



BRANDON VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH

May 2021

Editor Janelle Daum

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PASTORAL MEDITATIONS



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"This is the day that the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it."

Psalm 118:24

We have all heard this verse many times and have probably memorized it and quoted it a few times. I know I have. It's one of the wonderful truths that we find in Scripture that helps us with our outlook and our attitudes. If every day is a gift from God, then we should rejoice and be glad in it.

The problem is that life has a way of setting its own priorities. There

E-mail: jbvbeditor@hotmail.com your article.

are a lot of important things that demand our attention, and they tend to pile up on top of each other. Instead of getting more done we find that there is just more and more for us to do. It's an endless cycle that can steal our joy and gladness.

In the book, *The Life You've Always Wanted*, John Ortberg tells about an evening when he was giving his children a bath. He had three kids in the tub, and he was cycling them through the process of soaping, rinsing and drying. It had been a long day and he was hurrying his kids along. Then, all of sudden his daughter Mallory, came up out of the water and began to perform what had become known as the "Dee-Dah-Day Dance." As John tried to dry her off she kept putting her arms in the air, squirming out of his grasp and dancing around.

As John became more and more irritated, he snapped at her, "Mallory, hurry up!" His daughter turned to him and asked the most convicting question he had ever heard: "Why?"

John found that he had no answer to her question. At that moment he had nowhere to go, nothing to do, no meetings to attend, no sermons to write. What did he learn? "I was just so into hurrying, moving from one task to another, that here was life, here was joy, here was an invitation to the dance right in front of me – and I was missing it."

We have to make the choice to experience gladness and joy in life. It isn't going to happen by itself. It takes a concerted effort to change our perspective if we are going to see each day through God's eyes.

So what caused the psalmist to change his perspective? His new perspective begins in vv.1-4.

"Oh give thanks to the Lord, for He is good; for His steadfast love endures forever! Let Israel say, 'His steadfast love endures forever.' Let the house of Aaron say, 'His steadfast love endures forever.' Let those who fear the Lord say, 'His steadfast love endures forever.'"

The psalmist has gone through an extremely difficult time in his life, a time of distress and fear where he was surrounded by enemies. He came through that time thankful that the Lord had allowed him to live, and ready to let everyone know what the Lord had done. The Lord's steadfast love endured through all of his trials and troubles. That understanding of what the Lord did for him led him to desire to give thanks to the Lord in vv.19-22.

“Open to me the gates of righteousness, that I may enter through them and give thanks to the Lord. This is the gate of the Lord; the righteous shall enter through it. I thank You that You have answered me and have become my salvation. The stone that the builders rejected has become the cornerstone.”

The psalmist could have complained about how hard his life had been. He could have complained about the way that God had disciplined him. He chose not to do that. He chose to give thanks and bring praise to God.

“This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.” v.23

Because he chose to see all that had happened as the work of God, he was able to see each day as a special gift from God. And if each day is a special gift from God, then we can definitely rejoice and be glad in everything that takes place in it.

Life isn't always easy, but it is always solidly ensconced in the steadfast love of God. Our daily attitude and our heart responses depend on which way our eyes are focused. Are we focused on the never-ending busyness of life or are we focused on the eternal goodness and love of God?

Every day we have the opportunity to change our attitude and enjoy all that God gives us. Every day we have the opportunity to choose to not miss out on life. Every day we have the opportunity to live in the steadfast love of God.

What do you choose? Blessings, Pastor Randy

UPCOMING EVENTS FOR MAY AND BEYOND

EVENTS CALENDAR 2021:

Sunday's

9:30 a.m., Worship Service

10:30 a.m., Fellowship

10:45 a.m., Sunday School for the Whole Family

Wednesday's

Awana Clubs resume in the Fall

6:30 p.m. - 8 p.m., 6th-8th Grade Youth Group

6:30 p.m. - 8 p.m., 9th-12th Grade Youth Group

Thursday's

2 p.m., Prayer & Women's Bible Study at BVBC

6:30 p.m., Women's Evening Bible Study held at various homes

Saturday's

May 1, 8 a.m., Men's Bible Study on ZOOM

May 15, 8 a.m., Men's Bible Study on ZOOM

Sunday, May 9, Mother's Day

Monday, May 31, Memorial Day

MISSIONARY OF THE MONTH

Crystal Springs

Camping with a Christian Purpose

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Crystal Springs Baptist Camp is affiliated with the North American Baptist Conference, but is also available for rental to other church groups and denominations.

