

PASTOR'S PENNINGS

Jesus Makes Us Eternally Rich

Andrew ... spoke up, "Here is a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish, but how far will they go among so many?" Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." ... The men sat down, about five thousand of them. Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish. When they had all had enough to eat, he said to his disciples, "Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted." So they gathered them and filled twelve baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left over by those who had eaten (John 6:8-13).

Have you ever fallen for any of the "Get rich quick" scams? Or have you thought, "If I could just win the lottery, life would be better."

People were coming to see Jesus because of the miracles He was performing. His notoriety had spread. People saw Him as the answer to their problems in life. Jesus' own disciples were still learning who Jesus truly was. Jesus wanted all to know He was God, but He also wanted them to know He had come to make them right with God.

Just before His miracle of feeding the 5,000, Jesus leads Philip to see how amazing His power was with a question: "Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?" He asked this only to test him, for He already had in mind what He was going to do. Philip answered him, "Eight months' wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite!" (John 6:5-7). Philip saw what an impossible task this would be to feed more than 5,000 people.

By this miracle Jesus showed that He has the power to provide what we need. As God He can do what is impossible. The people recognized he was someone special, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world" (John 6:14). But Jesus is more; He is our Savior God.

All the riches in the world won't solve all our problems. Worldly riches will not make us right with a holy God, undo our sins, or save us from death and judgment. In His life, Jesus made it clear that He came to make us rich toward God. He gives us the certainty that we can live eternally with God in heaven. Jesus had the power to take away our sins and to give us His perfect life. That is the greatest miracle Jesus has accomplished for the world and you. As our Savior He brings us peace with God.

PRAYER LIST

Psalm 61:1 & 2 - "Hear my cry, O God; listen to my prayer. From the ends of the earth I call to you, I call as my heart grows faint; lead me to the rock that is higher than I."

Please keep Mrs. Roberta Beckelman, Bob Landry and Bob Wagner in your prayers. Roberta is in Arizona and struggling with liver cancer. Bob Landry, Aimee Barnett's grandfather, has been hospitalized and is not doing well. Bob Wagner, Dorothy Deard's brother, has brain cancer and is not

doing well. Ask God to grant the families of these people strength and Christian endurance. Ask Him to keep these people strong in the faith until He calls them home.

We thank God for blessing the Henrys with 55 years of marriage and for blessing our community of believers through them.

Please thank the Lord for blessing the Doug and Regina Hahn family with Douglas Karl Hahn, Jr. What a blessing it was for us to see Douglas come to faith on his baptism day on July 11th.

STEWARDSHIP

Build On A Deeper Foundation

For Financial Stewardship

The high priority--personal discipleship growth

“Jesus talks of money and possessions more than about any other topic, except for the kingdom of God. There is an intimate connection between faith and finances--a connection that can either threaten faith or strengthen faith. Your stewardship ministry ought to focus on helping followers of Jesus grow in their re-relationship with Jesus.” -- Charles Lane

God's Word belongs at the center of our stewardship ministry to make sure it is built around our growing discipleship with Jesus. Although the Bible speaks plenty about money, we aren't just searching for money principles, but the perspective of life that comes from being connected with Jesus. Jesus connects us with eternity through His life, death, and resurrection. The Gospel message has the power to transform lives to respond in the way that honors God and blesses people.

We need to lay the foundation with a comprehensive spiritual growth plan for the congregation in the following ways:

- 1) Personal and family devotional life
- 2) In-depth Bible studies led by trained leadership
- 3) Small group ministry
- 4) Spiritual growth at functions
- 5) High expectations and a clean plan for leadership growth
- 6) Responsive and loving action toward those spiritually slipping
- 7) Honest repentance and “training in righteousness”

Three reasons that it is difficult to get the majority of people involved in consistent spiritual growth that may come to mind: a) Priorities are wrong--no time for God; b) Finances are stretched to the limit/economy is too tough--worry about financial future, instead of trusting God to provide for your

needs; and c) Too many “worldly” concerns such as activities, social functions, popularity and etc., instead of an emphasis on growing in your faith as a blessed child of God.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Kalen Catteded has transferred to Holy Cross and will be attending church at Grace. Kalen is a student at OU and hopes to be able to teach in the public schools in Oklahoma City when she graduates. Welcome aboard Kalen!

