

The Evangelist

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST ANGLICAN CHURCH
Ancient Faith, Modern Life
May 2012 Issue

A COMPETENT KING

What does the kingdom of God have to do with me? Isn't that when Jesus returns sometime in the future? But what about my life right now?

It's interesting to note that in the preaching of Jesus and the apostles, the kingdom of God is both a future AND a present reality. Jesus and his disciples preached "the kingdom of God is at hand". Yet, they also speak of the kingdom as if it were far in the future (Mark 1.15 and Luke 13.28-29, respectively).

For them, the kingdom of God is immanent and immediate (i.e., present among us now) AND it is also transcendent and future (i.e., beyond human understanding in the future). It ought to be the same for us.

Most of the time, we see the kingdom of God as far away, on the other side of the impenetrable wall of death. We usually don't think of the kingdom of God as in the midst (Luke 17.21). We don't think of the kingdom of God as having any real meaning to us right now.

That is a dangerous way of thinking! Consider this line of thought.

- A kingdom has a King.
- But if the kingdom of God is not a present reality, then we have no King, or at least he has no authority.
- If the King has no authority, then who is running the show?
- And if God isn't running the show, then what assurance do we have "that for those who love God all things work together for good" (Rom 8.28-30)?
- In fact, what hope do we have that any of the circumstances of life have any purpose?

In principle, we all believe that God is intimately involved in history. But do we believe that he is intimately involved in OUR history?

Last week, Ben Cramer preached on "Choosing The Unchosen Spiritual Discipline" (4/29, see web site for audio). He spoke of seeing everything in our lives – and especially the hard things – as instruments in the Father's hand. They are meant for our good. But we cannot embrace hardship or trial as a spiritual discipline, as having a purpose, unless we know that they are in the competent hands of a good and powerful God, a God who both means us well and will accomplish it.

Do you believe that? If not, I am puzzled to know why you believe in God at all.

A WORTHY KING

If you do believe that God is intimately involved in YOUR history, then be prepared to see your worship change (there are many other implications too!).

Worship – declaring God's worthiness – becomes all the more difficult in hardship. It's one thing to breathe a quick "thanks God" when things are going well. It's another when we must declare the worthiness of Him who is trying and testing us.

The psalmist demonstrates worship in hardship when he writes, "purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice" (Ps 51.7-8).

He acknowledges that his affliction comes from the Lord. Because hardship comes



from God's good hand, then he can be confident that he will "hear joy and gladness". He is willing to withstand the pain of his "broken bones", because the same God who broke them

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will also cause them to rejoice in healing.

If God has no authority over the broken bones, then He has no authority over setting the broken bones. If the cup does not come from the hand of our good Father, then the psalmist merely drinks bitter hyssop and not a healing potion.

This is a truth we need to learn now. It will be much harder to learn this in a hospital bed, or in the midst of depression.

Who is your god? Luck and chance? Are you the captain of your own fate? Do the stars rule your life? Is your god far away god, at best disinterested, at worst cruel and arbitrary? Then you worship an idol.

Or is it the God to whom Jude gives praise,

“Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever” (Jude 24–25).



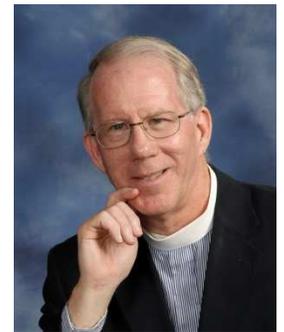
Baker Library Book Brief
By Ken Cook

The newest volume being added to our congregational library has been written by the father of one of our parishioners. Klaus Issler, Dan Issler’s father, is the author of Living into the Life of Jesus: The Formation of Christian Character. I had been aware of his previous publication for InterVarsity Press for some time, as I found the title to be expressive of how both Christians and non-Christians might view Christian prayer, Bible reading, meditation and devotion – Wasting Time with God: A Christian Spirituality of Friendship with God.

However, it was not until I saw a photograph of Dr. Issler in the advertising copy for this new book that I realized that the author was Christa’s father-in-law and the grandfather of Katherine and

Eleanor. Klaus Issler has other credentials, in addition to having relatives in our congregation. He is professor of Christian education and theology in the doctoral program in educational studies at Talbot School of Theology of Biola University (formerly Bible Institute of Los Angeles).