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MISSIONARY UPDATES

RON & JEANNIE SECK - HUNGARY



We are certainly sending out a lot of prayer updates! Thank you for your prayers. We need the Lord's healing and saving hand in so many situations.

GOD IS ANSWERING positively:

Sasha in Tuzla, Bosnia, praises God and thanks you for your prayers for his healing from Covid and for his comfort in the loss of his dear mom due to cancer and Covid.

Marija and Adrijan in Novi Sad, Serbia thank you for prayers for their incredible, God provided healing from a dangerous level of Covid and pneumonia.

MUCH PRAYER NEEDED:

Eno Demerol a valuable servant of God in Bulgaria is gravely ill with persistent bleeding from his nose after a heart attack, a stint was put into his heart and he's not healing well.

Please pray for safety for his young family, and for a way for him to efficiently get to his native Switzerland for proper treatment and recovery.

Thank you for your faithful prayers, Ron and Jeannie

PRISON MINISTRY NEWSLETTER



April 2021

“All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, everyone, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.” Isaiah 53:6

When we think of Good Friday and Easter, it should fill us with love for our awesome Savior! Good Friday was a difficult Friday for Jesus, knowing His entire life that He came to suffer a cruel death for you and me! Hebrews 12:2 says, “Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.” We can go through difficulties knowing that they are temporary, and the best is yet to be! Thankfully, the Lord Jesus paid for our sins on the cross. Without this we would all be without hope.

One young man who recently gave his life to Christ, told me that he got sentenced to 15 years in prison. This seemed overwhelming to him. He had some spiritual background and realized he could not do all this time without Christ. Keep him in your prayers.

For the last six months I have been doing a weekly Bible study at Washed Clean Ministries. This is a half-way house for men with an addiction. At the last Bible study we were talking about how our sinful heart is our biggest problem, and we are not to blame others for all our problems. Then I mentioned that men often tell me that they have a good heart and God will let them into heaven. One man at the Bible study said, "When I was in prison several years ago and you said that we are not basically good, I disagreed with you about that fact, and I didn't really like you. Now I realize that you were teaching the truth and we do have a sinful heart. I gave my life to Christ and am excited about following Jesus whole heartedly and what the Lord has planned for me in the future!"

Tim had completed a year of Bible college in Florida and now he found himself in prison in South Dakota for a few years. His desire was and still is to be a pastor, but some family acquaintances brought him to South Dakota. Tim was very discouraged about what had happened. He found himself getting caught up in a domestic dispute. He could not believe he got himself into such predicament. After we visited, he admitted some of the sins that he had not dealt with before God. Tim felt strongly that God had called him into the ministry. I encouraged him to allow God to clean out all sinful desires of his heart. I let him know that God can still use him in ministry even while he is in prison. Then I encouraged him to reach out to the many inmates who do not know Christ. Some of the Christian men in prison feel called to share the love of Christ with others. They are inside missionaries and can reach the men we as chaplains can't reach.

Thank you to all who are supporting this ministry through your prayers and financial support! You are essential to this ministry of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ!

In Christ's love,
Harlan

DARWIN & KAREN STOESZ - JAPAN



April 18, 2021

Stoesz Ministry Update

April starts a new budget year for SEND Japan and with that is a lot of end of year business items that need to be done. Budgets for the mission and for each missionary needs to be approved etc. It is always great to see how God provides for missionaries. There are always missionaries in transition and with each transition usually housing and money is involved. Darwin is thankful that he can be a part of what God is doing by working alongside the 60+ missionaries in Japan.