EVANGELISM

This last month, lots of outreach took place at Holy Cross. We had a free car wash. Everyone who came got a sermon CD, a brochure and a warm invitation. There was a VBS canvass, a canvass in Norman to help make people aware that we are conducting services on Sunday afternoon at the Embassy Suites Hotel. Thank you to all of you who participated or prayed for the workers.

But what should we do if the Lord moves the hearts of some of the people who received the Gospel to respond to it and come to our church? Actually God has been doing that a lot. We have had many visitors at both of our services here and in Norman. So, how are we going to make them feel welcome?

Quite often we will have guests or newer members with us and they can be found standing by themselves. They almost look like they are diseased because no one is talking to them. Without any ill will or evil intentions on our part we easily ignore our “new friends.” We are really hurting ourselves when we do that because we are missing out on getting to know another new friend.

Without even meaning to we can easily develop such characters as:

Arnold Arctic - Arnold is a very cold person. He may shake the hand of the pastor, but he will most certainly not acknowledge the hand of a visitor.

Sammy Selfcentered - Droning on about himself is a habit of Sammy's. He'll let anyone know everything about Sammy, but his concern for others is minimal.

Ronald Religious - Ron thinks he must impress the visitor with the sound theology that we have in the WELS, but the visitor doesn't even know what “WELS” stands for.

The Clan Families - This scene is most common. Two families who know each other will discuss the week's activities, but they are often oblivious to visitors.

We often form something of a “holy huddle” which makes it almost impossible for a new member or visitor to get to know us, or more importantly, us to get to know them. Each one of us needs to make the extra effort to greet our visitors and new members. Why not start looking for new people before the service begins.

If you don't recognize someone, then extend to them a warm handshake and bright smile. Introduce yourself by telling them your name and where you live. Then ask them their name and where they live.

Find out if they have a church home, or any type of religious background. Offer to sit next to them so you can help them follow along with the order of service (our structured order of service with the standing up and sitting down and sung responses is very different than many churches). If possible, introduce them to the pastor or some other member. Quite simply, show an interest in them and let them know that we are glad they are visiting with us.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

VBS was a huge blessing! It was funded by Thrivent insurance benefits that are given to Thrivent members of Holy Cross. About 25% of those attending were non-members. Every day attendance was between 27 and 40 children. Perhaps the biggest blessing was a teen class that ranged from 10-14 students. Approximately 12 adults helped as teachers, teachers' helpers, craft, music, food and registration workers. On Friday there was a closing devotion for all the parents. Let us thank our Lord for the opportunities He gave us to share the Word. Let us pray that the Word which was shared takes root and brings the children who received it closer to Jesus.

LWMS

The Lutheran Women's Missionary Society's 47th Annual Convention was held in St. Louis, MO June 24th through the 27th. Joy Hahn from Holy Cross attended the convention. The convention opened with a flag presentation of the countries where the WELS has presence in either mission work or training. This was followed by a communion service with speaker Pastor Jonathan Rockhoff, Chairman of the Nebraska Mission Board. Pastor Rockhoff spoke of doing God's work as a water system. Where the faucet should never be turned off, let the water flow through the hose to the sprinkler. The faucet represents God, the hose - churches, and the sprinkler - missions. If the hose slows down then the missions slow or close, but if the faucet is turned off, everything stops. We need to keep the faucet on by studying God's Word using the sacraments and giving.

The Friday mission speaker was Pastor Andrew Fix who works with Sudanese in Des Moines, IA. He told how his congregation with an attendance of 80-90 members grew to over 150, with 60 to 75 being Sudanese. The Sudanese worship is a more relaxed worship than the traditional Lutheran worship. Pastor Fix and his congregation have learned to stop finding fault and to just love each other and show love through little things, and not by trying to start things.