As both the title and subtitle of Living into the Life of Jesus suggest, this book is about an essential concern of all disciples of Christ: the process of change whereby we become more like Jesus. We typically yearn to grow more like our Lord. But we commonly see little “progress” and are often highly frustrated. Our best efforts at faith and obedience do not seem to translate to much in the way of change, and, at times, we may be uncertain as to how to proceed. At times, we secretly - or openly - feel like giving up. So much for sanctification! Yet, thankfully, the Scriptures do not allow us to stay in such a state of hopelessness. We are challenged to “strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14). As well, we have the promises and instruction of our Lord Jesus: “I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from you can do nothing” (John 15:5).



Dr. Issler takes this whole matter very seriously. Like his master Jesus, he actually aims at a change of heart (!), and not a mere change of behavior. But it is important to say that our author has hope and joy as a result of gleaning what the Scriptures have to say about how Christ lived a godly life, as well as how we might live with him. Further, the whole book is refreshingly practical. See Table 2.1., “Five Formation Gaps” on page 52 and find yourself. See Table 3.2., “Three Major Phases in Heart Flow Change” on page 72 and get something of the big

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picture with regard to your on-going struggles and potential maturation in living the Christian life with Christ. The book's central sections focus on the divine resources available to us as we seek to have our character transformed by the grace of God. They are (1.) the love of God for us and for others through us, (2.) the essential ministry of the Holy Spirit within and through us and (3.) the vital revelation of the Holy Scriptures to us, and lived out through us by the Holy Spirit.

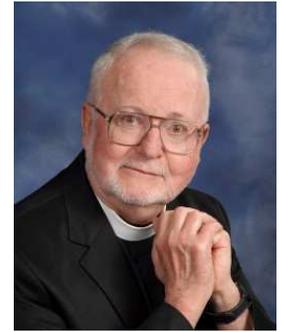
Living into the Life of Jesus contains the cutting-edge testimony of many Christians as to how their lives came to experience transformation by the grace of God and by disciplined reliance upon the grace of God. Likely, all readers will find the chapter on "Three Jesus Practices About Relationships" instructive and quite helpful. Who doesn't have problems among their relationships? Perhaps the closing chapter on "Three Exemplary Practices About Money and Work", while of value to all, will prove to be of special interest to those of us who serve the Kingdom of God in the world of business; this section offers perspective on Jesus' 18 or so years in the building trade and the influence those years had on his teaching. One of the strongest possible reasons for reading this book can be found in the two pages of the Preface.



In Memoriam
By William C. Kenney

Some of us were privileged to know Christine Mahl and her dear friend Nadia Watson when our parish family was based in Huntingdon Valley. The two of them were advancing in years, but they persevered in driving every Sunday from far off Harleysville eastbound on Route 63 directly into the blinding morning sun to arrive at St. John's for the 9:30 a.m. service. They were truly saintly.

At one time they had managed a small Christian retreat center in the Poconos. Many of us loved being with them and absorbing their quiet wisdom. The following poem by Christine provides a good example of this saintly wisdom. One of our old timers, Barbara Quitt, prays this poem from memory as part of her daily devotions.



*I know not by what methods rare,
But this I know: God answers prayer.
I know that He has giv'n His word
Which tells me prayer is always heard,
And will be answered soon or late.
And so I pray and calmly wait.
I know not if the blessings sought
Will come in just the way I thought,
But leave my prayers with Him alone
Whose will is wiser than my own,
Assured that He will grant my quest
Or send some answer far more blessed.*

Bill

Osprey
Courtesy of
William Keene



TYNDALE
Periodicals

From the Editor's Desk

Stair Fairies
Posted on March 16th, 2012
by: [periodicals](#)

We have gnomes living in our house. Or elves. Or perhaps, and more likely, stair fairies.

At least that is the belief of the other two people who live in our house and who have opposable thumbs. (They would be my

wonderful wife and son. I have excused the cat and the dog from this diatribe.)