A lunch story – by Darwin

This last week I walked into Hotto Motto – my usual take-out lunch place near the SEND Japan office. Many times, there are people waiting but this time I went in and no one was there. I used that opportunity to start a conversation with the lady that I had seen many times by asking for her recommended lunch. She got me something, I did not understand what she called it, but I bought it. I took it to my

office. I looked at it and saw all that seaweed and I will be honest it did not look particularly good. I thanked God for it and ate it. Was it good? Well, not really but I can't blame her as I did tell her to give me her recommendation.

Later I went online and found out the name of the lunch I received was: Rourohan – which didn't help because I had never heard of that word. If you want to know what I got check this link out: https://www.hottomotto.com/menu_list/view/11/4070

Family Update

The area where we live in Tokyo is in a quasi-emergency' Covid-19-related restriction till at least May 11. They are encouraging people to continue steps to prevent the spread of the virus. They include reduced business hours in restaurants and bars, as well as limitations on event attendance. Non-essential travel between prefectures is also discouraged.

Anna and Clara continue to study in person at their school - Christian Academy in Japan. Anna and Clara are both active in sports after school. Anna is doing well in track and Clara is on the middle school basketball team.

Anna will graduate on June 4th and then plans on attending John Brown University in Siloam Springs, Arkansas this Fall. She plans to major in Kinesiology. She would ask for prayer as she makes this big transition to JBU this summer after spending most of her life as a missionary kid in Japan.

Karen continues her class [Integration of Faith Work and Economy] with Moody Bible Institute as she continues to work on her bachelor's degree.

Prayer / Schedule Update

Our tentative schedule so far is as follows. Of course, all dates are subject to change. Please pray for us especially for these events:

April 21 Business report to SEND Japan leadership

Apr 23-24 SEND Japan Ladies Retreat
Apr 26 Karen has leadership board meeting at Christian Academy in Japan
Apr 28 Darwin leadership meeting at office
Apr 30 Darwin donates blood at Japan Red Cross
May 10 Karen last day of class at Moody Bible Institute
May 22 Darwin drive truck for a missionary move
May 28 Darwin go to Seibu Lions baseball game with his teacher Mr. Tsuneizumi-san
May 29 SEND Japan Business Meeting (Online only)
Jun 4 Anna graduation CAJ
Jun 8 CAJ last day of classes for Clara
Jun 9 CAJ Senior Banquet
Jun 17 Fly to USA
Aug 19 Arrive back in Japan

Please pray:

1. Pray that Japan would have wisdom to know how to curb the growth of the COVID-19 virus.
2. Pray that the church in Japan would know how best to use online opportunities in sharing the gospel here in Japan.
3. The Tokyo Olympics is still planned for this summer and there are many who are praying that this would turn into opportunities for the Gospel to be shared to the athletes that come.
4. Pray that Darwin's teacher Mr. Tsuneizumi and Karen's friend Yuko-san would put their faith in Christ.
5. Pray for wisdom for decisions that need to be made in the SEND Japan office and at Christian Academy in Japan.
6. Pray for Anna and Clara that they would have continued growing relationships with Jesus.
7. Pray for our short trip to USA that we would be able to visit family and friends who we haven't seen in over three years.

8. Pray for Anna as she plans on starting college in the Fall in the States.

Thank you for your continued partnership in our ministry.

Thank you so much for your prayers, financial support, and encouragement so that we can stay here in Japan.

Sincerely,

Darwin & Karen & Anna (17) & Clara (13) Stoesz

BRANDON & MARCI JONES - BRAZIL



April 5, 2021

A Change of Plans

“Remember your calling!” These sweet words running through our hearts serve as a reminder that even in the hardest of days, we must remember the reason for all the sacrifices. The Great Commission given to us to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth comes with Jesus’ promise: “And I will be with you always, even until the end of the age.” These promised words have been a life-giving truth for our family.

When we trained for this position we were introduced to a metaphorical “bridge of transition.” We learned how we will each travel at our own pace, while tied together, from being settled in America through chaos to being resettled in Brazil. Overall, the process would require at least two years of our time plus a ton of effort and energy. Our goal through it all would be that on the other side we’d be acculturated and able to navigate well our new world with a new language.

