

AGATHOS

INVITATIONS



*Come,
for everything is now ready.*

LESSONS LEARNED FROM THE
Parables of Jesus

SPRING 2022

agathos

(n.) whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, admirable, excellent, praiseworthy;

about us whatever is good.

The Agathos Journal is an annual publication of the Joseph and Alice McKeen Study Center by the Christian Fellowship at Bowdoin. The publication is a member of the Augustine Collective, a national network of undergraduate Christian journals. After a year of scripture study, our community of believing college students, mentors, and families works to write on the truth that the Bible has for our academic, social, and cultural campus context. We invite you to read here the ways we hear God speaking into our lives at Bowdoin College and this world at large.



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Editor	Alexander Kaye '25
Bible Study Leader	Joshua Lin '22
Bible Study Leader	Espoir Byishimo '22
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Writer	Taylor Jorgensen '22
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Writer	Daniel Kang '25
Writer	Ruth Olujubi '25
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Contributor	Catherine Cao '25
Illustrator	Di Phung '24
Executive Director	Robert B. Gregory

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Letter from the Editor

Dear Reader,

This year, students at the Joseph and Alice McKeen Center studied the Parables of Jesus. At the beginning of the year, our fellowship primarily consisted of a small group of seniors. Over time, by God's grace, our numbers have increased to about twenty students, leading us to split our studies into two sessions. Throughout the year, these students arrived one by one by the invitations of the seniors, and then by the invitations they subsequently extended to each other.

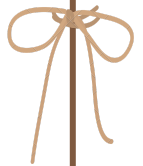
In the Parable of the Great Banquet, we discover that a king prepared a great banquet for the wedding of his son, but those invited refused to accept the invitation. To readers of this parable, it seems strange that those invited refused an invitation to a royal wedding. Likewise, students at the Joseph and Alice McKeen Study Center reflected that to refuse God's invitations in their lives to closely study His Word, keep His commandments, and fellowship with His people would be a mistake we would soon come to regret.

While meeting on Wednesdays for Bible Studies, Thursdays for Prayer Meetings, and Sundays for church, we witnessed a foretaste of the joy we will come to experience at the final wedding feast and reflected on what it would look like for us to share God's invitations to others around us.

Thus, this year's Agathos publication is, in short, a compilation of testimonies by students considering and reflecting on the divine invitations they have received and accepted throughout the Parables of Jesus. For some in our study, it was an invitation to reorder our priorities through God's Word, an invitation to be vocal about our faith, an invitation to believe in the midst of uncertainty, and, for many, an invitation to be strong and bear the cross uniquely and commonly given to us.

Dear reader, as you read through this journal, we hope that this publication can serve as an invitation to you to likewise consider the personal invitation given to you by God. The King has prepared all things – everything is ready.

Sincerely,
Juliette Min



Secured to the Mooring

The Parables of Jesus are Good for this New England College

by Robert Gregory



The year 2021-2022 marks the eighth year since the founding of the Joseph and Alice McKeen Study Center at Bowdoin College. It is also the eighth year of the publication of the *Agathos Journal*. We encourage the students at the McKeen Center to contribute essays to this Journal connected with our weekly study of the scriptures that follow a four-year recurring cycle: creation, justice, the final judgment, and the parables of Jesus. The scripture texts vary from year to year, but we hold to this pattern as a way to help students to orient themselves to the coordinates of time (past, present, and future). The parables of Jesus embed abstract principles of justice and the ethical life in narrative stories over which Jesus controls characters, time, and space. Jesus makes the actors do and say what he intends, and the elements of nature also respond the way he wants them to. All of this requires the reader to describe the world the way he does. Why not? He is in charge!

For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him. (Col 1.16 KJV)

My purpose for contributing to this journal each year is to leave a literary record for those who might follow us. Continuing the tradition of Joseph McKeen, the first president of Bowdoin College, we encourage these students to in scholarship bearing witness to the remarkable claims of Jesus Christ on a New England college campus. The *Agathos Journal* serves that purpose of letting future readers know how *this* generation of students secured themselves to their Christian moorings during the first quarter of this millennium.

This is the second year that we will publish this journal during a worldwide pandemic. We have often reminded one another of the words of Jeremiah to his scribe Baruch:

*"Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, to you, O Baruch: 3 You said, 'Woe is me! For the LORD has added sorrow to my pain. I am weary with my groaning, and I find no rest.' 4 Thus shall you say to him, Thus says the LORD: Behold, what I have built I am breaking down, and what I have planted I am plucking up—that is, the whole land. 5 And do you seek great things for yourself? Seek them not, for **behold, I am bringing disaster upon all flesh, declares the LORD.** But I will give you your life as a prize of war in all places to which you may go." (Jeremiah 45 ESV)*

We are proud of these students who have persevered during the school year and through the summer and vacation breaks, both in the study of the Scriptures, and importantly, in late night sessions of weekly prayer. But we decline to say that we are proud of students without reminding them, as Jeremiah reminds Baruch above, that these are not words of flattery. For these Christian students, the prize of service is life itself: "But I will give you your life as a prize of war in all places to which you may go."

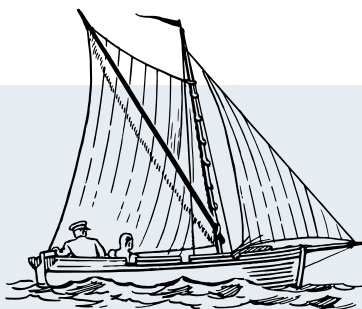
This Study Center has published three historical monographs securing Joseph and Alice McKeen and this Center to its forgotten mooring. Bowdoin College was established to prepare students to minister the Gospel of Jesus Christ. *Sober Consent of the Heart: The Bowdoin College Chapel Message of its First President* (2011); *All Governing Providence: The Beverly Massachusetts Sermons of Joseph McKeen from 1783 to 1801* (2013) (Both volumes edited by Robert B. Gregory) and *Joseph McKeen and the Soul of Bowdoin College*, by Stephen J. Tracey. M.Th. (2016). For those of us who do our life work on the coast of Maine, the image of the marine mooring is precisely the right one. Small boats free to drift yet tied to the fixed anchors of divine authority that set limits on the arc and range of that freedom. The parables of Jesus help us redefine what that freedom looks like when attached to the moorings of reality and a divinely authored universe.

The word *authored* points to the word authority in the rest of this essay. Christian freedom is infinite possibilities, but the gracious achievement of the one work which God has prepared in advance for us to do. And the first of those works is the command to obey the Gospel - what the apostle Paul calls "the obedience of faith." (Romans 1.5 and 16.26 ESV)

The mooring knots appearing at the top of this essay are placed there to remind us of the great shipbuilding heritage of Midcoast Maine. This heritage continues in one of the world's great shipbuilding yards in Bath, Maine located just 10 miles north of us here in Brunswick. While the coastline of Maine is only 228 miles long measured on a tie line from southwestern Maine at the New Hampshire border to the northeast and our border with Canada, the extended coastline, including inlets and bays in Maine, measures a remarkable 3,478 miles. Dotting that coast are many drifting vessels, many fixed moorings, and an equal number of mooring knots securing the one to the other.

In this essay I will record two observations from our studies this year. As I have in a past journal, I will address Jesus and John the Baptist with the parables. I will observe that Jesus resists all efforts of critics to discredit John the Baptist in his public ministry and to separate his call for repentance and warnings of coming judgment from the gracious earthly ministry. King Herod, the Pharisees, and the Sadducees each had their own way of attempting to separate John from Jesus and Jesus from John. I understand the parables as a response, in part, to the effort to untie that mooring.

The second observation, related to the first, is that Jesus uses the parables to teach divine authority in relational terms. Most of the parables feature an authority; a father, master, vineyard owner, or a King. Each such parable invites the reader to ask how the actors (sons, servants, tenants, invited wedding guests) are to respond to that authority. In one beautiful trilogy of parables in chapters 21 and 22 of Matthew's Gospel Jesus invites the listeners to think of a father who issues a command, a vineyard owner who solicits tenants to share the fruit of the field as fair rent paid for their privilege, and a king who extends a gracious invitation to come attend the wedding of his son. We learned that the *command*, the *opportunity*, and the *invitation* expressed in these three parables are bound together in such a way that each summons from us a duty to respond. As we read in a later parable, **you knew** therefore **you ought**. (Matthew 25. 26-27 ESV)



John the Baptist **Moored** to Jesus

God ordained that Jesus' cousin John the Baptist would be set apart from birth to announce the coming of the long-awaited Messiah. John was the only New Testament figure, other than the Messiah himself, whose life and ministry was specifically foretold in Old Testament prophecies. (Isaiah 40, Malachi 4) John preached a baptism of repentance and prepared the people for the long-awaited Messiah who would offer pardon from the coming judgments. When King Herod arrested John because of his prophetic rebuke of the monarch's sexual infidelity with the wife of Herod's brother, John experienced some doubts and uncertainties about his own pronouncement about the Messiah.

Was Jesus the Messiah or should he expect another? Did John the Baptist possess an excess of expectation that the end had come when there was plenty of time left on the clock of history? Tempering the expectation of God's premature closure on human history appears to have been the purpose of many parables taught by Jesus the Messiah who awakened those expectations. Yet, Jesus publicly esteems John the Baptist not merely as the greatest of the prophets, but also as the greatest of men ever born among women:

7 As they went away, Jesus began to speak to the crowds concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind? 8 What then did you go out to see? A man dressed in soft clothing? Behold, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. 9 What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. 10 This is he of whom it is written,

"Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who will prepare your way before you."

*11 Truly, I say to you, **among those born of women there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist.** Yet the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. 12 From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force. 13 For all the Prophets and the Law prophesied until John, 14 and if you are willing to accept it, he is Elijah who is to come. (Matthew 11 ESV)*

The political and religious pressures to drive a wedge between John the Baptist and Jesus were persistent and would continue even after John was beheaded in Herod's prison. After John was executed, Herod even had nightmares thinking that Jesus was John the Baptist resurrected from the dead.

...and he said to his servants, This is John the Baptist. He has been raised from the dead; that is why these

miraculous powers are at work in him. (Matthew 14:2 ESV)

In Matthew's gospel this culminates when Jesus turns the questions about his relationship with John the Baptist back on his critics with this simple question:

*23 And when he entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came up to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" 24 Jesus answered them, "I also will ask you one question, and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you **by what authority** I do these things. 25 The baptism of John, from where did it come? From heaven or from man?" And they discussed it among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' 26 But if we say, 'From man,' we are afraid of the crowd, for they all hold that John was a prophet." 27 So they answered Jesus, "**We do not know.**" **And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.***

At the heart of the parables is this question of messianic authority. Who is in charge? When Jesus teaches his disciples in parables, he is answering this question. Jesus is in control. Jesus is sovereign. Jesus will judge his rivals. Jesus is the Son of David:

The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against his Anointed . . . As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill. (Psalms 2:2 and 6 ESV)

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authority. Who is in charge?

