



Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? Yet not one of them will fall to the ground outside your Father's care. And even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. So don't be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows.

Matthew 10: 29-31

MILLESTONES

Through the Ages

With Kingdom Eyes

by Katie Lutz

"Why do they need a house so big?" "Why doesn't anyone greet me when I enter the room?" "Why does it seem so difficult to communicate in my own language?" "Does anyone even care where I have been the past two years?" "I thought I was supposed to fit in with everyone now that I am back in my home culture."



Those were some of the many questions that drifted in and out of my thought process frequently during my first six months back in the United States.

I had been living in Peru for almost two years, serving as a GEO Missionary (Globally Engaged in Outreach) with LCMS World Mission, when I decided to return home to finish my master's degree in education. I anticipated a smooth and comfortable transition back into my home culture. After having spent two years speaking a second language and learning how to function in a foreign culture, I had expected to receive a break from major challenges and difficulties. I was wrong.

I found myself feeling as if I had blurred vision and slurred speech. It seemed as though it took me forever to process even basic decisions. So many cereal options at the grocery store! I would get frustrated with small cultural norms (heads buried in cellphones instead of talking face-to-face), and I felt slow to connect to people in conversation. The individualism that resides in our country easily saddened me.

I remember a few times parking my car on the side of the street in nice neighborhoods, weeping as I looked at the houses and thought of my friends in Peru who lived with dirt floors in one-bedroom huts. I'll admit, it was really hard for me to see God working in my new setting, and I prayed that He would allow me to see even small glimpses of how He was moving. As His Word tells us, God responds to our prayers so beautifully and timely. (Matthew 7:7-11)

Now three years later I can look back and see, by the guidance of the Spirit, many ways that God was working through the uncomfortable transition back to the United States. Over time, He did not make me comfortable in the United States, but He did begin to give me kingdom eyes through His Word — eyes to look at what really matters in light of God's kingdom in a given situation, conversation, or decision. A heart that once was easily frustrated now sits calm and peaceful. A mind that used to dwell on the problems of man, now dwells on the promises of God. A soul that was once restless, now rests securely in the arms of the Father.

Scripture says: *Let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith* (Hebrews 12:1-2), and *So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen* (2 Corinthians 4:18).

I don't know what transition will come next for me or for you, but my prayer is that we encounter whatever it may be with kingdom eyes — eyes consumed not by what is worldly but that gaze constantly on the One who knows us deeply and loves us unconditionally.



Through Changing Circumstances, God Abides

by Beth Opel and Susan R. Opel

When you meet Corrine Opel for the first time, it's likely you'll get a broad smile, a heart-felt welcome, and a warm hug.

She's one of those people who will sign up to do just about anything that needs to be done at church. Need a batch of cookies for coffee hour? She'll bake something delicious. Need a poem written for the church anniversary? She'll sit down and write a thoughtful and clever little ditty. Need a greeter at the church door? She's on it, doling out those famous hugs.

For fifty-seven years, Corrine has been serving the Lord not only as the wife of a dedicated church worker, but also as a founding member of her LWML at St. John Lutheran Church—Amelith in Bay City, Michigan. In LWML, she found a purpose that blossomed into a personal mission, serving as a leader in district and national Christian growth committees.

In recent years, taking on such tasks has become more of a challenge. She doesn't see as well as she used to, and she often struggles with her hearing. She moves more slowly too. But after so many years, that habit of service is hard to break.

Last summer the Lord opened her eyes, by the Spirit, to what lay ahead of her. Her strong and independent husband, who had cared for her in sickness and health, went in for a routine doctor's appointment, which led to surgeries and complications, resulting in months of hospital stays, rehab, and therapy. He was now the one in need of her care.

We, their daughters, as well as our two brothers, looked on with concern. None of us lived close enough to care for our parents on a daily basis, so we took turns traveling to Michigan to stay with Mom and to encourage Dad. We did our best to set up routines, and we enlisted local friends to help Mom until Dad was able to come home again. Surely, we thought, he'll be back to normal soon.

But as the days turned into months, it became clear that what we expected and hoped to happen was not reality. Though we were thankful for the church friends who so lovingly looked after Mom and visited Dad, we felt helpless and guilty about being so far away.

From our home in the Salt Lake City area, we brainstormed with our brothers in upstate New York and metropolitan Detroit: What if Mom and Dad moved here to Utah? Half their children live here, and Susan works from home and has a flexible schedule.

Dad's logical and sensible nature recognized that the idea of moving to Utah had merit. But Mom was not as easy to convince. She had lived in Michigan since 1937. Her family was there. Her church was there. Her life was there. As she sat in the congregation at St. John one fall Sunday, she felt certain that she could not leave that place.

But as Dad explained to her the advantages of moving to Utah, she began to soften. In the end, she recognized that God's plans don't always match up with our expectations. As a faithful and loving wife and companion, she echoed Ruth's example of devotion: *"Where you go I will go, and where you stay, I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God"* (Ruth 1:16).