When the pandemic hit in early 2020 we were progressing along our bridge, even seeing the newly settled landing on the other side. Then suddenly, like a gust of wind halting our course, we were blown right back into the chaos and have been swirling around there ever since.

TWO WEEKENDS IN 2021

This February we were looking back on our year that was. Our kids adjusted to nearly a full year of online school, but the plan was for them to return to in-person school when the new year would begin in Brazil in late February.

We ordered uniforms and books, and even got the required items the kids would need to follow pandemic safety rules. During that week we had read local news reports that a new variant of the virus that had badly hit the Amazon region was now circulating here in our state. As a result our area hospitals were starting to fill up. This was worrisome, so we asked others to pray for us for wisdom because it seemed that the daily life in our city, which was rather open at the time, was not matching this news.

But on that Friday, on the final summer weekend before school was set to begin, our governor brought the hammer down. We were locked down with the strictest measures yet. This was a disappointing blow to our daughters; they cried. They had already finished a hard year online, and the thought of doing it again was heartbreaking. And yet as parents we were a little relieved; we felt safer at home.

Throughout the pandemic authorities in our state had tried adding beds and facilities, but they still faced a shortage of supplies and staffing. Now we were hearing of younger people coming to hospitals too in droves. Within a week there were waiting lists of a hundred or more people to get a space in the ICU.

One weekend in March, as hospitals were overcrowded, our closest friends and colleagues got sick with the new variant. The husband

was on the verge of needing to be hospitalized, but he was sent away from a few facilities because he wasn't sick enough to be admitted while they were already over capacity. Their final trip that night was to a private hospital that requested a lot of money just to admit him. Thankfully, he was seen by a doctor there, and it was recommended that he try recovering at home, and within a few days he was feeling better. Praise God!

During this time we also heard from others who lost friends and family members to this wave of the pandemic. One of them was an area pastor, husband, father, and a Kairos mentor. He was admitted to a hospital that was already over capacity, so he had to lay on a gurney in the hallway for two weeks before eventually needing to be intubated. He died shortly thereafter.

The death toll in our state and all of Brazil has continued to skyrocket to nearly 4,000 a day. Unless something unexpected changes, Brazil will surpass the death count in the States by August, although we have around a hundred million fewer citizens here.

More ambulances blared by our apartment in March than in any other month in memory. News reports were beyond depressing, but we would read them nonetheless. Somehow, celebrating small wins rang hollow. We were reading news...in Portuguese. Brandon began teaching a class... in Portuguese. We were launching Kairos with live students...in Portuguese. We were healthy. We had a safe home. We had all the supplies we needed. And still, we were fatigued and exhausted.

AN INTENSE CONVERSATION

We were told before moving here how hard it would be to move a teenager to the mission field. Our son was a freshman in high school at the time of our move. Upon arriving he leaned into the challenges he faced here. He worked hard at school to make friends, and he got involved in clubs and pushed himself in learning a new language.

But in March of 2020 his school switched to online school, and since then he has found himself lost in a world in which he feels he doesn't belong.

One night last month he shared his heart with us. He lamented things such as how much he missed being able to talk to people and actually be understood by them. He shared about the hardships of doing school online and his sorrow in not having the chance to build a life here. This was not the whining of a spoiled teenager. These were deep hurts and losses of a missionary kid whose parents prompted him to give up everything familiar and follow them to a new country, but now due to the pandemic he has had little to no chance to build something new here. He will be a senior later this year, and meanwhile the pandemic is as bad as it has ever been in our city.

That night we realized that despite our best laid plans, we just were not able to provide even a reasonable high school experience for him. We moved overseas during his 9th grade year and the pandemic has already greatly affected his 10th and 11th grade years. We had hoped to give him a joyful experience full of new friends and new adventures as he did high school here, but online school for a third or more of his high school years just doesn't cut it.