Missionary John Holtz from Malawi, Africa, spoke on how they show, teach, and guide in Malawi, and showed a short film on the work in Malawi.

Two other mission speakers were Missionary Michael Duncan from the Pakistan and Nepal Mission Field, and Missionary Peter Strackbein, a member of the Latin America Traveling Theological Educators (LATTE) team. Missionary Duncan thanked the ladies for the generous donation to KIDS C.A.R.E. He told about the life in Pakistan and how they are using the Bible Teaching Books at 5th grade level with 11,000 enrolled. They have seven training workshops, 8 hours each day with 2 breaks, and they sit on the floor. Only 1.1% of the population is Christian and only 7% of Christians can read. Missionary Strackbein spoke of how the four members on the team who travel to Mexico, Columbia, Cuba, Puerto Rico, Brazil and the

Dominican Republic spread the Gospel. They train Christians to know their Bibles and train leaders in Bible doctrine. As a child will grow to become an adult, the church also starts out as a child, then an adult. We have to equip them to share and learn the Gospel.

Sunday's closing worship service emphasized how God always accomplishes His purpose in His time and His schedule -- not ours.

HYMNAL SUPPLEMENT

The Voters' Body of Holy Cross voted to retain the blue Christian Worship Supplement and to allow your Pastor to use it at his discretion. Although the vote was very close, the Voters showed a very loving Christian spirit by also having a follow-up vote making the decision unanimous. To help the congregation learn some of the melodies, Pastor will probably be asking for more use of soloists if they are available. Starting in August, Pastor plans to return to the former practice of using the Communion Liturgy on page 15 of the Christian Worship Supplement for the third Sunday of each month.

God wants us to be a congregation united in spirit motivated by Christ's love given to us personally in the Word and Sacrament. Let us show that love with a positive spirit about our church and our mission.

VOTERS' BODY NEWS

The Quarterly Holy Cross Voters' Body Meeting was held July 18th. The Financial Secretary, Treasurer, and each Board presented a report on their activities during the past yearly quarter. The Board of Elders recommended that Holy Cross congregation use the "blue hymnal supplement" during the worship service. This recommendation was unanimously approved by the Voters. The Board of Property Management reported that funds had been received from the insurance company to replace the roofs on the church and parsonage. These roofs were damaged by hail during May. The President of the congregation was asked to appoint a committee to define and review the intent of the "Pastor's Education Fund," which is part of a pastor's call to Holy Cross.

LITURGY AND WORSHIP

Why are there Latin, Greek and Hebrew terms in the liturgy? We have Greek and Latin words in our service, along with Hebrew and English words such as: Gloria in Excelsis, Amen, Kyrie, Hosanna and Hallelujah. It is fitting that we have ancient words in the service of the universal Church. Parts of our service can be traced back to the Second and Third Centuries! This is a reminder that our worship has been celebrated through-out history and that Christianity is not new, but a fulfillment of Judaism. We are joining our voices with many Christians who have gone before us. Christianity is truly cross-cultural.

GRACE NEWS

Holy Cross members at Grace had a canvass of a community near the hotel. Several people were added to our prospect list. Holy Cross gave permission for the participants of Grace to look for grants from various foundations who support mission endeavors to help get the Word of God out to the community of Norman. In these endeavors they will report to the Outreach Board which will in turn

report to Holy Cross Voters. Currently, applications are being made to WELS Kingdom Workers to sponsor a WELS layman for one year to canvass the area and possibly also to form a program of outreach to OU students. The South Central District Mission Board is planning to have their next scheduled October meeting in Oklahoma City. At that time they will review our plans, activities and offer suggestions for areas Synod might be able to help and what deadlines there are for applications to obtain that help.

Attendance by Holy Cross participants in this endeavor is down. Visitors from the community are up. Please pray for this mission endeavor so that new souls may hear the Gospel and so that if it is God's will, a new independent congregation can be born. Pray also that this endeavor, by God's grace, may help to reverse the declining number of WELS congregations and souls in the U.S.

SOUP CAN LABELS/CEREAL BOX TOPS

Please continue to bring your Campbell Soup labels and box top coupons and give them to Dina Shoumaker.