A year ago, none of us could have foreseen the changes that were ahead. But we are content in knowing God has engineered an amazing plan for our family. Mom and Dad will now have children nearby to care for them, and all of us will have an increased peace of mind.

Before Dad fell ill last summer, he and Mom had planned to drive to Des Moines, Iowa, for the 2015 LWML Convention. Because of his hospitalization, that trip had to be cancelled. So imagine their joy when they realized that the 2017 convention will be held in Salt Lake City, Utah — their new hometown!

"Oh, thou who changest not, abide with me." (LSB #878)

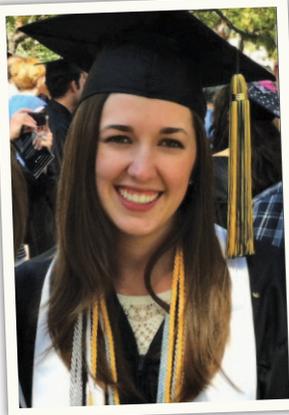


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Who is like you, Lord God Almighty? You, Lord, are mighty, and your faithfulness surrounds you.

Psalm 89:8





Expectation | Reality

by Margaret Foreman

I was always excited about growing up, finishing college, going to grad school, and getting a real job. I had high expectations for my grown-up future: big city, travel, networking, handshakes and success — all in high heels, of course.

Not surprisingly, the reality is nothing like this. I network and shake hands, but high heels just aren't practical when I switch between deskwork and manual labor at a moment's notice.

The reality of my grown-up present is small town, jeans and flats. More than that, the reality of my grown-up present is better than my expectations. Not glamorous, but better.

Getting here was not as glamorous as I imagined either.

Sure, my adult journey started with an exciting milestone: college graduation. But the transition from college to the work place was a slow one. It took me to new cities, dragged me through piles of job applications, introduced me to new friends, and made me grow up (at least a little bit).

Every step of the way, I saw my reality fail to fit my expectations.

The most glaring example of this was my expectation that I would walk in to my dream full-time job and apartment right

away. The reality? Before I found that dream job, I had to volunteer, live with my parents, and try to be patient.

The constant waiting, build up, and let down was hard. I cried. I considered moving. I got bangs.

God pulled me through. Any transition requires an active faith life seen in prayer, trust, and patience. I'm not sure I exercised any of those things at the beginning. I'm not sure I am strong in them now, but I know I grew by the power of the Holy Spirit.

I quickly found a welcoming church. There, I could hear God's Word, remember my Baptism, take the Lord's Supper with friends, and connect with a group of young women, my first friends in a new city.

We meet weekly for Bible study and prayer. We do life together. Throughout my transitions, I bring them the worry of the unknown and the excitement of realizations. They pray with me and for me. As I transition and resettle, I continue to grow in my faith.

My expectations didn't match His plans for my reality, but I praise God that He clearly guides me through the opened and closed doors of His Word. I feel a little like a cow going down the chute to an unknown future. But He promises *your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left* (Isaiah 30:21 ESV). I keep moving forward, and He lovingly shows me the way.



There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens.

Ecclesiastes 3:1



A New Mission Field

by Marilyn Stuckwisch

I'm here, Lord — moved into my apartment at the assisted living facility!

It was a big decision, but it was time. It was getting more difficult each month to keep up a house, buy

groceries, pay the bills, and monitor my medications. However, it is also difficult to give up my independence to this degree. As You know, Lord, I have always been a "doer"! But the "doing" has slowed down a lot.

I heard about a new facility from the newspaper (when I was flying to the Pittsburgh LWML Convention!) and, when I got home again, decided I needed to check it out.

On my visit I noticed most of the residents had smiles on their faces. The staff was pleasant and invited me to stay for lunch. The food was good, my tablemates were friendly, and I felt comfortable.

What really sold me on my decision to move there is that the complex is only a mile from our church! You know, Lord, how important my church is to me. Since I can still drive, it will be

easy to get there for services and still enable me to participate in activities like choir and LWML! When I can no longer drive, a number of friends live close by and I will not be shy in asking them to pick me up from time to time.

The decision was made, but then came the difficult part — downsizing! So many memories and so much stuff! But that's what so much of it is — just stuff! The job got done by handing down some to family members, selling some, taking some to the Christian thrift store, and giving some away. And here I am!

I moved in, determined to have a good attitude about this transition in my life. What's not to like? No cooking, no cleaning! New friends, new activities! There may be some things I will not care for, but that's life. One thing I do know — after I made the decision, I felt such peace. I know You had been guiding me every step of the way. Your blessings have been constant in my life, and I am so grateful!

And now I have a new mission field before me. I know there are people here who may not know You. Use me, Lord, to make a difference here. And bless the rest of my days here as I live them out in Your service. In the name of my loving Savior, Jesus. Amen. **Q**