This led us to to start to look at what's next. We began praying and talking to our closest friends. We started to process how best we could balance our commitment to the field here with the emotional and mental needs of us all.

WHAT'S NEXT?

When looking at the trend of Covid here, and the slowness of response by the government and vaccination rates, we realized that it was unlikely that things will reopen much this calendar year. With this reality we began a conversation with our field director and our conference's International Office. Together we have decided to bump up our home assignment from July of 2022 to July of 2021.

This decision addresses both the needs of the field here and of our family. Our prayer is that by the time we return to Brazil in July of 2022 many things will have already reopened: That churches will be open, the seminary and other schools will be meeting in-person, and that life and ministry can resume in a more normal fashion.

This decision was also for the mental and emotional health of our family. Each one of us has had our own struggles with isolation and the struggle of acculturation while in our apartment most of the time. The hardships of living in a new country have intensified with the pandemic, and our prayer is that this timing will also allow us some time to heal and rest.

Our base during home assignment will be Aurora, Missouri, and our kids plan to enroll in the local schools there: Daniel will be in 12th grade, Monica in 8th, and Olivia in 6th. Once they are finished with the school year, we will look to return to Brazil with Monica and Olivia, and Daniel will be starting college in the States at that time.

PRAYER REQUESTS

As we make plans, please pray with us:

- We need a place to stay in Aurora, preferably with three bedrooms.
- We need to acquire two vehicles: one that can fit all five of us and one for Brandon to drive on longer trips and leave behind for Daniel to use.
- We need to comply with international travel restrictions and quarantine rules, which right now include proof of negative COVID tests, but these rules could change at any time.
- We need someone to stay at our apartment in Brazil and take care of our cats while we are away.
- We need to renew our work visas, which expire at the end of October of this year.

God is a big God, and he has been gracious to us, sustaining us every step of the way. Although this was not our plan, we can rest in

the comfort of knowing that it is his plan for us.

One thing we are excited about is being with you again! We will contact you in the coming months and let you know when we will be available to visit with you, even if that means joining you for an online worship service or meeting!

Thanks as always for your prayers and support. We love hearing from you, and despite all the ups and downs it has been a privilege to begin this journey as missionaries. We think of this change of plans as our next step in the journey, even if it came as a bit of a surprise.

We are also thankful for God's gracious gift of perseverance. Through him we have been holding steady to a good purpose, keeping the end goal in view the whole time, no matter what delays, fatigue, and temptations to indifference may arise. There is a weariness that can come from our efforts, and we think of Paul's reminder not to become weary in well-doing.

We are in a marathon, not a sprint, so perseverance can look like adjusting to changes along the long course and wisely moving forward. Our end goal remains to come alongside what God is doing in southern Brazil. We are remembering our call, and we can still smile knowing that Jesus is with us right now and will continue to be with us even until the end of the age!

Thanks so much for your ongoing support and prayers. We truly are blessed to have a team like you!

Brandon and Marci Jones

North American Baptist Missionaries to Brazil

TeachingBeyondBorders.Org

UPCOMING EVENTS

July 2021-22 - Home Assignment

AMANDA BENSON - PHILIPPINES



April 1, 2021

Are You Satisfied?

What satisfies you?

A hot beverage on a cold day?

Being with those you love?

Finishing the crossword puzzle of the day?

Not having to wear a mask?

A Snickers? (Sorry...couldn't resist!)

God, speaking to Jeremiah of the time when He would redeem His people and bring them back to the Promised Land after 70 years of captivity in Babylon, says "I will turn their mourning into joy; I will comfort them, and give them gladness for sorrow. I will feast the soul of the priests with abundance, **and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness**, declares the Lord" (Jeremiah 31:13b-14).

Since reading this, I have been pondering: *What does it mean to be satisfied with God's goodness? Am I satisfied with God's goodness?*

It's so easy to see God's goodness when times are great and things

are going well. We can usually see His abundant blessings, and we are satisfied with life. But what about in times of trial and uncertainty? In times of grief and sorrow? In times of loss and longing? Can we still see His goodness? Can we still be satisfied with His goodness?