HC - AUGUST GREETERS

Aug. 1 - Marlon & Karen Henry

Aug. 8 - Gene & Ada Hill

Aug. 15 - Mike & Latischa Huller

Aug. 22 - George & Nancy McKinnis

Aug. 29 - Scott & Carole Peters

HC - AUGUST CLEANING LIST

Aug. 7 - Chris & Mindy Chaddock

Aug. 14 - Jack & LaVon Post/Andy & Jeanie Quam

Aug. 21 - Scott & Carole Peters/Kris Timm

Aug. 28 - Shawn & Charity Stuever and Family

HC - AUGUST MOWING LIST

Aug. 7 - Jack Post/Andy Quam

Aug. 14 - Rick Poulin/Paul Barnett

Aug. 21 - John Deards/Al Cardwell

Aug. 28 - Tom Finney/Kris Timm

HOLY BAPTISM - By Delores Staats

Oh, Lord, we bring to You this child

On his baptismal day;

Take him in Your protecting care

And keep him, Lord, we pray.

With water and Your Holy Word

You wash away his sin,

You give Your Holy Spirit

And create new life within.

This heavenly birth through Your dear Son

Is hard to comprehend;

But You have asked us kindly

That we follow Your command.

To bring to you the small ones, dear

And to forbid them not;

For these are also precious souls

Our Savior's blood has bought.

We thank You that for such as these

Your kingdom now has come;

Direct and guide his footsteps

Ever toward his heavenly home.

Oh, Lord, for us we also pray

And ask that You would give

The wisdom and the strength we need

To teach him how to live.
Oh grant us all a childlike faith
That we at last may stand
Around Your throne with those we love
In Your dear heavenly land!

JUNGLE JOURNAL

This will be Terry's last journal article from the Amazon. He will be moving to the Dominican Republic and will live in Santiago with Pastor Strackbein's brother, Peter, although Pastor's brother is slated to be moved out of the Dominican Republic next year. Terry's last article is a summary of his work in Peru and is long. It would have to be cut into several parts and published during the coming months. The following is the first part.

THE FINAL CHAPTER - APRIL-MAY 2010

How do you write the final chapter to a book you started nearly 10 years ago? How do you put into words the thrill of taking the life-saving Gospel where it has never gone before? How do you describe the mighty Holy Spirit descending upon tribal village after tribal village? And all this, while working in the most extraordinary place on the planet, the Amazon Jungle? What follows is a collage of images, impressions, and stories gathered over these many years of monthly Journals. Yes, it got quite long. (Think of it as a short book to add to your summer reading list!) Then again, with 14 years of mission work in Peru, this tome comes out to less than one page per year. I've broken this journal down into categories, recalling the wild places and things, the jungle experiences and, most importantly, the changed lives of the many whom came to Christ. I didn't look through any past journals before I started writing. All these memories are indelibly etched in my mind.

The Jungle and its Wildlife

Everything about the Amazon jungle is simply off the scale. People don't use the adjective "Amazonian" to describe huge things for nothing. Recall just a few examples: In the river there are lily pad-type floating pads the diameter of a round card table. The pads are so big and strong you can set a baby on one and the pad won't sink. Some trees are so massive they are buttressed by roots the size of garage doors. There are metallic blue butterflies with wings larger than playing cards. There is a plant with leaves the size of desk tops. Bugs have bodies the size of matchbox cars. Stick insects are as long as a ruler. You name it, trees, plants, butterflies, insects; there's an Amazon version that's been supersized. And, let's not forget what's in the river. I remember telling the story of Jonah to the natives one day. "Jonah was actually swallowed by a huge fish," I excitedly recounted.

“They had the same problem over in Parinari,” a member dryly replied. “There was this large boy who loved to go out and dive off a cliff every morning before breakfast. In the village, we could hear him hit the water over and over. One day, we heard several splashes, then nothing. A huge fish swallowed him. He was never seen again.”

