is born, to us a son is given...” Those striking words state that Jesus **is given to us** – unrepentant sinners. It is important to recognize that this baby lying in a dirty manger was the perfect gift for all mankind. This is the greatest joy – Jesus came to live and die for us and our salvation!

When we sing the words to this hymn, Pastor Vajda invites us to become pilgrims looking down on baby Jesus to reflect on the true meaning of His birth. This miracle is truly incomprehensible and awe-inspiring. Here are the beautiful words to *Where Shepherds Lately Kneelt*:



Where Shepherds Lately Kneelt

*Where shepherds lately knelt and kept the angel's word,
I come in half-belief, a pilgrim strangely stirred;
But there is room and welcome there for me,
But there is room and welcome there for me.*

*In that unlikely place I find him as they said:
Sweet newborn babe, how frail! and in a manger bed,
A still, small voice to cry one day for me,
A still, small voice to cry one day for me.*

*How should I not have known Isaiah would be there,
His prophecies fulfilled? With pounding heart I stare:
A child, a son, the Prince of Peace for me,
A child, a son, the Prince of Peace for me.*

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Kneeling, from page 5

*Can I, will I forget how Love was born, and burned
Its way into my heart unasked, unforced, unearned,
To die, to live, and not alone for me,
To die, to live, and not alone for me?*

These stanzas describe baby Jesus and His bigger-than-life impact on the world. God chose lowly shepherds living in the fields to undertake a journey to see his greatest miracle. It is interesting that shepherds were chosen to go to Bethlehem. They were simple, hard-working men who spent their lives tending to their flocks – just as Jesus tends to us. Those unassuming shepherds at the manger certainly understood what they must do day and night to protect their flocks. In Isaiah 40:10-11, the prophet spoke of our Savior when he said: “*He tends his flock like a shepherd: He gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young.*”

The shepherds had followed the angel’s words: “*Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is Christ 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). The shepherds found Jesus in that *unlikely place* just as the angel had described. The title of the hymn invokes images of the shepherds as they knelt before the little baby. They knelt out of respect and amazement for the small, frail child who would secure our eternal salvation. No wonder the lyricist (and all of us) stand in *half-belief* and are *strangely stirred* at this inexplicable sight. Can you imagine being with the shepherds as they knelt before our glorious Lord?

Finally, the last two verses of each stanza show what God has done for us! Each verse is repeated for emphasis on its importance and ends with the words *for me*. *But there is room and welcome there for me*. This means that the Lord always has a place for each of us. Although we are miserable sinners, He is always forgiving. Like those shepherds of long ago, we are welcomed by our Savior. In this life, we know Him through prayer and the Word. At the end of our life’s journey, He will embrace and welcome us home forever!

A still, small voice to cry one day for me. Our Savior’s *still, small voice* cries for us from His humble beginnings as a baby to His agonizing hours as a man nailed to the cross. All His teachings and actions are freely given so that we may know Him and be saved. The Lord is everything and “*will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*” (Isaiah 9:6). The hymn says: *A child, a son, the Prince of Peace for me*. We know that He is a Triune God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is the most complex God, one we will never fully comprehend.

As we sing this beautiful hymn this Christmas season, may we walk as pilgrims and reflect on what God has done for us. We hear Isaiah’s prophetic words, and witness our Savior’s birth. We wonder at the Lord’s magnificent blessings and ask —

*Can I, will I forget how Love was born, and burned
Its way into my heart unasked, unforced, unearned,
To die, to live, and not alone for me,
To die, to live, and not alone for me?*

God saves us from sin and death because of His unsurpassed love. We have done nothing to deserve this. Love was most certainly born that joyful day when Jesus entered the world!



“Advent Services”

By Carl Schueler



“Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord’s coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord’s coming is near.”
James 5:7-8 NIV

As we look forward to the birth of our Savior over a late December weekend this year, that celebration officially began already in November!

