



What have you been reading lately that's brought you closer to the Lord?

That question caught me by surprise as I was picking away at my salad at the Willmar Youth for Christ banquet. It came from the fellow sitting next to me picking at his salad and looking for something to drum up conversation. But it's a great question and I thought if he was interested, maybe somebody else would be too. So here goes...

My first response was "A book by a fellow named Chris Fabry. A Christian writer with a knack for using humor to make the truths of God hit home and then stick. I love humor books. Life's too short to not laugh - a lot:

"A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a crushed spirit dries up the bones." Proverbs 17:22.

"I would wish less to go to heaven if I knew that God would not understand a joke." Martin Luther

Anyway, this particular book is entitled *At the Corner of Mundane and Grace*. It is a great book that not only finds humor in the mundane, everyday situations we encounter - it also finds God in them.

Here's an excerpt from a chapter entitled: "You gotta hold the baby - even when she spits"

Our children have been quick learners, so the following should not deter you from asking them to baby-sit, should you have the opportunity. In order to protect her identity, I will refer to the offending child as "Sibling."

Sibling wanted to hold baby Kaitlyn when she was only a few weeks old.... Sibling lovingly cradled little Kaitlyn in her arms and said sweet things to her. I turned my back for a second. The next think I knew, little Kaitlyn was "bouncing" on the floor. Thank God for thick carpeting and Stainmaster. I picked her up and calmed her, then looked at her astonished Sibling.

"What happened?" I said?

"She spit on me." Sibling said...

I helped Sibling clean her pretty dress and reminded her, "You gotta hold the baby - even when she spits."

On our way through life, we learn that life "spits up" on us. As we grow older, life spits up and kicks us in the teeth, and we're tempted to just drop the whole thing. But remember that the spitting lasts just for a season, but joy comes in the morning. That's sort of in the Bible (Psalm 30:5). And if you ever drop the "baby," pick it up again and hang on. There's a Father who loves you in spite of it all.

The life-lessons in *At the Corner of Mundane and Grace* are such that I've found myself re-reading parts of it.

There's another book I've been re-reading whose life-lessons have had an even greater and longer-lasting impact: The Gospel of Matthew. The Good News about Jesus as told by Matthew, a disciple and former social outcast tax collector. Violet and I have been reading a chapter a day for our daily Bible study together. We've been using the excellent booklet "Who is Jesus" from Lutheran Hour Ministries to guide our reading. You can find this booklet in the narthex. Here are just a couple of insights from life I've learned from Jesus this time through (no matter how many times you read about Jesus, you *always* learn something new):

The Maji (Wise Men) didn't let appearances fool them. Look like it or not, Jesus *was* the King. They didn't let their idea of what a king should be derail them. They simply believed. Jesus doesn't always fit our idea of what God should be. Don't let that fool you. He *is* the King. He *is* God. Simply believe.

Repentance (turning away from sin and turning to God) is the first message Jesus preached. It is the necessary first step for any of us to enter the Kingdom of God.

At his baptism, God claimed Jesus as his Son. At our baptisms, God claims us as his sons and daughters too.

Satan tried to get Jesus to sin by misquoting the Scriptures. Just because a thought comes into your head (or to you in a dream) when you are searching for answers, *doesn't mean it came from God*. Satan could have planted it there. Check what God says in his word - not what "sounds like something God could say."

I could go on and on, but my best advice is simply to read the Gospel of Matthew for yourself (even if you've read it before). I guarantee you'll get some fresh insights on who Jesus is and what his message means for your life right now.

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to pastor@livingwordlutheran.net