Moored to the Command, the Opportunity, and the Invitation

The question of Jesus' authority and the authority of John brings us to our second heading that ties the gospel invitation to commands and other opportunities by which we are confronted to respond to authority. Jesus began his public ministry teaching in parables with the greatest invitation ever given, to *come, take, and learn*:

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gospel invitation to commands and other opportunities by which we are confronted to respond to authority. Jesus began his public ministry teaching in parables with the greatest invitation ever given, to *come, take, and learn*:

28 Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. 29 Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. 30 For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." (Matthew 11 ESV)

Beginning in Matthew chapter 13, and continuing to the final week before his crucifixion in a discourse with his disciples on the Mount of Olives, we find Jesus teaching primarily in parables. The discursive narrative teaching of the Sermon on the Mount and his other ways of instructing teaching give way almost exclusively to parables.

All these things Jesus said to the crowds in parables; indeed, he said nothing to them without a parable. (Matthew 13.34 ESV)

We turn now to these three important parables: a father's command to his sons, a vineyard owner's rent collectors, and a King's wedding invitation.

In the first of these parables, a father commands his two sons to work in his field. The first son declines to go but changes his mind and obeys. The second son confirms to his father his willingness to go, but also changes his mind and never enters the work. Which son does the will of the father? (Matthew 21.28-32)

In the second parable, a vineyard owner sends his servants to collect a share of the vintage as rent. His servants are beaten, and the rent is unpaid. The vineyard owner finally sends his own son who is beaten and killed, and rent is again unpaid. What will the owner do to these tenants? (Matthew. 21.33-46)

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In the third parable, a king sends out invitations for attendance at a wedding he is preparing for his son. Remarkably, the invitations are refused and those receiving the invitations pay no attention. The king will go out into the highways and byways with other invitations so that the wedding hall will be full. One guest appears improperly clothed for a wedding and

is not permitted entry for the reason that he is inappropriately dressed for this special day. What will the king do to those who refuse to come to the wedding dressed and ready to celebrate his son?

We observed three anticipated responses to authority: obedience to command, fulfillment of purpose, and acceptance of an invitation, and all share a common feature. The invitation sounds like a command. The opportunity to pay fair rent to the landowner is weighted like a command. While an invitation can't be reduced to a command, and the invoice to pay rent is not exactly the same as an invitation to do so, the parable is meant to teach us that there is an appropriate human response to divine initiative. That response is grounded in the complex attributes of authority. This point is driven home for us when we observed that these parables were told in response to Jesus living parable. When Jesus entered into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey, he was fulfilling the prophetic expectations of the Messiah:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; righteous and having salvation is he, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. (Zechariah 9.9 ESV)

As if to leave no doubt about the meaning of this enacted parable, upon arriving in Jerusalem Jesus upsets the tables of the money changers in the temple, reminding the assembling pilgrims of the words of another prophet:

He said to them, It is written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer,' but you make it a den of robbers. (Matthew 21:13 quoting Jeremiah 7. 11. ESV)

Conclusions

During a summer meeting with other directors of Christian study centers across the country, someone made the comment that my parents' generation (children of the Great Depression) wanted to answer the question what it means to be right. My generation of Baby Boomers wanted to answer the question what it means to be free. This generation wants to answer the question what it means to be me. The answers to all of these questions point to these mooring knots of divine authority. Our mission at this Study Center is to help Christian students see their life as the activity of those under authority when the Master has gone away and is delayed in his return. How will the disciple respond when the Master is away?

These and other parables of Jesus have worked something very special among these students this year as they have grown together in a hunger for something deeper in their life of public readings and common prayer. By these means, they are seeking the answers to how they should appropriately respond to divine authority - however that authority presents itself, whether in commands to be obeyed, purposes to be fulfilled or invitations to be accepted - and invitations to be extended as those who are gathering with Jesus.

Whoever is not with me is against me, and whoever does not gather with me scatters. (Matthew 12.30 ESV)

Our privilege as mentors and advisors to these students is to gather with them, as they gather for Him.

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Invitation to the Wedding Feast is a Rescue Plan

by Ismerai Ortiz



the *right* question to ask is
why is eternal life so
important to Christianity?

The hardest questions I'm asked about my faith come from family. I've come to understand that when it comes to faith, people ask questions to either pull in or to pull away from God. This binary in questioning doesn't just apply to people who are not Christians, but also to Christians themselves. Sometimes as Christians, we have times when we ask questions to draw in closer to God, but other times, we just want excuses to pull away.

When my sister and I were talking about Christianity, she asked me a set of questions that I didn't know how to answer:

"If Christians didn't have the promise of eternal life, would they even be Christian? Doesn't this just show how humans are so selfish? They're trying to be good because they know there's a reward."

My first instinct was that yes, **eternal life is important, but then I asked myself: how important should it be?** First, I don't think that the fact that there is an end to look towards or a reward at the end of our life diminishes the work that we do in this world. Second, I've never placed too much importance on eternal life even though I've heard about it a million times in sermons and read about it often in the Bible. So what exactly is eternal life?

"And this is eternal life, that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent" (John 17:3). Jesus says that eternal life is knowing "the only true God, and Jesus Christ," and to know and to follow Him means to be in His presence. However, this is not just one way, if we know God, then He also knows us, and if we do not know Him, He does not know us.

In the Parable of the Ten Virgins, once the door to the marriage feast is shut, it doesn't open again. The people who were ready went in with the bridegroom, and they are therefore in the presence of the groom, who is Jesus. What does the bridegroom say to the ones who came after the door was shut? "**Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.**". For these virgins that came after, the Lord did not know them, and thus entry into the marriage feast, and entry into eternal life was not allowed.

Knowing this, I think that **the RIGHT question to ask is why is eternal life so important to Christianity?** In reality, eternal life is inseparable from Christianity. Answering my sister's question, Christians wouldn't be Christians if eternal

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I consider eternal life not just as a reward, but as a restoration and as a rescue from a life incomplete.

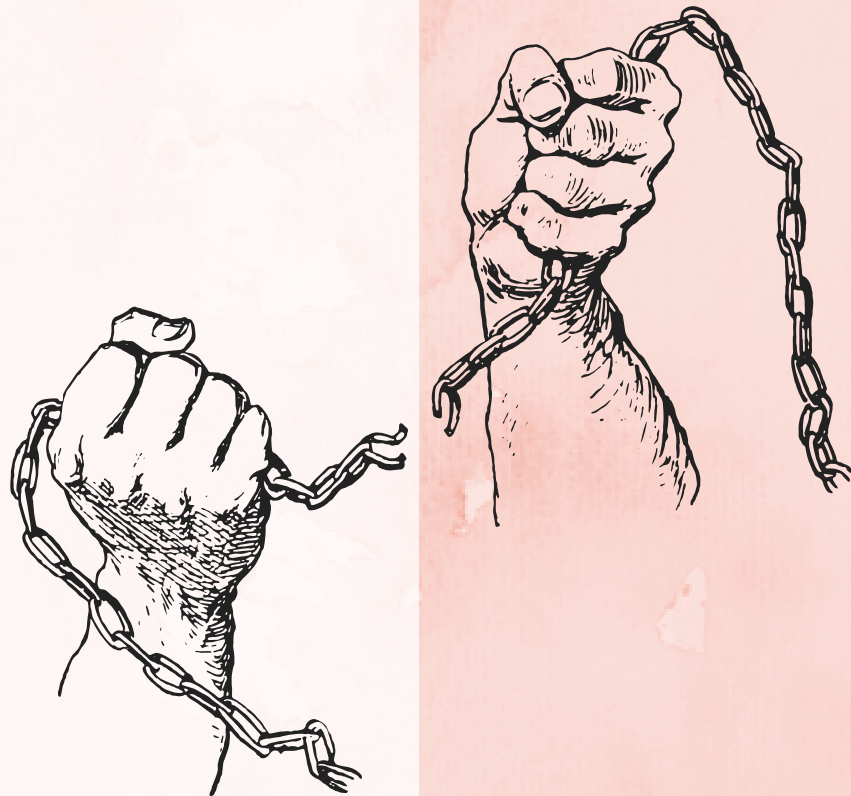
life didn't exist, because Christianity itself would not exist without the concept of eternal life. Let me explain. If we take this back to the beginning - and I mean the very beginning - we look at Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. When the serpent is tempting Eve, the exchange is this:

"But God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.' But the serpent said to the woman, 'You will surely not die...'"

When I was little, I remember reading this verse but thinking, "but Eve didn't die?" So why did God say that Adam and Eve would die if they ate the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden? Although Adam and Eve didn't immediately die after eating the fruit, they eventually did die - which could be an answer. Another answer though, would be that the death God was talking about was not physical, but rather a spiritual death. The spiritual death for Adam and Eve was being cast out from the presence of God in the Garden of Eden. Eternal life is the restoration of God's intended design for us. God's original design for us is to be next to him, to walk with him, to dwell in His presence forever just as Adam and Eve were meant to be in the Garden of Eden. When we do not know God, or we choose to go away from God, we are choosing death, just as Adam and Eve did in the Garden of Eden. Therefore, when we choose to follow and obey Jesus, we choose to know God and His Son, and going back to John 17, we choose eternal life.

God didn't create us to be puppets, but rather, He gave us free will and freedom to choose. When we are invited to the marriage feast as the 10 virgins were invited, we are invited to enter into the presence of God forever. Can you imagine saying no to that? So while eternal life is a reward, **I consider eternal life not just as a reward, but as a restoration and as a rescue from a life incomplete.** A life that does not fulfill our intended purpose and design is a life in which we seek worth and fulfillment in things that are not able to fill or satisfy us.

Sin will never fulfill us. If sin is doing the things that bring us or lead us away from God, then it only serves to temporarily assuage us, but ultimately we are left feeling more empty than ever, because we are straying so far from our intended purpose. In this world, we are rescued from being slaves to sin, by entering into the new covenant through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and thus we are able to live with Christ.