Indeed, Advent presages Christmas each year beginning in late November immediately after Thanksgiving. Some criticize commercial stores for starting their Christmas advertising almost the day after Thanksgiving. That commercial tradition is, however, not entirely removed from the Christian Church calendar regarding Advent!

The last day of November Our Redeemer conducted the first mid-week Advent service at 7:00 PM. Pastor Proeber provided a service looking forward to the celebration of the birth of our Savior nearly a month in advance of the annual holiday. Though the date of our Savior’s birth in Bethlehem is unknown, we celebrate his birth on December 25th. He may have been born in Spring or Summer, no one knows. This is a mystery for us, but surely known to Mary and Joseph. For some reason, the Lord chose to keep that date secret. Perhaps we should remember his birth every day of the year?

Pastor Proeber reminded us that while we wait a few weeks for Christmas, we also wait for the second coming of the Lord. Pastor joked about how frustrating it may be to wait to see one’s doctor: Why, one might die of old age by the time the doctor is available! Pastor noted that, similarly, it may seem as if the Lord will never really return! Indeed, Bible critics for centuries have pointed to the fact that time seems to stretch on and all is the same as ever. But, “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

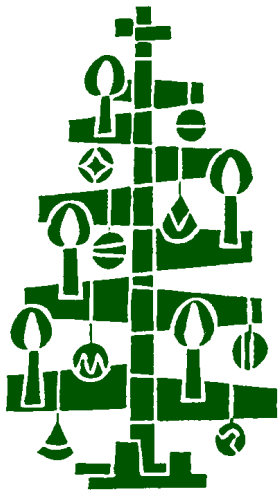
This reminder provides two-fold comfort to believers. It provides comfort as we wait on the Lord, knowing his mercy to us in heaven is assured. It further provides comfort as we witness, recognizing the Lord is using us to help save lost souls who can be redeemed because the Lord is patient.

The second mid-week Advent service will be Wednesday, December 14th at 7:00 pm.

Jesus, your Church with longing eyes for your expected coming waits.
When will the promised light arise and glory beam from heaven’s gate?

Teach us in watchfulness and prayer to wait for your appointed hour,
And fit us by your grace to share the triumphs of your conquering power.

Christian Worship 9 st. 1 & 5



“
I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all people.”

Outreach Opportunities

The Outreach Committee continues to sponsor events to provide opportunities for members to invite friends and relatives to Our Redeemer. Some events are conducted outside the formal worship service. There are also special worship services with food and fellowship afterwards. We hope these events will encourage you to invite people you know to learn more about our church and to hear the message of Grace we proclaim. Please plan to participate, and to serve!

Christmas Cheer

Although this is not a worship activity, it does give us the opportunity to bring the good news of Jesus to people who need to hear it. Following the church decoration and chili dinner, we will go caroling to Wood Glen Hall and to some of our “home bound” members.

It is an enjoyable evening of singing praise to the Lord and visiting, these special people.

The evening will end with dessert and fellowship. Mark your calendars for December 18th beginning at 2:30 pm. Caroling begins at 5:30 pm.

Advent Worship

This year’s theme has focused on the simple prayer, “Come, Lord Jesus.” It invites us to prepare our hearts and lives through regular and heartfelt prayer.

Ransom Me Unharmd from my Enemies
Renew My Life with Your Precious Gifts
Refresh Me as I Sojourn through this Life
Rekindle My Joy in You as my Savior

Mid-week Advent

The services will be Wednesday, November 30th and December 14th. The 7:00 pm evening service will look to the encouragement our Lord gives us to Wait and Watch.

Ladies’ Christmas Cookie Exchange

The Annual Ladies Christmas get-together is December 6th at 7:00 pm. Sonja Todd will open her home to this evening of food, friendship and festivities. As always, guests are welcome. This year the gift and cookie exchange is optional—just come and have an enjoyable evening with your sisters in Christ.

Christmas Eve, December 24th

Christ, the Savior is Born! While it is a familiar message, it never loses its wonder and awe. Once again we will focus on the promises of a gracious and faithful God. This is the God who sent his Son into the world to bring peace and righteousness to all people. The candlelight service is at 7:00 pm.

