



Covered by God's Grace By Jan Brunette

On February 3, 2022, an ice storm hit northern Texas, wrapping residents in a glistening wonderland. While beautiful from a distance, the storm also could have easily been a hazard to me and to others.

What an incredible lesson those ice-laden limbs brought: no matter how challenging my life may appear to be, God covers every seemingly insignificant aspect with His shining glory and amazing beauty.

Opening Prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us the freedom to come to You in humility and praise. Grant us the wisdom to see the lessons You desire to reveal. Prepare our hearts to receive them with a depth of understanding necessary for strength and healing to take place. In Jesus' name and through the power of the Holy Spirit, we ask this. Amen.

REPAIRING BROKEN LIMBS WITH CHRIST'S GLISTENING PROMISE

When struggling with slippery events in our lives, we find it difficult to acknowledge that there is a loving Father, a caring, adoring Savior, and a tender, gentle Holy Spirit coating our weak, broken "limbs" with eternal blessings unseen to the human eye.

One important desire of Jesus is that of "heart-repair." Read **Matthew 12:15-21** (especially verses 20 & 21) to review His desire.

Matthew 12: 15-21 Jesus, aware of this, withdrew from there. And many followed him, and he healed them all and ordered them not to make him known. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah:

"Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased. I will put my Spirit upon him, and he will proclaim justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel or cry aloud, nor will anyone hear his voice in the streets; a bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not quench until he brings justice to victory; and in his name the Gentiles will hope."

Jesus does not come to us to break down, but to build up. He comes to bring victory, not just for Himself, but for all people.

Have there have been times in your lives when you felt like a bruised reed or a smoldering wick? Depending on the size of your group, you may want to invite women to share in pairs or small groups instead of in the large group. No answers are wrong, but be aware of confidentiality and bravery it may take for some to share with others.

We may discover that heart healing and repair is slow and progressive, exposing our doubt that God's details are best for us. The journey can teach us to love and better understand others in similar situations and enable us to grow in our faith-walk with our loving Savior, Jesus Christ.

Read the following, and discuss why details are so important.

Genesis 50:15-21: When Joseph's brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, "It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil that we did to him" So they sent a message to Joseph, saying, "Your father gave this command before he died, 'Say to Joseph, Please forgive the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you.' And now please forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father." Joseph wept when they spoke to him. His brothers also came and fell down before him and said, "Behold, we are your servants." But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

The story of Joseph is told in Genesis 37-50. Obviously, it has many important details for our Lord to see fit to have so much included. Points to ponder include, Joseph's dreams and then later Potiphar's dreams, Joseph being sold by his brothers, and the trips the brothers made to Egypt to not only gain sustenance during the famine, but also be reunited with Joseph. Key words in passage above are forgive, comfort, "do not fear", and "God meant it for good".

Acts 8:26-39: Now an angel of the Lord said to Philip, "Rise and go toward the south to the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is the desert place. And he rose and went. And there was an Ethiopian, a eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure. He had come to Jerusalem to worship and was returning, seated in his chariot, and he was reading the prophet Isaiah. And the Spirit said to Philip, "Go over and join this chariot." So Philip ran to him and heard him reading Isaiah the prophet and asked, "Do you understand what you are reading?" And he said, "How can I, unless someone guides me?" And he invited Philip to come up and sit with him. Now the passage of the Scripture that he was reading was this:

"Like a sheep he was led to the slaughter and like a lamb before its shearer is silent, so he opens not his mouth. In his humiliation, justice was denied him. Who can describe his generation? For his life is taken away from the earth."

And the eunuch said to Philip, "About whom, I ask you, does the prophet say this, about himself or about someone else?" Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus. And as they were going along the road they came to some water, and the eunuch said, "See here is water! What prevents me from being baptized?" And he commanded the chariot to stop, and they both went down into the water, Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him. And when they came up out of the water, the Spirit of the Lord carried Philip away, the eunuch saw him no more, and went on his way rejoicing.

The meeting of the eunuch and Philip was not a coincidence. It was a planned event by the Holy Spirit. Note that the eunuch had been in Jerusalem worshipping and was ready to dig deeper in the Scripture. Even the portion of Scripture that he was reading allowed for an easy sharing of Christ's love for all as Philip studied and taught with this man. Scripture is a Means of Grace that allows us to know our Savior and learn more of Him as the Holy Spirit works faith in us.

Acts 12:1-17:

And about that time Herod the king laid violent hands on some who belonged to the church. He killed James the brother of John with the sword and when he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. This was during the days of Unleavened Bread. And when he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out to the people. So Peter was kept in prison, but earnest prayer for him was made to God by the church. Now when Herod was about to bring him out, on that very night, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and sentries before the doors were guarding the prison. And behold, an angel of the Lord stood next to him, and a light shone in the cell. He struck Peter on the side and woke him, saying, "Get up quickly." And the chains fell off his hands. And the angel said to him, "Dress yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. And he said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me." And he went out and followed him. He did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. When they had passed the first and the second guard, they came to the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its own accord, and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel left him. When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting." When he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were gathered together and were praying. And when he knocked at the door of the gateway, a servant girl name Rhoda came to answer. Recognizing Peter's voice, in her joy she did not open the gate but ran in and reported that Peter was standing at the gate. They said to her, "You are out of your mind." But she kept insisting that it was so, and they kept saying, "It is his angel!" But Peter continued knocking, and when they opened, they saw him and were amazed. But motioning to them with his hand to be silent, he described to them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison, And he said, "Tell these things to James and to the brothers." Then he departed and went to another place.