There are giant electric eels in the rivers. A man went fishing one night and got a huge one stuck on his line. When he pulled it out he got electrocuted so badly it burned everything off of him. When he was found the next morning, all that was left of him was a charred, black skeleton holding a charred black pole.

Then there was the native who one day discovered a mysterious new cave. The cave was huge, with vines dangling from the top and birds flying in and out. The natives wandered in to look around. He was never seen again. The mouth of the cave snapped shut. The native had walked right into the jaws of a colossal Amazon snake.

Bizarre behavior characterizes some creatures of the Amazon. At the top of the list: the ruthless shushupi snake, more feared than the giant anacondas. Why is this snake so feared? Not only does the shushupi have a furious temperament; it will actually chase down a fleeing man, coiling up and throwing itself forward. The natives say your only defense against a shushupi attack is to rip off your shirt and throw it over the snake's head. Very few natives have survived an attack. The snake invariably springs onto the victim's back and goes into a biting frenzy.

Twice I have seen a pink river dolphin. The Amazon River system is the only place in the world they exist. These creatures don't look real: With the sun-lit water glistening off their bodies, they look like they are made out of bright pink wax. Unbelievable!

There were a few three-toed sloths we held along the way. You always hold a sloth from behind, grabbing it under the arms and holding it away from your body. Those famous three toes are more like long, picket knife blades. They will rip you to shreds. How lazy are these sloths? They actually have green moss growing on their fur!

Of course, nothing is as synonymous with the Amazon jungle as the piranhas. The mestizos talk about what happens if a cow with a small scrape or cut on its leg wades into ankle-deep river water. A school of crazed piranhas will overtake the animal and literally bring it down. The next day, the farmer comes to the river and finds nothing left of his cow but a skeleton picked completely clean. Many natives have more fear of piranhas than any other animal. They use piranha teeth to shave with. I remember taking the Peruvian Air Force's three week jungle survival school training, (a course designed for pilots shot down over the jungle). We were cleaning a jungle bird up on a wood dock one day. A piranha leaped out of water and onto the dock to get to the bloody bird. The Special Forces soldier tried to flick the silver-dollar-size fish off the dock. But the piranha bit the soldier in the finger and held on. The rapacious fish held on so hard, the soldier ran up the hill for the medic to get the fish removed. No one doubts what researchers claim: A piranha can smell one drop of blood over a mile away! Of course, virtually any creature that walks, crawls, swims, or slithers may end up on the dinner table. On one jungle trip Mary pointed out a beautiful toucan high in a tree over the river. Our member shot it. That

night the entire blue-grey carcass of the cooked bird, from large beak to clawed feet, was placed on a plate and set in front of Mary!

Over the years I have eaten: Frog soup (nibbling around the bright green bones), tapir soup (the huge blackened head the size of a horse head, with eyes wide open, was half stick-ing out of the huge pot of black broth like it wasn't quite dead), tapir steaks, monkey meat, fresh and dried (reminder: the smaller the monkey, the tougher the meat), turtle legs (dirt still clinging to the claws and feet), turtle eggs (one of the foulest items of all. Then again, you are lurching on reptile eggs), piranha, stingray, strips of snake meat (say, if you like ribs), huge white worms dug out of a certain palm tree trunk in the spring of each year. I've even picked meat off a crocodile head that sat on my banana leaf plate.

One cannot insult one's native hosts (you are trying to bring them to the Lord!) by refusing to eat some of what they set in front of you. The village men may have spent the entire previous night hunting for something to feed the honored guests. This brings us to:

Those Nighttime Jungle Hunts

Our first night hunt started around 10:00 after an evening church service in the mestizo village of Pelejo. We had been introduced to Jose who everyone said was the #1 jungle expert in the whole area. Jose had sat in on our service. We went over to his house afterwards as he got his flashlight, shotgun, shells, machete, and a bag for whatever he shot.

Jose lit up a huge, homemade cigar, blew out the heavy, rank smoke, and with his hands wafted the smoke towards Ronal and me. "A natural insect repellent," I knowingly informed Ronal, as Jose spread the smoke all over us. Years later Jose would admit that the cigar and smoke were part of a shamanic ritual. The special smoke was meant to protect us from the evil jungle spirits. Imagine our churchgoers walking home after church and seeing us over at Jose's: "Look, there are the two Lutheran pastors doing a shamanic ritual to ward off jungle spirits."