In this world, we are rescued from being slaves to sin, by entering into the new covenant through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Christian Priorities in Luke 14

by Joshua Lin



BY HYATT MOORE — LUKE 14 BANQUET

If you care about God, you will care about the things He cares about. So what are some of the things that God wants us to pay attention to? Thankfully, the life and parables of Jesus are rich with resources to help answer that question. Let us take a look at four lessons Jesus teaches us in Luke 14 at a meal hosted by a Pharisee (an order of Jewish religious elite, some of whom were opposed to Jesus and his teaching).

1. Prioritize the Spirit of God's Commandments

At the start of Luke 14, a man with a lethal condition appears in front of Jesus during the meal on the Sabbath day. Knowing the Sabbath is a designated day of rest, some of Jesus' religious opponents watch him, waiting to see what he will do. If Jesus does not heal the man, the man would die soon. If Jesus heals the man, he could be implicated for "violating God's commandment" to honor the Sabbath by refraining from work.

At the start of Luke 14, a man with a lethal condition appears in front of Jesus during the meal on the Sabbath day. Knowing the Sabbath is a designated day of rest, some of Jesus' religious opponents watch him, waiting to see what he will do. If Jesus does not heal the man, the man would die soon. If Jesus heals the man, he could be implicated for "violating God's commandment" to honor the Sabbath by refraining from work.

What does Jesus do? He takes hold of the man, heals him, and then sends him away (v4).

In healing the man, Jesus showed that God's intent for the Sabbath goes beyond resting from work. Rather, the Sabbath is fundamentally meant to help preserve rest and life for His people. It is a purposeful commandment based in a relationship between God and the Israelites. Acts such as healing or, as Jesus proposes, saving one's child or livestock from accidents match the spirit of God's commandment. This is in opposition to the legalistic mindset of the Pharisees who were ready to consider healing on the Sabbath a form of forbidden work if that would help their case against Jesus.

Notice how Jesus lays his hands on this man to heal him - Jesus is not fazed by his medical condition. And whether this man was a plant from Jesus' religious opponents or not, by sending the man away after healing, the man is spared unwanted attention he may have attracted from sticking around in this hostile environment.

How do you think about God's commandments? Do you see the spirit of what God is accomplishing through them? Let us not follow them legalistically for the sake of tradition like the Pharisees here. Let us be intentional about reflecting on God's commandments to us such that we may avoid making assumptions that could get in the way of caring for others. Note, if the Pharisees knew of Jesus' reputation as a healer, none of them were earnestly asking Jesus to heal this man. Jesus' religious opponents vision of God had become quite narrow - focusing on what the Sabbath kept from them; rather than the spirit of what God meant it to accomplish for them. In any case, it is worth admiring how Jesus gracefully restores the bigger picture here.

2. Humble Yourself (v. 7-11)

During the meal, Jesus notices some guests seeking out places of honor at the table. Using a parable, Jesus makes a concise point about humility. Setting up a hypothetical wedding feast scenario, Jesus exhorts the honor-seeking guests to find the lowest seat at the feast first, instead of assuming they belong in a seat of honor. The lesson ends with Jesus concluding that "...everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." (v11) Jesus contrasts the goodness of a humble attitude with that of a self-honoring one. The one who humbles themselves sees themselves as no more flashy or worthy of honor than can be presumed and with an active eye towards the interests of others.

This parable provides a good point of reflection on how well we prioritize humility. It is tough to put others' interests above our own, not to mention, humbling ourselves to take the lowest seat at the table. That said, at the end of the day, we ought to remember that all we have and all we can do is by the grace of God! Additionally, in our struggles, we can look to **Jesus "who, though he was in the form of God, 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."** (Philippians 2:6-8) How amazing is our God; that we need look no further than Him to see humility embodied and the beauty of it all despite the difficulty in achieving it.

3. Do the Unrepayable (v. 12-14)

Beyond addressing some guests, Jesus directly rebukes the host of the meal. The host is told to consider who they invite to feasts in light of how they [the host] will ultimately be repaid. Rather than inviting friends who may repay him via similar future feasts, Jesus tells the host to give banquets to the poor and crippled for the sake of one day receiving repayment from God himself in the resurrection. This parable presents a different way for us to think about our motivations and what kind of rewards are truly important.

But how can we live in a way such that we prioritize receiving repayment from God? It can be tempting to adopt a transactional mode of thinking and living life, doing things only when we can see some concrete benefit in return. These things, while nice, cannot bring lasting satisfaction and ultimately will not be ours to keep after we die. Conversely, while God's repayment is paid out after we move on from this life, we can trust it will be secure, long-lasting, and ultimately worth it. As we are encouraged in Matthew 6:20 we can, "...lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal."



4. Accept God's Invitations (v. 15-24)

After hearing Jesus address the host, a guest jumps into the conversation with a proclamation of "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God!". The passage does not say exactly what this guest's intention was but, given the context, there is a possibility they responded with a broad, "feel-good" statement aiming to defuse tension in the room following Jesus' statements rebuke to the host on who should have been invited. Regardless, we see that Jesus has another parable lined up to refute the comment made.

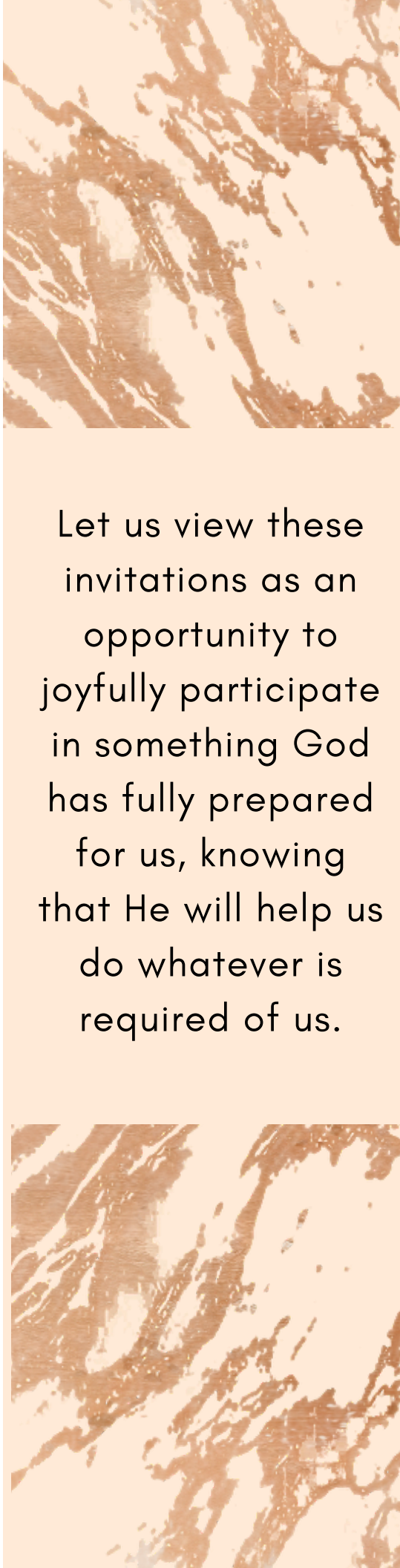
In this parable, those invited to a great banquet excuse themselves upon receiving word that the banquet is completely prepared and ready for them to attend. Hearing these excuses, the host brings in many others to enjoy the banquet. Those who were initially invited to the banquet are consequently excluded from it for good by the host.

Now, how does this parable address the one guest's statement of "Blessed is everyone who will eat bread in the kingdom of God?". To be clear, I believe Jesus would agree with such a statement. So then, why does Jesus tell this parable? Based on the context, I believe Jesus wants those around him to know that entry to the kingdom of God may not be as straightforward as they might assume. In the parable, it is precisely the invited who are left out. The Pharisees, in this light, may very well be those invited to the kingdom of God, given their knowledge of the Old Testament and history as the people of God. Still, despite their knowledge, they spurn Jesus and, consequently, the kingdom of heaven. In the end, the kingdom of God ultimately goes to those who were not invited! This is good news for those Gentiles (non-Jews) and those who conventionally may have been thought of as lower in society. Entry to the kingdom of God is for everyone!

Putting the kingdom of God alongside a great banquet, Jesus portrays the kingdom of God as a joyous, abundant celebration. However, despite its jubilant nature, there are still those who are invited and turn down the invitation. The reasons given entail "the necessity to inspect a field that isn't going anywhere", "freshly purchased oxen", and "a wife that has just been wed".

The silliness of these excuses to me is comparable to having a friend turn down an invitation to your birthday party because they have just purchased some apples and need to try one. It is almost as if these tasks are super time-sensitive and somehow more worth than going to the great banquet.

In light of what invitees are denying by making excuses, it is hard not to shake my head in disappointment. At the same time, besides the direct application of the parable to the Pharisees and the Gentiles, we are pushed to think about how many times we may deny invitations to prioritize God's cares in our lives. This parable gives us room to reflect on how we prioritize the kingdom of God; it is worth reflecting on how we see the kingdom of God. **Do we believe it is as amazing as a great banquet - one worth dropping all of our daily to-dos to attend?** If we sense that God may be inviting us to take part in something he is doing, whether it involves caring for a person, or completing some task, how do we perceive it? As in the parable here, unlike the guests who make excuses to decline God's invitation, let us view these invitations as an opportunity to joyfully participate in something God has fully prepared for us, knowing that He will help us do whatever is required of us.



Let us view these invitations as an opportunity to joyfully participate in something God has fully prepared for us, knowing that He will help us do whatever is required of us.

MATTHEW 20:1-16

“For the kingdom of heaven is like a master of a house who went out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with the laborers for a denarius a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

And going out about the third hour he saw others standing idle in the marketplace, and to them he said, ‘You go into the vineyard too, and **whatever is right** I will give you.’ So they went. Going out again about the sixth hour and the ninth hour, he did the same.

And about the eleventh hour he went out and found others standing. And he said to them, ‘Why do you stand here idle all day?’ They said to him, ‘**Because no one has hired us.**’ He said to them, ‘You go into the vineyard too.’

And when evening came, the owner of the vineyard said to his foreman, ‘Call the laborers and pay them their wages, beginning with the last, up to the first.’ And when those hired about the eleventh hour came, **each of them received a denarius.** Now when those hired first came, they thought they would receive more, but each of them also received a denarius.

And on receiving it they grumbled at the master of the house, saying, ‘These last worked only one hour, and you have made them equal to us who have borne the burden of the day and the scorching heat.’ But he replied to one of them, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you and go. **I choose** to give to this last worker as I give to you. **Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me?** Or do you begrudge my generosity?’

So the last will be first, and the first last.”