As I was reading Deuteronomy 2, I was struck by a phrase Moses told the people about their wandering in the desert. He says God “knows your going through this great wilderness. These forty years the LORD your God has been with you. You have lacked nothing” (v. 7b). God didn’t just know about their journey...He knew it. Intimately. He not only provided for them each step of the way; He walked it with them. He was there each moment, guiding them with the pillars of fire and clouds. He told them when to fight and when to avoid places. He heard all of the complaints and grumblings. He knew about everything way better than they ever would.

This last year (and counting) has sometimes seemed like a great wilderness. There was so much unknown. There has been some wandering (and lots of staying put), sometimes even just within our own souls. It has been a time like never before. And here in the Philippines it seems like we are making no progress. We are back to square one, currently sitting in our homes during the strictest level of lockdown with record numbers of cases, the vaccine not really in sight, and the hospitals overwhelmed with patients.

And yet, God is here. God knows this wilderness. Intimately. He is walking it with us. And even now He is good. Even now, I can be satisfied with His goodness.

Paul learned the secret to being satisfied with God’s goodness. He says, “I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me” (Phil 4:11b-13). I cannot survive any wilderness on my own; I

can survive through Christ, who gives me strength. I can be content in the unknown and in the wandering. I can be satisfied, knowing God is good (Ps 34:8-10) and that He promises to not withhold good from those who walk in His ways (Ps 84:11, 85:12).

Chris Tiegreen says it well when he says, “God is good. Relentlessly good. No matter what we see. No matter how it feels in a moment of crisis. No matter what we think He could have/should have done to help us out of the crisis or deliver us from pain. Regardless of the evidence of experience--which, by the way, we see from an extremely limited perspective--He has never forsaken those who seek Him. Hold onto that. Forever” (*The One Year Heaven on Earth Devotional*, March 17).

I say with the Psalmist, “I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living! Wait for the Lord; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the Lord!” (Ps 27:13-14).

I am waiting. And I am looking for the goodness of the Lord today when I’m tempted to look at the bad. I am learning what it means to seek Him and rely daily on His strength. He is so good. I pray that I can be satisfied in His goodness, and that you may be as well.

Amanda

Praises

- Praise God for His constant goodness and faithfulness, even in times of trial.
- This past few weeks have been really great for me as far as planning ahead and getting caught up on work! And now we have a couple short weeks of school (due to Easter and Parent/Teacher conferences) and then have a week-long break. The end is in sight!
- My neighbors returned about a month ago, so now I have people to spend some time with during quarantine (we live in separate houses on the same compound)!

Prayer Requests

- Pray for the Philippines as we face record number of Covid cases, overwhelmed hospitals, and strict lockdowns. Pray in particular for the kids, who have not been able to leave their houses since March 16, 2020 (except for exercise for a time, though that is taken away now).
- Pray that God would provide strength and motivation for the staff and students to finish strong. So many are struggling right now to stay motivated to continue learning online, especially with no end in sight. We are hoping to do hybrid learning next year, but it depends on if the government will give us permission or not.
- Pray that God would provide the staff we need for next year, that God would provide their support, and that they would be able to get into the country this summer.

Missionary Contact Info.

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Tax-deductible donations can be sent to: SEND International
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Brandon & Marci Jones:

Website: teachingbeyondborders.org

Email: PastorBCJones@gmail.com

Address: U.S. mailing address is: 1003 Baretta Ct., Aurora, MO 65605

Address in Brazil is: Avenida Cristóvão Colombo, 3452/201, 90560-002 Porto Alegre, RS, Brasil (Cards are wonderful, but please contact us before sending a package)

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Step 2: Click on the "missionaries" label.

Step 3: Click on the national missionary to whom you would like to designate your support.

Step 4: Click on the "give to.." button on the national workers page.

Step 5: Fill out the form. All gifts given through the NAB are tax deductible.

**BRANDON VALLEY BAPTIST CHURCH
PRESENTING A CHANGELESS CHRIST FOR A CHANGING WORLD**