Refreshments will be offered in the Fellowship Hall.

Christmas Day, December 25th

The celebration of our Savior’s birth continues with the 9:30 am service. When we consider what God accomplished with the birth of his Son, our sincerest desire is to come and worship the newborn King, again!

All of these worship services are wonderful ways to share the good news of Jesus Christ with people. Make sure you invite others to come and see the great things God has done for them.

Notes & News

Handbell Choir

The “ringers” are concentrating on our Advent and Christmas worship services. There are a number of new, and somewhat challenging selections. We rejoice in the faithfulness of those who give of their Monday evenings to enhance our worship services with the bells.

If you are interested in ringing in the New Year, please give prayerful consideration to participating in this special area of service to the Lord and Our Redeemer.

Please speak to Debbie Aitkins following one of our Sunday worship services.

GAUDETE

Choir

The choir has been a regular part of our worship services since September. We are thankful for the service they provide, and for the songs they sing. Like the bells, preparations are being made for Advent, Christmas and Epiphany.

Practice is every Thursday at 7:00 pm in the Sanctuary. If you have ever thought about singing, come! New voices are always appreciated, and welcome.

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

There will be no evening study through the month of December, however, on the 11th of January, classes will re-start. We will return to our study on the Book of the Judges, specifically considering the life, work and death of Samson.



Sunday Morning Bible Class

As always there is a regularly scheduled class after the worship service. This class covers a number of topics and utilizes a number of different presentation formats.

We are now studying the Ninety-five Theses Luther prepared as “A Disputation for Clarifying the Power of Indulgences.” It has proved to be an interesting, as well as informative study.

Certainly most of us have our ideas about what happened on October 31, 1517. Did you know, however, that Luther had no intention of trying to start “something new?” His goal was to debate what was happening on the basis of sound Scripture and the teachings of the Church.

Sunday School for Children

The Sunday School continues to meet on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of every month.

We thank the Lord for the teachers who faithfully commit to teaching our children God’s Word. We also thank the Lord for our parents who faithfully bring their children to receive the blessing of studying God’s Word.

If you have any questions regarding our Sunday School, please speak with Joel Degner (Education Chairman, or one of the Sunday School teachers—Barbara Favuzzi, Sonja Todd, or Sue Proeber).



New Opportunities for the New Year

We are always looking for new opportunities for service, outreach, study and encouragement. Please share your ideas with one of the current Board members: (Jacob Martin—Elders; Joel Degner—Education; Frank Florez—Trustees). You may also speak with Pastor Proeber. Our goal is to serve as many as possible with the Gospel.

PRAISE
THE
LORD,
FOR
HE
IS
GOOD

Reporters Wanted

Book review? Personal Story of Faith?
Event report? Potluck-gathering? Party? Field Trip?

Half-page to three pages
Reviewed for scriptural consistency
Due by 25th of month to appear in next issue

Email to Carl Schueler (cfs_home@hotmail.com)
or Pastor Proeber (pastor@orlcsb.net)

A simple and rewarding way to serve!

Thanks to Alan Todd, Barbara Grunewald, Karolyn Hanna, and Carl Schueler for articles in this month's *Reporter*.

There is a standing invitation to provide material for the *Reporter*. Throughout the past volumes, articles authored by members have made every issue more interesting. If you have an idea, and you are not sure whether to act on it, please don't hesitate to speak to Pastor Proeber or Carl Schueler for advice. Thanks!



Meetings for December

Church Council	Tuesday, December 6th at 7:00 pm
Committees	Tuesday, December 6th at 8:00 pm
Outreach Committee	Tuesday, December 13th at 7:00 pm

If you have a question regarding a specific area of ministry, please contact a member of the appropriate Board. He will be happy to help.

Thanks for a Job Well Done!