While those gathered were praying, God was answering. And while God gave the deliverance that was asked for, those praying were not ready for such a swift answer to those prayers. The earnest prayers of the church and the power of our Lord had a powerful and unexpected result.

Read **Matthew 18:19-20** and **James 5:13-16**. What lesson can be learned for the church today? **Matthew 18:19-20** "Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them."

James 5:13-16 Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing praise. Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.

One of the joys and privileges of the Christian community is that of praying for others and their needs. Pray once. Pray often. Pray together. The answer and power of prayers rests in God's hands and we will often be amazed with His answers. When we put our needs and requests in God's hands, we trust in Him to do what is best.

NOTE: God allowed the evil occurrences and planning on the part of others to be used for good. Jesus proved His love by stretching out His loving arms on the cross, employing the seemingly evil circumstances to redeem them and us and to grant all His love into eternity. God wastes nothing.

If Time permits you may add this section to your study

How important were details in the life of Jesus? Review Jesus' own words in **John 2:4; 7:6-8 and 8:20.**

John 2:4 And Jesus said to [his mother], "Woman, what does this have to do with me? My hour has not yet come."

John 7:6-8 Jesus said to [the disciples], "My time has not yet come, but your time is always here. The world cannot hate you, but it hates me because I testify about it that its works are evil. You go up to the feast. I am not going up to this feast, for my time has not yet fully come."

John 8:20 These words he spoke in the treasury, as he taught in the temple, but no one arrested him, because his hour had not yet come.

God's timing is not an earthly design, it is His and His alone.

Compare your answers to **Galatians 4:4-5.**

But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption of sons.

The Father sent Jesus to be born so that we may be saved as His sons and daughters. Our baptism makes us part of God's family as His redeemed, forgiven children.

When had Jesus' time truly come?

John 12:23, 27-28 And Jesus answered them, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified...Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say: "Father save me from this hour"? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name." Then a voice came from heaven: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again."

John 13:1 Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.

John 16:31-33 Jesus answered them, "Do you now believe? Behold, the hour is coming, indeed it has come, when you will be scattered, each to his own home, and will leave me alone. Yet I am not alone, for the Father is with me. I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."

John 17:1 When Jesus had spoken these words, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, "Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you,"

Jesus' time came when He was to be mocked and crucified, making atonement for the sins of all. His desire was to bring to glory to the Father, officially sealed by His resurrection.

Jesus knew how important timing and details were in His life and that His Father had His every step covered with love for their eternal purpose. What lesson can we learn from Jesus?

Even as the plans for Jesus, God's own Son, were perfectly planned and used for good, so are ours – whether in the past, the present, or the future.

DETAILS IN YOUR LIFE

Does God really have me covered? Is it really true that His details are important?
Discover His answers in the following Scripture passages:

Acts 17:24-28 The God who made the world and everything in it, being Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples made by man, nor is he served by human hands, as though he needed anything, since he himself gives to all mankind life and breath and everything. And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, that they should seek God, in the hope that they might feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us.

God knows the world. He made it. Each minute detail of the world is His to know. He created all to His glory.

Psalms 139:1-16 O Lord, you have searched me and known me! You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from afar. You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether. You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high; I cannot attain it. Where shall I go from you Spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there! If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there! If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me, and your right hand shall hold me. If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me, and the light about me be night," even the darkness is not dark to you; the night is bright as the day, for darkness is a light with you. For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well. My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately woven in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed substance; in your book were written, every one of them, the days that were formed for me, when as yet there were none of them.

Again, God knows about each aspect of us. He knew when our lives began at conception and he knows each second of our lives, even before they happen. He knows our details better than we know ourselves.

Does this reaffirm, alter, or challenge your personal beliefs about all the details of your circumstances? *Answers will vary.*

What does God promise to grant you in the process? Read the following to find answers:

Psalms 91:1-4, 14-16 He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will abide in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say to the Lord, "My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust." For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence. He will cover

you with His pinions, and under his wings you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler...

“Because he holds fast to me in love, I will deliver him; I will protect him, because he knows my name. When he calls to me, I will answer him; I will be with him in trouble; I will rescue him and honor him. With long life I will satisfy him and show him my salvation.”

God is our refuge and shelter. He shields us from the world and the sin it contains. He also is our Deliverer, our Rescuer, our Answer.

Matthew 11:28-30 “Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.”

God gives us rest, not just in the physical sense, but also spiritually as He takes our sin and gives us His yoke, His forgiveness and grace.

John 15:9-11 “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father’s commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.”

Jesus loves us and teaches us to love Him and others. Through this we have joy.

Romans 5:1-5, 8 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the holy Spirit who has been given to us...God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

We are given faith, peace, and grace. We also have knowledge that when we suffer it will lead to hope in Christ as we keep our eyes on Him. And we know this happens through the Holy Spirit.

Just like glistening, ice covered limbs, your Savior has you wrapped in His love. Rejoice that you are precious and honored in His sight and that there is nowhere you can go without His covering of sacrificial love and forgiveness as it was revealed through the cross and resurrection.

Closing Prayer: Dear Jesus, thank You for saving us through Your suffering and death. You knew Your perfect timing and the pain and suffering it would take to accomplish Your final outcome – our salvation and eternal inheritance with You. Give us the faith to trust and the power to believe. In Your name, we ask this. Amen.

You may also want to join in singing or reading Lord, Take My Hand and Lead Me (LSB 722).