Laboring in the Vineyard

by Juliette Min

The Yoke of Labor and Witness

As I become a more seasoned Christian, I realize that a steady continuation of spiritual growth involves aligning ourselves to the biblical understanding of labor and witness. What is required of me in my interactions with others – with God, my friendships, my family, and the unbeliever? How do I come to grips with the frustrations that come with witnessing – and continue to labor heartily? The parables of Jesus and further texts from the Gospel books have helped inform the way I answer these questions.

While at Bowdoin College, wrestling with the hows and whys of witnessing well in a college with a tense history with Christian students comprised much of my faith journey. Years of walking into classes and social spaces where Christianity was disfavored led me to see and believe that the cultural tide in liberal arts schools was moving away from God's truths, which lead to a full, flourishing, and abundant life. Additionally, learning how to live out my deepened Christian faith back in my hometown proved to be difficult as I realized that my new faith-directed life was confronting and creating some deep-seated discomfort in my closest relationships. In these moments of discouragement, from the social and potential academic cost associated with siding with Jesus in classroom settings, and fear, of sitting in the tensions that Jesus invites us into in my hometown, I have come to discover that the Parable of the Vineyard Owner strangely was a source of much encouragement to me.

In the parable, a master of a house goes out early in the morning to hire laborers for his vineyard. After agreeing with some laborers on working for a denarius a day, he sends them out into the vineyard. While those laborers work diligently, the master goes out into the marketplace in the third hour, the sixth hour, the ninth hour, and finally the eleventh hour to hire other laborers. After all the laborers finish working, the owner of the vineyard called his foreman to pay the laborers each a denarius, beginning with the ones who came last to the ones who came first.

When the laborers who came first grumble about receiving the same payment as those who have worked only one hour, the master states, "I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius? Take what belongs to you and go. I choose to give to this last worker as I give to you. Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me? Or do you begrudge

my generosity? So the last will be first, and the first last" (Matthew 20:13-16 ESV).

The First Laborers

Biblical scholars can see this parable in Matthew 20 as a response to Peter's question to Jesus in the previous chapter, asking "See, we have left everything and followed you. What then will we have?" and further relating to the mother's request in the same chapter, which asks, "say that these two sons of mine are to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your kingdom." Jesus is surrounded by disciples who think that their service to Him earns them "extra reward" like the laborers who came first to the vineyard. At first glance, these requests for a greater reward given his additional work seem fair – Peter, James, and John are disciples of Jesus' inner circle, and they gave up much and suffered greatly for the kingdom of God. In responding so differently, I surmise that perhaps Jesus' vision of His Kingdom – and the labor required in it – are not defined by our worldly standards. Could His vision be better?

Jesus' response is revealing to the way we should approach laboring for God's Kingdom. Jesus responds, "You will drink my cup, but to sit at my right hand and at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by my Father." This response is similar to that of the vineyard owner, who states "Am I not allowed to do what I choose with what belongs to me?"

The question isn't how long we have served, in what manner, in what position, and to what effect, but rather whether we have served in the capacity God has uniquely ordained for us. Each of us is called by God in the manner and timing that best suits the vision God has for our lives and for humanity— we only align ourselves to it, knowing we are all equally unworthy of that gift. Thus, when we live for the Kingdom, perhaps we are required to go the extra mile as these disciples did, but additionally cannot expect brownie points for doing so.

Reading this parable today as a senior at Bowdoin, I can see myself as one of the early vineyard laborers, having stayed at the study center for a few more years than the first years joining us this year. This parable humbles me and exhorts me as I finish my race here, that my responsibility is to labor to the fullest extent that God has enabled me to and tell myself at the end of the day that I did what was my duty.

The Laborers to Come

Yet there is more to the Parable of the Vineyard Owner that can challenge and inspire us. At the study center, students considered whether the last laborers to be chosen by the master held particular qualities beyond laziness and lack of grit that led them to be chosen last. Could it be that the last laborers had been waiting and hoping to be chosen since the early morning – at the same time as the first laborers? Could it be that these workers waited all day, to discover that nobody thought they were worth their time? Could it be, that these workers represent – and are – the weak and the disabled, and the marginal? Maybe these last workers are the workers who, despite their willingness to, would not have lasted longer than an hour in the vineyard because of their unique situations and abilities. How would reframing the way we see these last workers change the way the parables inform our Christian life? How would it reframe the way we see the generosity of the master? At the same time, perhaps we are required to think this way of characters like these every time.



Could it be that the workers who come later represent – and are – the weak, the disabled, and the marginal?

When I consider how the master of the vineyard came to the marketplace every few hours to look for more workers, I wonder whether he looked upon each new worker fully knowing their strengths and weaknesses – and perfectly timed their hiring hours such that their labor would not be harder than they could bear. The master, who is like **God, is kind and compassionate enough that he would provide for each of the laborers in this way – by giving them an opportunity to work when they could and in the way that they could.**

This parable helps me acknowledge that there are many who ran the race long before me. Because of their labor, I am here. I am thankful that God brought me to Him and to work for His Kingdom here at Bowdoin in his perfect timing. And as a student often discouraged by the hostility to the Christian message that I see at Bowdoin, in my hometown, and beyond, this message encourages me, because it teaches me that God calls each of us to labor in His divinely appointed time, to work the length and amount that they can according to their unique circumstances and abilities. This gives me hope that maybe the student who criticizes Christianity in my class today could be working in the fields with me tomorrow and that the close friend who I am in tension with over the Gospel would be chosen the next day.

Can the love of my neighbor and my longing to be in spiritual communion and fellowship with them fuel my inclination to work? I think it should. We can think of our labor as bringing in the people who are closest to us – hastening the kingdom we so long for. Thus, if the first laborers reframe the way they see the other laborers, they might work so that after the hours have passed, the other laborers who, due to their unique stories and circumstances could not work earlier, could finally arrive and work too. Likewise, maybe while we are chosen to run this race, we should also do so faithfully with all that we have knowing that our labor is hastening those who are not yet suited to come and work now to come sooner. Our stories are connected – and they are being written by a God who knows each of us intimately and deeply.

Can the love of my neighbor and my longing to be in spiritual communion and fellowship with them fuel my inclination to do the work that God has designated for me?

It is amazing and hopeful to believe that the people around me who I once doubted would be a part of God's kingdom may be those who end up helping us clear the rest of the vineyard one day. But what is even more comforting is that as I work, the master is bringing more people under his wing to work and receive the denarius. I need not fret about working beyond what is allotted to me or be anxious about the work that has yet to come. He will call the right people, at the right time, who will join me in this labor. **It is a dependable thing to know what my job is, and to know that despite my work being confined to a small subsection of a wide vineyard, God is bringing in more people to harvest the field.**

Maybe the student who criticizes Christianity in my class today could be working in the fields with me tomorrow and the close friend whom I am in tension with over the gospel will be chosen the next day.

The Denarius

Finally, the Parable of the Vineyard Owner encourages me in one final way. The denarius, which is the wage that each of the laborers earned, was a day's worth of sustenance back in Jesus' day. It is amazing that no matter what hour the laborer came in or how much they worked compared to others, the master rewarded only exactly enough sustenance for one day for the labor he assigned them. Those who worked very little compared to others still received enough to sustain them for one day, and those who worked much compared to others still received just enough to do the same. In God's Kingdom, there is no saving up and there is no retirement. There is no excess; there also isn't scarcity. The payment of a day's labor being only sustenance for one day requires that each day is dedicated to living our lives in alignment with God and His Word. And yet, this sustenance is never lacking — it is always enough.

This parable, like the Parable of the Unworthy Servant, humbles me and exhorts me as I live the Christian life. Like the servant who plowed and kept sheep all day and came home not to recline at the table but to prepare supper, dress his master, and serve him while he ate, I am taught that I should also be inclined to what is required of me and more. I should love more and give more, only to tell myself at the end of the day that I am an unworthy servant, and that I have only done what was my duty. I should do so with an excited and hopeful heart that my labor would not be in vain, that laborers would soon come to join me, and that my God will sustain me to the end.

“

“Will any one of you who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come at once and recline at table’? Will he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink’? Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, ‘We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.’”

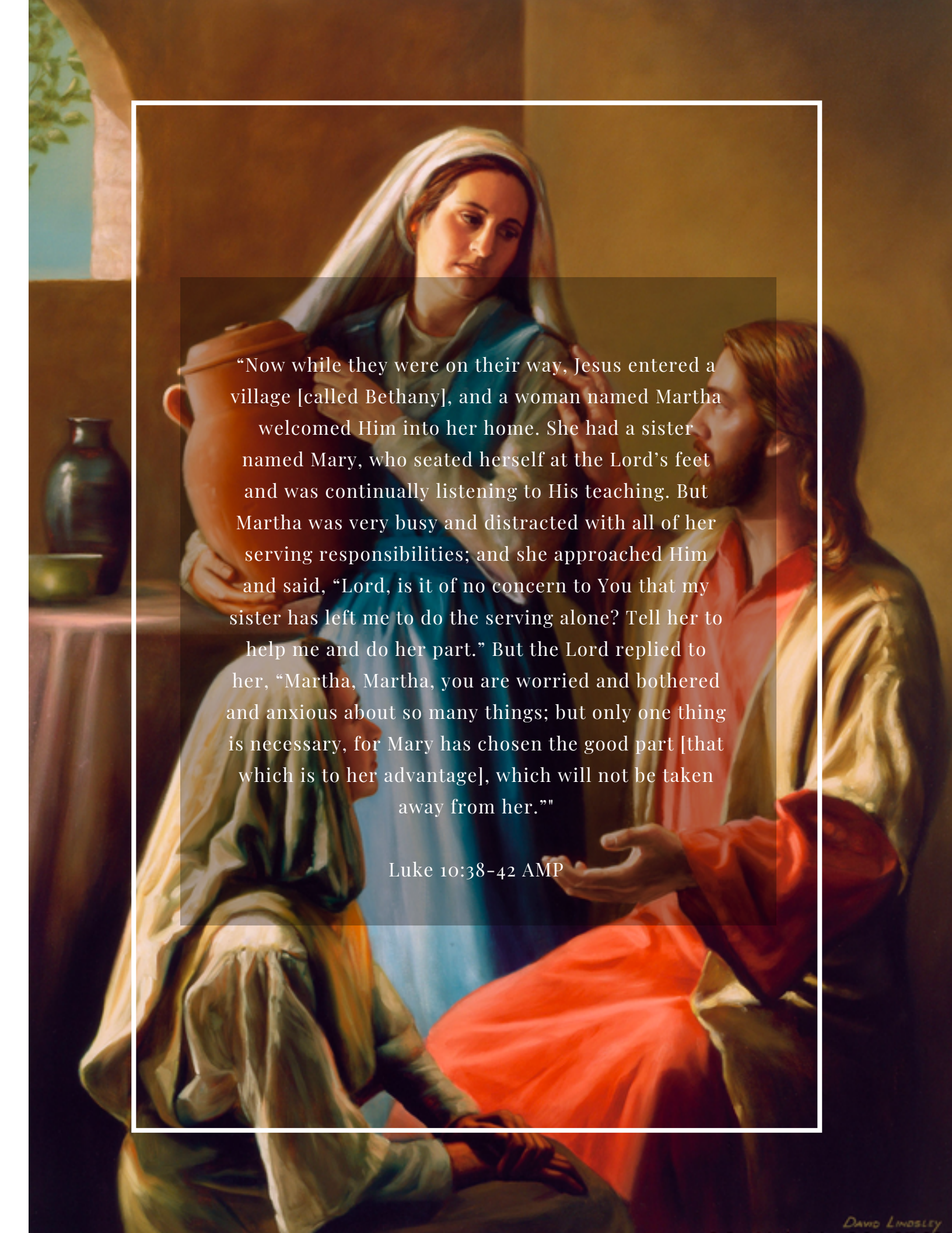
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Let's have a feast and
celebrate for this son
was lost and is
found



Father, I am
no longer worthy
to be called your
son...