Why do they believe in stair fairies? Well, we have two staircases in our house. One goes upstairs to the bedrooms, and the other goes downstairs to the basement. The scenario is this: an item of some sort—an article of clothing (often socks), a roll of wrapping paper, tape, a stack of books, empty boxes, or a new bottle of shampoo—will be left at the bottom or the top of one of the two staircases. It might be left overnight. It might be two days. And then, like magic, the article appears at the opposite end of the steps. So the other two people in the house *must* believe in stair fairies. Why? BECAUSE THEY NEVER TAKE ANYTHING UP OR DOWN THE STAIRS! NEVER! (Sorry for shouting. And I intended on sounding good-natured.) I am sure my son imagines that as soon as the stair fairies see these abandoned items on the steps, they wait till the house is quiet and furtively carry the things up or down.

Yes, I am the one who generally, if not always, carries these things up and down. I guess that is just part of the dad duties that one must accept. (In my son's defense, he helps around the house a lot. He just doesn't see things that are at ankle level because at 6' 4", he has a long look down.)

So, why do I mention this truth of modern family life?

Well, it exemplifies another truth—of the Christian life. There are lots of issues and concerns and situations that we simply don't see, or choose to overlook. We walk right by—when it would be very simple to pick them up and carry them a few feet. We need to keep our eyes open to see the things left at the bottom of the stairs.

Of course, I know that we can't get involved in everything and that there are hundreds and hundreds of wonderful efforts and missions and organizations that need help. No one person can be involved in them all. That's a given. So let me push my stair illustration just

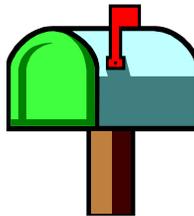
a bit. People can walk by things that are right in their paths because they know someone else will take care of them. I can't worry about the staircases in other people's houses—but I can care about mine.

So if you have been walking past a particular opportunity for a while, I suggest that you stop and see if God is trying to tell you to help with it. It may not take a huge effort—but it could be enough to take that person or organization a few more steps in the right direction.

After all, there's no such thing as stair fairies.



Jim Kraus, Publisher



Update from the Church Office By Cindy Kamm

We recently developed a new leaflet for newcomers to St. John's. So, if you see someone new to St. John's, feel free to say hello, introduce yourself and give them one of our leaflets. A sample of the front page is at the end of this newsletter.

In an effort to cut back on postage expenses, we have a mail box for our "Church Family" in the Church Office. If we have mail for you, you will receive an email titled "You Got Mail."

If you would like to us recognize your birthday or anniversary in *The Evangelist*, please let us know by email at cindy@toknowchrist.org or call the Church Office.

Thank you.

Cindy



Birthdays in the Month of May:
4th – Ellen Bodenheimer
18th – Margie Cook



May	
6 th	Mission Sunday
19 th	Faith In Action Service Date
19 th	Community Day of Giving
20 th	Teacher Appreciation Sunday
June	
3 rd	Parish Picnic
July	
8 th	Family Fun Night
22 nd	Family Fun Night

Please be sure to read "What's the Buzz" in the coming weeks for more details.

American Minute

By Bill Federer

Wednesday, April 25, 2012

<http://www.crosswalkmail.com>

Beginning April 25, 1789, every session of the U.S. Senate has opened with prayer. This continued the Continental Congress' practice during the Revolution, as Franklin remarked in 1787: "In the beginning of the Contest with Great Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayer in this room for Divine protection." The first Senate Chaplain was Bishop Samuel Provoost, who conducted George Washington's Inaugural Service at St.

Paul's Chapel. All 62 Senate Chaplains have been Christian, though leaders of other faiths have periodically been invited to offer prayer. The U.S. Senate Chaplain after World War II was Peter Marshall, who prayed: "Our liberty is under God and can be found nowhere else. May our faith be not merely stamped upon our coins, but expressed in our lives." On February 7, 1984, President Reagan addressed the National Association of Secondary School Principals: "God...should never have been expelled from America's schools. As we struggle to teach our children...we dare not forget that our civilization was built by men and women who placed their faith in a loving God. If Congress can begin each day with a moment of prayer...so then can our sons and daughters."



Welcome
 Leaflet
 Front
 Cover

*Knowing Christ and
 Making Him Known*

Welcome!

Weekly Holy Communion Services:
Sunday - 8:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m.
Wednesday - 9:15 a.m.

Our Clergy:

Rector:
Rev. Mark E. Rudolph
Associate Rector:
Rev. Kenneth R. Cook
Assistant Rector:
Rev. Williams C. Kenney, Jr.