Creeping through the deep jungle in the black of night is pure, full-on sensory overload. Strange, eerie sounds, sudden monkey shrieks, constant rustling in the underbrush,--it comes from all sides. Little bb-size emerald green eyes on all the plants and trees reveal countless insects and spiders. The bugs are so dense they turn your flashlight beam into a cylindrical shaft of thick, black, buzzing, mass. Huge tarantulas caught in your light stare back at you. They do not skitter away.

That night Jose shot a big monkey. That was actually sad. Later, he spied a frog that was so massive he shot it with his shotgun. He then ran up and finished it off with a machete. How big was the frog? It was just like people often said: Some frogs are so big and belligerent they will try to swallow your arm, - getting it in their mouth all the way up to the elbow! When we first met Jose he was a heavy drinker, practiced shamanism, and treated his wife very badly. Then he started coming to church. He and his wife Sandra came to faith and have now been the Pelejo Sunday school teachers for over 6 years! Their son attends our Tarapoto seminary. More on Jose later.

Another night hunt took Ronal and me with several church members to a deep jungle lagoon. There are few thrills like that of seeing shiny red eyeballs the size of jaw breakers eyeing you from a distance, then disappearing into the black water. That night Cesar shot a medium-size crocodile. Believe me; you know you've gone native when you trot back down the midnight path for hours with someone in front of you, who has a headless crocodile strapped to his bare back. The head-less crocodile was spurting blood down Cesar's spine with every bounce.

Evangelizing the Shawi Tribe of the Peruvian Amazon Jungle

A Wycliffe translator once wrote, "If you were to choose one word to describe the Shawi tribe of the Amazon, that word would be 'fear.'" The Shawi believe they live their lives surrounded by evil spirits. There are spirits in the jungle air at night, with their eerie, other-worldly hissing/screeching sound which sends a shiver down everyone's spine. Evil spirits dwell in a certain mysterious, rarely-seen bird. The rivers contain evil, spirit-possessed dolphins: If a child slips off a raft in the middle of the river, the evil dolphins grab the child and take him or her off to the watery underworld, never to be seen again. Everyone believes that if you walk under a tree at night where an evil spirit dwells, the spirit will snatch you off the trail and up into the tree. You are never seen again. An evil spirit will mimic the voice of a dead spouse or child, drawing a grieving person deeper and deeper into the jungle. The hapless victim is never seen again.

Imagine announcing in a Shawi village that it is possible to live a life without fear. Such is the message we excitedly brought to every village we gained permission to enter: Jesus, the Son of God, had defeated Supai (the devil) and destroyed the power of evil spirits. Jesus even destroyed the power of death itself. "Followers of Jesus have absolutely nothing to fear in this world," we told the natives, some of whom literally gasped in astonishment.

Our evangelism work stuck with the basics, clear Law and Gospel presentations, which the Holy Spirit mightily blessed. Our natural sinfulness, brought on by our common ancestors Adam and Eve was carefully explained. (I never met a native who doubted the account of Satan taking the form of a snake and striking up a conversation with Eve. In fact, my telling the story of the cunning serpent seemed to increase my credibility with the natives.) Jesus' defeat of Satan at the cross eventually became clear. (It took time; No one knew what a cross was at first.) The Holy Spirit descended upon village after village. Almost immediately after those first conversions, our native brothers took us to deeper and deeper villages, introducing us as men who knew the truth about Creator God. Our brothers and sisters were deeply concerned that their relatives had not heard of Jesus and would be lost forever. (As the Shawi youths marry as young as 14, 13, even 12, it is not uncommon for someone to have 8, 10, 12, or more aunts and uncles on each side of his or her family.) To this day we have more invitations to tribal villages than our native evangelism team can follow up on. These are invitations to villages that have never heard the name of Jesus Christ!

To be continued . . .