“Now while they were on their way, Jesus entered a village [called Bethany], and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who seated herself at the Lord’s feet and was continually listening to His teaching. But Martha was very busy and distracted with all of her serving responsibilities; and she approached Him and said, “Lord, is it of no concern to You that my sister has left me to do the serving alone? Tell her to help me and do her part.” But the Lord replied to her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered and anxious about so many things; but only one thing is necessary, for Mary has chosen the good part [that which is to her advantage], which will not be taken away from her.””

Luke 10:38-42 AMP

Oh Martha!

by Ruth Olujobi

Dear Martha,

I saw you the other night rehearsing your solo for service on Sunday. I could tell you've really grown as a singer; those riffs were pretty solid. And that vibrato? Way to go girl! I'm really proud of your growth. But Martha, I'm a bit worried about you. I'm worried about your priorities. I'm worried that you're losing focus and that your heart is drifting from the most important thing. I mean, thank you for wanting to serve, it's simply amazing to see how much effort you put into things of the Father. In fact, we all should be just as happy as you to serve. But you see Martha, just serving isn't enough. Where is your heart?

Martha, it's important for us to remember that we shouldn't let the activities we engage in distract us from receiving all God has in store for us. There's so much we would receive from God if we could only stop, take a deep breath, and redirect your focus. I know you might not admit it, but I can tell that "you're anxious about so many things" (Luke 10:41 AMP). I see the worry on your face when you sit at bible study, I hear the anxiety hidden in your voice when you talk about your choice of career, I can sense fear of the unknown in your questions about the future. Truth is, you're not alone, and that's why there is a huge necessity for you to have your heart deeply focused on God.

Do you know that the matter of the heart is the heart of the matter? Yup! Once our heart aligns with God's will, we have a better understanding of what he wants us to do with our time, talent, resources, and how he wants us to live our lives. **Focusing our hearts on God gives us a clearer picture of who we are and what we should be doing at every point in time.** Sitting at God's feet helps us draw the strength and grace we need to serve Him in accordance to His will because honestly, we really can't do anything with our own strength.

Guess what? It doesn't end there. Apart from better understanding what God wants us to do, having our heart focused on deeply knowing God helps us let go of the anxiety and worries that are deeply rooted in this thing called life. Here's what the Bible has to say:

"Therefore I tell you, stop being worried or anxious (perpetually uneasy, distracted) about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, as to what you will wear. Is life not more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your Heavenly Father keeps feeding them. Are you not worth much more than they? . . .

"Therefore do not worry or be anxious (perpetually uneasy, distracted), saying, 'What are we going to eat?' or 'What are we going to drink?' or 'What are we going to wear?' For the [pagan] Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; [but do not worry,] for your heavenly Father knows that you need them. But first and most importantly seek (aim at, strive after) His kingdom and His righteousness [His way of doing and being right—the attitude and character of God], and all these things will be given to you also." Matthew 6:25-26, 31-33 AMP

But do you know what Jesus is saying? Just look at the birds of the air. They don't sow or reap yet God still watches over them and feeds them. And don't you know you're worth so much more than the birds? (Matthew 6:26) He is telling you that He sees and knows your needs, many times even before you even ask Him. (Matthew 6:8) **Jesus is also reminding us that even in a world full of chaos, agony, and despair, we are not without hope for the tranquility, happiness, hope, and love that He brings.** He is the order in the disorder of our world, the light in the darkness we see every day, and the breath of fresh air we all need to keep us going. But it's hard to see all this if your heart is not fixed on God.

Finally, Martha, do you know what else Jesus said about our hearts? He said where we place our treasure is where our hearts would be too (Matthew 6:21). Where is your treasure, Martha? Is it just in the services you do? In the number of solos you're able to nail? In the number of times you were able to lead Bible Study? No Martha, that shouldn't be your primary focus. All these are great, but God wants more from you, so much more. God is looking for your heart. He is here today calling you to come into an intimate relationship with Him. **He wants you to know that surrender comes before service; when you fully surrender your heart to Him, you can better serve in His temple.** I know it might seem hard, but trust me, it would be the best decision you ever made. Would you accept His invitation today?

Pause!

I'm Martha! You're Martha! We could all be Martha!

Yes, God wants our works, but more importantly, He wants our hearts. He doesn't want us to be so busy with activities that we forget what is most important. This doesn't in any way mean that we shouldn't serve God in our capacities. Instead, it is an invitation to you who has drifted from God to return to Him, it's a call to you who is distracted to reposition your priorities, and a gentle reminder to everyone currently serving that as we give Him our best, we should also sit at His feet to receive His best.

Abundant Blessings

Thoughts on Discipleship and the Christian Life

by Alexander Kaye



As I waited for the car that would take us to church on my first weekend at Bowdoin, some nervous thoughts darted across my mind. *My reputation would be thoroughly "Christianified,"* I thought to myself; *The first thing people will know about me is that I am a Christian,* I lamented, as I noticed curious glances directed towards us. It was a public declaration of faith that I was not used to and it made me uncomfortable.

Back in Tokyo, where my home is, my faith was quite a private one. I went to church on Sundays, but in some ways I was like the figures depicted in Tocqueville's Democracy in America who on "the seventh day of each week" enter into a "brief" moment of "meditation" and "repose." In the days prior to and after the seventh, I was "agitated," "restive," and "active" with my worldly life. Perhaps doing slightly better than that, I prayed often but had many idols (earthly distractions) and my life was not as Christ-centred as it is now.

When I reflect on it, however, being seen waiting for a car on Sunday mornings should not be the only declaration that we are Christians. There is an "**aroma**" (2 Corinthians 2:15-17 NIV) that comes with being a Christian and a radiance (Psalm 34:5 NIV) that cannot be ignored. It can be discomfiting for those witnessing it and it can be uncomfortable for those emanating it, too. Christians are moths that gravitate towards the lamp that is the Word of God while the rest of the world shy away from that light. And the message is clear: we are compelled by God as Christians to be the light in this world; and taking on this discipleship is difficult.

Indeed, approaching the light is not an immediately attractive option either. We have to leave the alluring world behind:

"He [Christ] told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road." (Luke 10:2- 4 NIV)

We cannot "**say goodbye to [our] family**" (Luke 9:61 NIV) and we have no amenities or accommodations. This is not something we would ordinarily take up with open arms. Furthermore, discipleship is not a choice that we have, it's an order. "**Go!**" Christ says and go we must. While spreading the good news is a natural deed for Christians, we cannot pretend that it is always easy.

There is beauty in the struggle
of discipleship.

That said, though hard is the way, even harder are the consequences of not doing this. Though the difficulty is great, greater is the joy that we anticipate. Furthermore, though discipleship sounds difficult and indeed impossible, "**with God all things are possible**" (Mathew 19:26 NIV). This is the point to be remembered: we cannot do anything by relying on ourselves. We must cling to God always and realise that it is only with God's help and love that we can live the Christian life of discipleship.

And indeed there is beauty in the struggle of discipleship. Though Christ himself uses the imagery of "**war**" (Luke 14:31 NIV) to describe discipleship, it must be borne in mind that we are fighting for something beautiful and wonderful. As Rob, our study center leader, said recently, it is like how men in Ukrainian families leave their families at the border to go back into the thick of the conflict. They are fighting for their country and for a just cause. For Christians, it is similar. As per the old hymn, we are "clad in salvation's full armour" to "join in the battle for truth." Though we must make sacrifices, what we are fighting for is immensely beautiful. It is a plentiful "**harvest**" that we are to reap (Luke 10:2 NIV). It is joyful. And it is eternal.

This can also, I think, affect how we talk about our faith with non-believing friends. Instead of the sombre tone of, "If you're curious, you should come to church," we can, as Joshua from Bible Study said, invite people enthusiastically. "You should definitely come! It's a great time!" is much more effective and in fact much more sincere than the former invitation. We should issue invitations far and wide and in joyful acclamation and those whom God has called will surely respond.

Jesus says "**in this world [we] will have trouble,**" but "**take heart! For I have overcome the world**" (John 16:33 NIV). Life is a flicker, a "**mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes**" (James 4:14 NIV).

"Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves

break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:19-21 NIV)

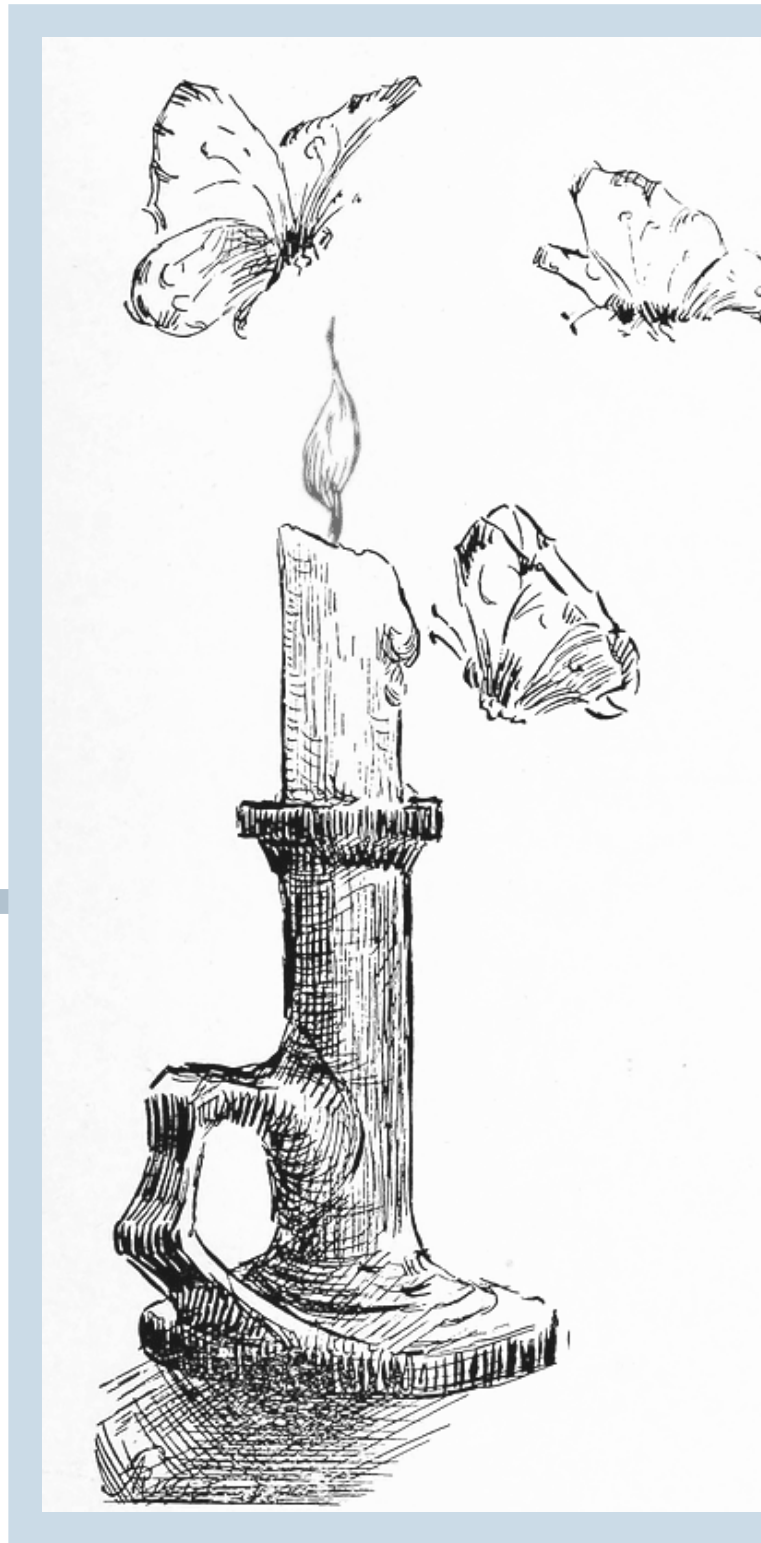
Let us, therefore, **“store up for [ourselves] treasures in heaven”** and let us not fixate on earthly deeds and achievements. Let us always be conscious that we are **“citizens of heaven”** (Philippians 3:20 NLT). While we are here let us **“set [our] minds on things above”** (Colossians 3:2 NIV), turn our gazes heavenward and anchor our perspectives on eternity.

Such thoughts and convictions have grown in me in my time at the Joseph & Alice Mckeen Study Center and while spending time with my Christian brothers and sisters and with God. These certainties mean that I feel less of the embarrassment or fear the judgement that I did when I arrived several months ago and feel more emboldened to declare and live out my faith.

“By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another” (John 13:35 NIV). As one who has been forgiven much, I strive to love much (Luke 7:47 NIV). It is this indescribable and unfathomable love that we are called to share as Christ’s disciples.

“You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”

MATTHEW 5:14-16 ESV



BY DANSK JAVLARNA

BY ALEXANDER KAYE

The Lord is blessing me abundantly.
He has filled in what was hollow and gave rest to what was restless.

He let me know who I am and whose I am.
Through these beautiful workings, He has made Himself manifest.
Through these things I feel His presence.

Through His amazing provisions He has made me His.
The Christian life is to share this joy and to strive to be like Him in all that we do.
Though it is no easy undertaking, we know He will be with us and is working
through us.

Lord, I pray that we anchor ourselves in you.
That every decision we make is a Biblical decision.
That in everything we do we strive to reflect you.
We thank you for your love, your unutterable love.

Lord, I thank you for what you have done to me.
I thank you for working through those around me and working in me.

Lord, I thank you for filling in what was hollow,
For giving rest to what was restless
And for letting me know who I am and whose I am.

This is your life not mine.
So help me glorify you in all that I do.

Amen



Faith in Jesus Christ

by Esopoir Byishimo

If you were to choose one principle to guide you and to abide by for the rest of your life, what would it be?

Think deeply about it.

Ordinarily, we scarcely choose or even think of choosing such a principle. Yet, knowingly, or unknowingly, by many principles we live; principles that influence our thoughts and perceptions, our behaviors, and our decisions. For our own sake, we ought to examine what those principles, or assumptions are and how we have acquired them—for they exert a great deal of influence on our life.

In this short essay, I write about a principle that you may have to consider. For beside it all other principles fall short. This principle is not a new principle, however. For those who have heard of it, it is a good thing to be reminded, and for those who have not heard of it, it is a good thing to know it. The principle, or truth, I present here is faith in Jesus Christ.

For faith in Jesus Christ often gets twisted. Some equate it with religiosity. Some profess to have this faith but deny it by their actions. So, it tells very little when opinion polls indicate that the majority of people in a certain country believe in Christianity, for to have Faith in Jesus Christ is not identical to checking a box that you are a Christian. Perhaps if you want to find out what a person really believes, you should analyze that person's checkbook. As Jesus said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Luke 12:34 ESV). **Thus, if you want to know where your heart is, check out your treasure. That is, where do you invest your time, energy, thoughts, or wealth?** The underlying reason for misunderstanding faith in Christ is that we, humans, think that we can construct God out of our own imaginations. But truly we cannot, lest we fool ourselves to be God. So if faith in Christ is not something that we can conjure up out of our own imagination and strength, what is it?

Well, faith in Christ is initiated by hearing and believing the Word of God: that God is our creator.

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life, and life was the light of men" (John 1: 1- 4).

And that faith is completed by doing God's work. Merely believing that God exists is not enough. As James wrote, "Even the demons believe—and shudder!" (James 2:19

(ESV) God's work is to believe in Him and to abide in his Word. Recognize that doing God's work is inseparable from having faith in Him, but that both faith and work are intertwined. In fact, the ultimate work we are asked of by God is to have faith. "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent," said Jesus.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God" (John 3: 16-18).

Faith in Jesus Christ, the Word of God, reorients one's mind. Simply put, where Faith in Christ is present, a change of mind inevitably follows. And the renewed mind conforms not to the thinking of this world but looks beyond the forms and structures of this world.

"For all flesh is like grass and all its glory like the flower of grass. The grass withers, and the flower falls, but the word of the Lord remains forever" (1 Peter 1: 24-25).

The renewed mind enables us to focus not on things that will not last, but on things that will last forever, always seeking to please and glorify God. "Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all else will be added," commended Jesus (Matthew 6:33). And he gives us power to accomplish that. As Scriptures say, "It is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure"(Philippians 2: 13 ESV).

The renewal of mind continues by the continued work of the Holy Spirit and by the feeding upon the Word of God. And this continued work bears good fruits. It makes you love God. It makes you love his creation. And it makes you love the things of God. All other things of this world become of no value, if not of less value. As Paul said, *"But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead" (Philippians 3).*

If and when not sure of where you stand with faith in Jesus Christ or things of God, flee to the Word of God, draw near to Jesus Christ who will speak to you, minister to you, and strengthen you. For He is your creator. And in Him you may receive eternal life.

Being Dumb for the Kingdom of Heaven

by Daniel Kang

As Christians, we are met with challenges that oppose our beliefs, actions, and lifestyle. In a college setting full of people from different backgrounds, there is a diversity of worldly ideologies, behaviors, and characters that create a hub for students to grow socially and intellectually. Opinions on government as well as on morality are discussed between students and faculty so that human innovation and human intellect can progress.

Not only that, but in a college setting, we are met with students who immerse themselves in uncontrollable drinking, hook-ups, drug use, and parties that seem natural to follow. The world says that college is the time when you explore yourself, try new things, and do stupid things with your friend. But when friends realize that I don't drink, gamble, steal, hook-up, use drugs, or smoke, they turn their heads and ask "why?"

Why is it that you don't engage in a culture so natural and exciting, where you can feel free from your burdens and have fun?

Jesus talks about a parable that shows the same response people make who don't know the way, the truth, and the life. After He explains the parable of the weeds to His disciples, He goes on to tell them the parable of the Hidden Treasure and Pearl. And He says:

"The kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in a field. When a man found it, he hid it again, and then in his joy went and sold all he had and bought that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant looking for fine pearls. When he found one of great value, he went away and sold everything he had and bought it." (Matthew 13:44-45 ESV)

As many read this passage, they may think: Huh? Why would anyone sell all their possessions, all that he had, to buy that field of treasure or pearl? Surely, even though there is treasure in that field, the man didn't have to sell everything he had to buy that field. And even though the pearl was of great value, the merchant didn't need to sell everything just to buy this pearl.

In this parable, **Jesus shows how precious the kingdom of heaven is.** A treasure so valuable and rare that when the man found it, he was full of joy. A joy so profound that it compelled this man to give up everything he had. The reader can imagine the man having no land, nor house, nor clothes, nor livestock, or any worldly possession but only that field which contained that treasure.

A treasure hidden in a field.

Likewise, a merchant who, when he found a pearl of great value, sold everything he had just to buy this pearl. A single pearl in exchange for the merchant's possessions.

A pearl of great value.

A Precious Mustard Seed

I can imagine the men's neighbors and friends questioning the well-being of the two men. "What is wrong with these people?" They would think. And as a reader, I was initially compelled to think that the men were dumb. Of course, there's treasure and a pearl of great value, but they could have kept the treasure and pearl and his possessions with them. So why did they sacrifice their possessions just to obtain these things of value?

Jesus describes the kingdom of heaven as something that is beyond human imagination and understanding. A kingdom that is so vast and beautiful that the human mind cannot fully comprehend nor fully grasp. In another parable, He describes the kingdom of heaven as being like

"a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all your seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and perch in its branches."(Matthew 13:31-32 ESV).

