



April 15, 2017

Hi Friends and Family,

Here are some thoughts as we celebrate the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus.

In John 1:27, John the Baptist declared that there was One coming after him; One to be preferred; One whose sandal strap John was not worthy to loosen. Then we read in John 1:29:

*The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"*

John's introduction of Jesus, the long-awaited Messiah, wasn't as King or by some lofty title, but as "The Lamb of God." The One who would take away the sin of the world.

Jesus came to save and to rescue us. To die for us and then give us the opportunity and the free will to decide to follow Him. He came motivated by love for us. The Bible tells us He loved us first, even while we were yet in sin! It was love that caused Jesus to leave His throne and be born as a baby, walk this earth as a man, live a sinless life and then be put to death, bearing our shame, and paying our penalty. All to set us free because He loves and cares for us.

Those that follow Jesus aren't forced, are not controlled, are not manipulated, or threatened. When I chose to follow Christ, I responded to His unconditional and freely given love. He loved me first.

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus himself declared His purpose:

*"The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor;*

*He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind,*

*To set at liberty those who are oppressed;*

*To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD."* LUKE 4:18-19

Oh, the wonderful work He has in store for all those who follow Him! He starts by speaking good news to our ears that have been deprived of truth and love. When we respond, He begins in the most important place. Our hearts.

He heals us in our hearts. Removes the wounds, softens the hardness, and sets us free to love again. It's amazing how well we see when our hearts are healed. How funny it is to be blind for so long and not even know it until the day that God Almighty takes the time, by our invitation, to touch our hearts. We see again.

We are free again. The weight of our hurts and wounds, the weight of our sin and past mistakes is lifted off us. We experience liberty. Real liberty that is free from fear, and full of hope and peace. We come to understand that not only does God care, He has a good, acceptable, and perfect plan for us. Then we understand that now is the acceptable year of the Lord!

Be encouraged - God loves you!

So, what have we been up to in the months of March and April so far? Here is a summary:

### **March**

- For the month of March, we were doing double duty on Sundays. On Sunday mornings, we were at the Church in Jurmala (5<sup>th</sup>), then at Factory-99 (12<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup>), and at the House of God Church in Riga (26<sup>th</sup>). On Sunday evenings, we were at the Church of Kalnciems for my friend Pastor Leonid. Leonid pastors two churches – the one in Jurmala and the other in Kalnciems. We helped give him a chance to rest in March by running the services.
- The kids and I started helping at the youth meetings at the Jurmala Church.
- Taught at BSM, and finished teaching my classes on the topic of “The Church.”
- MaryBeth and Amy continued their service at Hope for Children.
- Amy, stayed several days at BSM, living with the students and participating in classes and their normal activities. She also went with a team of students from Word of Truth to help serve and do street witnessing in the town Narva, Estonia.
- I am now meeting with and helping to mentor 3 young men. One is an Engineering student in Riga from Nigeria. One is a pastor of a church in Riga and leads History Makers, and the other will be planting a new church in the town of Ventspils, starting in June.

### **April**

- Ministered at Word of Truth the first Sunday of April and Factory-99 on the 9<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>.
- We continued helping with the Jurmala youth meetings and Hope for Children.
- Prepared for our upcoming trip to the US.

## UPCOMING SCHEDULE

- On Wednesday, April 19<sup>th</sup>, we will be flying back to the US for the graduation and then the wedding of our oldest daughter Emily. During that time, we will also minister at Celebration, visit family, and help settle our two oldest sons who will be staying in the States. It will be very busy with many things on our to-do list. We appreciate your prayers for our travels, plans and to-dos.
- Once we return to Latvia we will be finalizing plans for the mission team coming from Celebration in July.

## PRAYER NEEDS

- A Mission Team from Celebration Community Church will be coming to Latvia from July 16<sup>th</sup> to the 31<sup>st</sup>. Please keep this in your prayers. The team will be serving at Hope for Children, BSM, and participating in a full week youth camp.
- Once we return, we have been asked to help with a church plant in the town of Ventspils (about 2.5 hours away from Riga). Along with helping some of the smaller churches that either do not have a pastor or have specific needs we can help with.
- The Hope for Children facility in Bolderaja, where MaryBeth and Amy serve, needs a new stove. This is an after-school program for children in need and at risk. Hope prepares meals for these kids so that they get at least one good meal a day. We are hoping to help raise the necessary funds needed for the stove and other repairs and supplies.
- Our upcoming two-month trip to the States.
- The Lord's on-going leading and direction regarding ministry requests and opportunities.

It's hard to believe it was a year ago that we first wrote to you to tell of our plans to become missionaries in Latvia. Since that time, 9 months were spent in the country – full time since August 31st. In that time, we have served and encouraged many churches and individuals, youth camps, BSM, Hope for Children, and more.

We could not be here without you. Because of your help many individuals have received Jesus, received healing and victory, and have been taught the Word of God. We've also provided significant financial assistance to those most in need, expressing God's love in a tangible way.

Thanks for your prayers, love and financial assistance. Whether you helped us with a one-time gift or are making monthly donations, they all make a difference.

Financial gifts can be made through [www.Celebrationcc.com](http://www.Celebrationcc.com) or mailed to Celebration Community Church, PO Box 140, Columbus NJ, 08022. Your gifts are tax-deductible.

Love and Blessings!