The Board of Trustees deserves a special note of thanks for making sure the parking lot lights were installed prior to the start of our mid-week Advent services. It did take some extra effort, because the work was not scheduled until next year, but everything came together. If you have not seen the new lighting, make sure you come to the next mid-week Advent service. As one member said, "the parking lot has never looked so good!" Thanks again to those who made the work a reality, especially the Lord!

December Birthdays



We rejoice in the many blessings God has given the members of our family of faith. May the Lord continue to bless them richly.

1st	Al T.
12th	Bill W.
23rd	Barbara G.
25th	Our Savior, Jesus Christ

Devotional Corner

“Give Me a Sign”

When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples to ask him, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?" Jesus replied. "Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised and the good news is preached to the poor."
Matthew 11:2-6

Fred had his doubts. He regularly prayed, still he wondered if it did any good. One day when he was particularly troubled, he prayed, "Lord, give me a sign!" Eventually he became impatient and declared, "God, if you can't give me a simple sign, I'm through with you!"

Fred succumbed to a temptation concerning which I need to exercise caution. It is easy to become impatient with the Lord. It is easy to become frustrated. It is equally easy to say, "Lord, give me a sign or else!" Before I give up on praying to the Lord, I need to ask myself a very specific question: Would I recognize a sign if God gave me one?

Jesus' words to John's disciples are exactly what I need to consider. As much as I would like a clear and unmistakable sign - preferably of my own choosing - the Lord gives me something better. I have his faithful Word. In the Bible I can read one promise after another, and see each promise kept without fail. This is a sign worth noting. I also have the benefits of Jesus' precious work to keep me from falling victim to the weakness of my sinful nature. Jesus provides me with forgiveness when I grow impatient, he offers me peace which guards and guides my life, he even assures me of his never-failing presence. This is the sign I need, and it is an unmistakable sign upon which I can always depend.

Yes, it would be nice to see something dramatic, something bold and daring, something to which I could really hold. Honestly, I have that already in Jesus. In his life, in his cross, in his faithful promise, as well as in his abiding love I have every sign I need.

Prayer

O dearest Jesus, you have provided many signs in your Word to reassure me. Give me the faith I need to see, and believe all you have revealed as my Lord and Savior.

Daily devotions can be accessed through www.whataboutjesus.com or www.wels.net. Please follow the instructions to view daily devotions and to subscribe to them. They are also available as "podcasts."

Devotional Corner

"It's Not About Me"

After me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. *Matthew 3:11*

One could never forget meeting John the Baptist. His clothing was unusual. His message was unparalleled. Even the place where he carried out his work was unorthodox. Yet, even though everything in his life called attention to him, he would be the first to say, "It's not about me!" John freely confessed everything he did and said was about the "one who would come after him." This one would be the Promised One. This would be the Powerful One. This would be the One to follow.

I need to take John's message seriously. It's easy to think everything should be about me. People should pay attention to my schedule, my accomplishments, as well as my likes and dislikes. Unfortunately, this self-centered attitude also makes its way into my relationship with the Lord. God should see me the way I see myself. He should love me the way I am. He should even accept my attitude and good intentions for what they seem to be.

The problem is, it's not about me. If it were, I would be doomed to eternal punishment. I have to accept the truth there is nothing I could ever do to stand in the presence of the One who is more powerful than I.

This is why John's message is so necessary, and so precious. It leads me to look away from myself and look to the Savior God provided. In Jesus, God's Son who came into the world, I find perfection for my imperfection. I find unqualified obedience for my questionable intentions. I even find humble submission for my self-serving and selfish ways.

John's message is clear and it is what I need to hear. My life here, and my hope of life in heaven has everything to do with Jesus and his precious work. And honestly, I am thankful it's not about me, because Jesus is the One God the Father sent into the world to save me.

Prayer

O gracious God and Father, I thank you for the promise you gave concerning your Son. Help me look past my selfishness and self-centered ways to see the unselfish and undeserved love of Jesus my Savior.

Daily devotions can be accessed through www.whataboutjesus.com or www.wels.net. Please follow the instructions to view daily devotions and to subscribe to them. They are also available as "podcasts."