In this parable of the mustard seed, Jesus compares the kingdom of heaven to a small tiny mustard seed, which later grows to the largest tree in the garden and welcomes "birds of the air come and perch in its branches". In this parable, the kingdom of heaven is a place where life is overflowing with birds making its home on this tree, which all started from a small, tiny mustard seed. How precious and valuable is that tiny seed!

This goes on to show how the value of the kingdom of heaven is incomparable to anything in this world. Nothing on this Earth can compare or have the same equivalence to the kingdom of heaven. This kingdom, as Jesus implies, is an eternal kingdom. A possession that will never fade away nor lose its value. Rather, it will increase in joy and beauty as more people look upon the kingdom. This was manifested in the parable of the

mustard seed. As the seed grew, its beauty and splendor grew which allowed for it to give life and provide life for the birds of the air.

These things Jesus tells us to pursue. "Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you." (Matthew 6:33 ESV). So reader, which is better to obtain: Worldly dreams, desires and possessions that are temporary and die out or the kingdom of heaven that gives life and emanates the beauty of God and His creation? Rather than aligning myself with the world and its so-called "beauty" of engaging in sinful and unholy activities, I would rather seek what is pure, holy, beautiful, and everlasting. **If it makes me look dumb and stupid, so be it!** For it is written in 1st Corinthians, "For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength" (1 Corinthians 1:25 ESV). If God's ways and will are far greater than that of man's, it would be wise and better to submit under God and pursue His kingdom. The cost of having a bad reputation on Earth because of how I don't align myself with the world is so much worth it since I can inherit God's beautiful kingdom of heaven.

Treasure Hidden in a Field

Christians can be seen as "dumb" because of how they don't copy the world and its ways of having fun. Many engage in unhealthy drinking, many Christians don't. Many engage in hook-ups, many Christians don't. Many dabble with the fun of using drugs or substances, but many Christians don't. The world can see Christians as lame or dumb, but Christians see themselves as being obedient and faithful to the holiest God for what He has created: the Kingdom of Heaven.

However, how does one obtain the Kingdom of Heaven?

In the parable of the Hidden Treasure, the man "found it". Likewise, in the parable of the pearl, the merchant "found one of great value". These men have found the kingdom of heaven, but how does one find the kingdom of heaven? How does one seek and look for an invisible kingdom, and often unrealistic kingdom according to the standards and reality of this world?

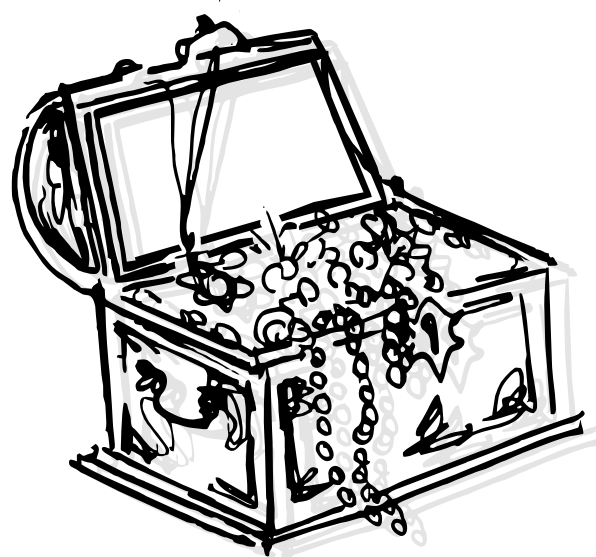
As churches say, the answer is always Jesus Christ. Through Him, we can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven and live eternally with God. For He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. The way to salvation, the truth to the Kingdom, and the life for all to have. It is not by our strength nor abilities that we can enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, but by the blood of Christ, in which he has already shed and given us eternal life.

For those who are still doubting whether you are a Christian, non-Christian, or were a Christian, this article is an invitation for you to ask the Lord. Even if you don't know Him fully, ask the Lord, and He will give it to you, for faith as small as a mustard seed can move mountains. Furthermore, God has created us to be eternal beings. This world is not the end. There is a kingdom of heaven that awaits those who accept Christ into their hearts. For we are not citizens of this world, but citizens of heaven. And with that, reader, I don't need to worry about what other people think about me and my fellow brothers and sisters in Christ. Rather, I have hope for Christ to take me back home.

So, have you found Christ?

"For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you; but they will give account to him who is ready to judge the living and the dead. For this is why the gospel was preached even to those who are dead, that though judged in the flesh the way people are, they might live in the spirit the way God does." (1 Peter 4:3-6 ESV)

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives; he who seeks finds; and to him who knocks, the door will be opened. Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him! So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets." (Matthew 7:7-12 ESV)



TREASURE HIDDEN IN A FIELD

Placing Importance in the Things Above

by Adam Nelson

Over the past several years, many lives have been permanently changed, revealing just how abruptly the future can become shockingly uncertain. A global pandemic has taken so much away from us all – memories and experiences we will never get back. Meanwhile, international political tensions call into question the stability of human life and how much time remains before the end when Jesus will undoubtedly return to receive those who have received him and deny those who have denied him. Although these turbulent circumstances have been a source of great fear and anxiety for many, plenty have aptly recognized God’s revelation that we must prioritize our relationship with Him in our lives rather than focusing on empty practices, promises, and pleasures. **Maybe humanity needed this wake-up call to assess our living situations and pray that He would restructure our priorities.** Like Jesus commands in the parable of the ten virgins, we must be ready for his glorious coming with our lamps of love and devotion well lit, for, like a thief in the night, Jesus will make his return to judge all (Matthew 25:1-13 ESV). How can we expect to be fully prepared if we are preoccupied with insignificant, earthly concerns?

In the parables of Jesus, through the apostle Paul, and elsewhere, the Lord explicitly commands, “seek the things that are above, where Christ is Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:1-3 ESV) and “Provide yourselves ... with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Luke 12:33-34 ESV). Admittedly, it is very difficult for us to not over-invest in the temporary things of this life, neglecting the more pertinent and paramount aspects concerning our eternal, spiritual lives. I have lived so much of my life fixated on academics, athletic performance, college and career prospects, hobbies and interests, etc. that when unseen circumstances have disrupted or devastated these components entirely, I have been left distraught and defeated, ignoring that God was still by my side through it all.

Strange and disheartening as it may be, our earthly goals, interests, and loves decay and perish as we grow nearer to Christ since we have been reborn and resurrected. Once we decide to leave behind earthly idols and instead pursue Jesus with our whole heart and soul, there is no turning back. **We must be transformed and equip ourselves with the new direction, attitude,**

and meaning that He has given us to serve Him. Thus, we must “Put off the old self with its practices and ... put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of [our] creator” (Colossians 3:9-10 ESV). Although it has been discomfiting to discover the parts of my life I once cared about so deeply no longer provide as much excitement or motivation, **I am beginning to accept that God is turning things upside down in my life so that I would prioritize Him.**

I am beginning to accept that God is turning things upside down in my life so that I would prioritize Him.

Through the parable of the great banquet, Jesus depicts how those who make excuses for why they cannot wholly devote themselves to Him are misguided and foolish. The parable demonstrates how Christ has invited everyone to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but many make excuses for their unwillingness to leave their earthly selves and follow Him including “I have bought a field, and I must go out and see it,” “I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to examine them,” and “I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.” In response, the master of the house, representing Jesus, becomes angry and declares, “none of those men who were invited shall taste my banquet” (Luke 14:18-24 ESV). Earthly aspirations and work such as acquiring wealth, land, and possessions can all too easily hamper one’s soulful search for Christ. If we acknowledge that many of the things we prioritize and emphasize in our daily lives will not carry over with us into the afterlife, we must be willing to ask God how to use them to further His kingdom on earth, or if that can’t be accomplished, to give them up entirely. God never promised it would be easy to prioritize Him over the earthly desires and practices we seek to give us meaning, but it is a fundamental step in the journey to His kingdom, for He is the only one that gives us purpose.

Putting aside our pursuit of earthly desires and work and instead prioritizing the commands of our Father allows us to be fully obedient children of Christ. Jesus says, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me ... For what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses or

forfeits his soul" (Luke 9:23-25 ESV). A similar sentiment is found in Matthew 10:39 in that "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it." Those who give precedence to and wholeheartedly follow Jesus will reign with Christ in Heaven forevermore. In comparison, **even if we achieved or accomplished every earthly desire or obtained every earthly treasure, we would still be left utterly unfulfilled because none of that will hold any significance in Heaven.** Hence, we must not let those dreams distract us from the path God has dictated for each of us.

Although it can be hard to accept, our temporary lives can never bring the unimaginable satisfaction and wholeness that life in the Kingdom of Heaven will. All the things I used to put so much stake in pale in comparison to my one true defining quality: a child of God. Everything of the earth will fade away in time and can never bring the indescribable joy that is knowing the maker of Heaven and earth nor rival the way the holy spirit moves and touches us. Nothing this world has to offer compares to the feeling I'll experience when I run to my Heavenly Father's arms and embrace the God I've put my faith in for so long. Truly, if not for the love of Christ that has been bestowed upon me, it would be a continuous struggle to get out of bed each morning and strive to be more Christlike. However, I know the Lord is building me up and strengthening my heart and soul so that I can fix my eyes on him and do the work that will glorify and honor His name. As long as I have the one true God beside me, before me, behind me, within me, beneath me, and above me, I don't need anything else. All anxieties wrapped within earthly things can fall aside, for He amazingly loves me even if I don't achieve the personal goals I set for ourselves. How freeing it is that I don't have to worry as one cannot "add a single hour to his span of life" by being anxious about mundane concerns (Luke 12:25 ESV).

Strange and disheartening as it may be, our earthly goals, interests, and loves decay and perish as we grow nearer to Christ since we have been reborn and resurrected. We must be transformed and equip ourselves with the new direction, attitude, and meaning that He has given us to serve Him.

Despite the monotony and insufficiency of our daily lives, we can be patient for Jesus's inevitable coming when this temporary life that is imperfect and unfulfilling is replaced by the perfect way of living God intended for mankind - free of pain, worry, sorrow, anger and where only truth presides. With this in mind, we must suit up with the armor of Christ: the breastplate, the shield, the helmet, and the sword, to endure the anguish and misdirection in our current lives, so that we may carry forward with our eyes on the bright morning star and trudge through the lonely desert sands and winds, following the living water that is the word of God. Then our courage and nourishment are restored and protected, and we can continue through the wilderness, not searching for a destination but enduring until the glorious day of Jesus's new reign.

Our temporary lives can never bring the unimaginable satisfaction and wholeness that life in the Kingdom of Heaven will.





The Simple Faith

by Patrick Kingston

For the past few years, I've been thinking a lot about the faith. It's been a journey through the entire realm of Christianity and has lately landed on the question of converting to Orthodoxy. It all began by looking at the origins of my faith. I went to an Adventist preschool, a Methodist church in elementary school, and a Southern Baptist one since middle school. All my life I have been involved in Christianity in some way, but being raised in the church bred a particular kind of indifference and sometimes even resentment towards it. When I was little and had questions about things like evolution and the Big Bang and space and many scientific theories that seemed to contradict the dogma of the church I went to, I received simple answers that were both philosophically and scientifically inadequate. My salvation experience was a summer camp conversion where the fervor of the room led me to come to the front to say a short prayer with someone. When I was older I looked back on the experience and felt manipulated. I was 8. I didn't know what I was doing and was manipulated by the exact same light and sounds you find at a secular concert.

At some point along the way it seemed as though I had just stopped believing full stop. But, I still had family commitments so I still had to go to church. If something is all you've ever known, it's easy to just go through the motions. I'm reminded of the parable of the barren fig tree (Luke 13:6-9). God came to me when I was born, when I was being taught, and when I was becoming an adult and all the while, I bore no fruit. In God's vineyard of souls, I was the fig tree to be struck down. But, just as Moses advocated for Israel when God wished to burn the nation to the ground, Jesus advocated for me and saved me.

I spent many years simply acting Christian, just existing in the vineyard. But, in my Sophomore year of highschool I began to reinvestigate Christianity. I decided that I had to look at the origins of the faith. All throughout my life I had been Protestant, but knowing history I knew that there were things before any Protestant denomination. I had to go all the way back to the beginning. I began before even Sola Scriptura - the founding principle that I had been force fed my entire life. I started off with two simple questions: Can I trust the bible at all? As well as: What even is the Bible? After all, if I am to believe that scripture alone is what I need, I ought to know that I can trust it in the first place. Growing up largely southern Baptist gave me an intense reverence for the Bible, an intense dislike of "man made traditions," a complete lack of understanding of the doctrines of other Christian

traditions, and an intense lack of understanding of what the Bible was and where it came from.

And so I learned about manuscript studies, historical manuscript families, the Greek language, dating techniques, copying techniques, and much much more. Beyond just the manuscripts for the texts we do have, I also learned about the texts that we didn't have. Some of these texts are held up by conspiracy theorists as books that were "hidden" from us, these are the books that are simply heretical or dismissed as anachronistic and pseudepigraphal. Others are texts that are simply never heard of because they have been lost to time. Others had simply stopped being read by Christians for one reason or another. I was absolutely enchanted by this world of Biblical studies that I had no clue existed before.

After all, the most I had ever heard about the writing of the Bible was that "Moses wrote some, some old testament people wrote some, the apostles wrote some other stuff, it was translated and now we have the Bible." This answer always made me deeply unsatisfied, and it was simple explanations like this that my inquisitive younger self always received that made me lose my faith at the slightest resistance. Now that I had found an answer that took into account human authorship, church history, patristic texts, heretical texts, divine authorship, and more that I finally felt as though I could put my doubts in scripture to bed. Once I knew that I could trust the text, I was absolutely hooked. I was so swept up in this flurry of new information that my zeal for Biblical studies seemed to at times overshadow my zeal for Christ.

Now if I had been studying the text of the Bible, this wouldn't have been a problem because it so obviously points towards Jesus. The problem was that I wasn't doing that, I was studying the history and compilation apparatus surrounding the text. This phase of my journey did give me some answers to the questions that I had earlier. Can I trust the Bible at all? Yes. What even is the Bible? It's complicated, but long story short it's a collection of inspired texts compiled over thousands of years.

This whirlwind of study left me with more questions than answers. For one, I was no longer convinced of Sola Scriptura. Consider two pieces of text. One says "I am inspired by God and I was written by someone who traces their authority back to Jesus." The other text says, "I am inspired by God and I was written by someone who traces their authority back to Jesus." They

teach similar doctrines, but one has certain things like the flesh being evil and that Jesus didn't have a physical body. Now imagine dozens of these texts existing. The question then arises: How do we know which texts are actually inspired and which are not?

A cliff notes version of the current understanding of the New Testament is that there were many texts in circulation in the regions that Christianity had spread. By about the second century, the texts that we regard as canonical were all in circulation. However, there were several texts that were also circulated along with them. These are texts like the Didache and the Shepherd of Hermas, texts that we still have around today. They were so influential that many of the earliest fathers and earliest codices held them to be inspired and of equal authority to the New Testament. Ultimately, the Bishops at the time who lived at the time gathered together at church councils and at the council of Carthage in 397, using the consensus of how these were used in the church they set in stone what we know now as our New testament canon. These texts, while they were eventually recognized to be not divinely inspired, still taught good teachings that could be of some beneficial spiritual use.

Eventually, I began to look into the Bishops who were in the Church councils (and those before them) as well as their writings. This experience became very individualistic for me, as I found myself accepting new doctrines like the role that pre-written and rote prayer could play in my life, the real presence in the Eucharist, and many more doctrines that sacramental churches hold that I had been taught to scorn. On the outside, my day to day life was still very Southern Baptist. I was still going to this church every single Sunday. I was still going to youth group every single Wednesday. I was even playing bass guitar on Wednesday nights, and sometimes even on Sunday mornings for the whole congregation. However, while the Christian walk includes and necessitates a communal relation to others, I internally found myself at odds with my church community concerning doctrines that I held to be so essential. I felt that I was no longer genuinely in the community. This was ultimately a conversion of the head, but not of the heart. I was still the unfruitful fig tree, the lost coin, the prodigal son. I had to continue thinking about the origins of my faith.

I reached a point where I settled the question of scripture, and of where it came from, and continued reading through the writings of the Church Fathers. I discovered that while these people aren't infallible and can have ideas that are down right heretical, they also held at times the ability to have mind blowing and fruitful interpretations of parables. My favorite example of this is the parable of the barren fig tree, and I've already snuck a personalized version of this into the second paragraph. Theophilus of Antioch used the

the Christian walk includes and necessitates a communal relation to others.

language, "Vineyard of God." Ephrem the Syrian and Cyril of Alexandria liken the vinedresser to Moses advocating and also to Jesus as the greater Moses. Augustine of Hippo, Ambrose of Milan, and basically every aforementioned writer all compare the three years the owner came to different periods in the Old Testament and the nation of Israel.

Through reading the Fathers, I was reminded that I wasn't the first Christian to ever live, nor were the older Christians I lived with. Also, the pastor I had heard from for years was not the only source of spiritual and theological wisdom. I had always been taught that if I had a question, I should just read the Bible and find the answer to it. I was told to only rely on myself and my interpretations of scripture. The Fathers taught me that many of these questions had already been thought through. It was amazing to see that I could look back far into history and see what the earliest post-scripture Christians believed. Theology didn't begin with me and my tradition. It is an ongoing conversation that stretches all the way back to Jesus.



AUGUSTINE AND HIS MOTHER BY ARY SCHEFFER

Even beyond this, in an act of spiritual immaturity, I even began to be skeptical of the modern Christians around me and only trusting the most ancient sources I could find. My thinking at the time was that I ought to trust only the most ancient sources. After all, the further away that you get from the source of something, the more likely it is to be perverted. Nobody today can have theological wisdom, right? How foolish.

Looking back, it was reading the Church fathers that softened my heart again and let me rediscover the beauty of the Parables and Scripture and such that I felt my heart to be with Jesus again. I felt that I was finally bearing fruit, albeit at a slow pace. In every period of my study, for example, the looming question of Orthodoxy was never, and hasn't yet, been resolved for me. While I stand still at this crossroads discerning if I ought to be heading east, I feel the pressure that I should still be moving forward in my faith. Recently, I have begun praying daily, and studying scripture when I can, although it can be inconsistent. It has been months since I've gone to a formal Sunday morning church service. Instead of praying and getting closer to God, I sometimes spend time in petty theological debates. Instead of going to church on Sundays, the thought that I am excused from doing anything because I'm uncomfortable seeps in even though the fact that I get to sleep in is equally as big a reason. **While I am in this situation of choosing where I ought to be Christian, I still need to be one.**

In some ways, instead of this long winding intellectual journey, I wish that I had simply looked to the true origins of my faith. **I wish that I had the simple faith of the ones who gave me the faith in the first place.** I'm not talking about some obscure Saint Ioaniasnisiss of Paraclenopolis in the Xth century. I'm talking about my Mom. The one who truly gave me the faith. I wish that I didn't have these questions arise and simply strove to be holy in my day to day life. I wish that I didn't let myself rationalize excuses to not go to church. I wish that I had a simpler, more pious faith of the Christian who came before me. For better or for worse, my Mom isn't bothered by these questions. When there is church, she goes. When there is Bible study, she goes. When it is time to worship, she does. She moves forward.

I now stand still at my own crossroads. I pray that I, a prodigal son, will have obstacles removed and be able to fully come back home. Further, I pray for discernment to know where my home is on this earth. But, most of all, I pray for the strength to get out of my head and live out the simple faith that I was born with. Amen.

While I am in the situation of choosing where I ought to be Christian, I still need to be one.



JOIN OUR STUDY

WEDNESDAYS
5:15-7 PM

Every year, students at the JAMS meet weekly at this time to study one book of the Bible. In the academic year 2021-2022, we will be studying the Gospel of John. Join us at the Joseph and Alice McKeen Study Center or email akaye@bowdoin.edu or dkang2@bowdoin.edu for more questions!

THURSDAYS
9 PM-10:30 PM

To further reflect on our Wednesday studies and encourage one another, students of the JAMS meet on Thursday nights to fellowship and pray for one another. Please email akaye@bowdoin.edu or dkang2@bowdoin.edu for more details!

WANT TO WRITE
FOR THE
AGATHOS?

All of the written pieces in the Agathos are reflections of one year of Wednesday Bible Studies under the guidance of Rob and Sim Gregory in one book of the Bible. We find that transcribing the ideas and lessons we have learned onto written pages gives us space to better understand what we believe and witness to those near to us. The Agathos Journal also serves as a piece of history for following students of the JAMS about the experiences and thoughts of Christian students at Bowdoin in previous years. If you would like to be a part of this process, we invite you to join us at our study or email akaye@bowdoin.edu!

The Joseph and Alice McKeen Christian Study Center
agathos.bowdoin@gmail.com
www.mckeenchristianstudycenter.org

whatever is good.

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agathos.bowdoine@gmail.com
www.mckeenchristianstudycenter.org
