

“First Watch” Touch Points for Evangel’s Prayer Vigil team

For the week of June 14, 2015

Developing a Praying Life – part 24

INSIGHTS from A Praying Life by Paul E. Miller from Part 4: Living in Your Father’s Story / Chapter 24

HOPE: THE END OF THE STORY

Hope is a new idea in history, a uniquely Christian vision. We take it for granted because the mind of Christ is so pervasive in shaping the modern mind, but it wasn’t always that way. The ancient Greeks had two kinds of story: comedy and tragedy. A comedy was fun, but it wasn’t real. A tragedy was real but not fun. If you took a hard look at life, it was sad. If you ignored life, then it was funny.

The gospel is Good News. Because God broke the power of evil at the cross, we can, along with Sarah, look at our cynicism and laugh. Not surprisingly, Jesus’ first miracle was making about 150 gallons of fine wine so a good party could become a great party (see John 2). Tragedy doesn’t have the last word. God saves the best for last.

Some writers suggest that God focuses simply on us knowing him....These writers give up hope by spiritualizing it. But Abraham and Sarah had a son. Joseph’s brothers bowed before him. David got the kingdom, and Jesus rose from the dead. And last but not least, [my daughter] Kim learned to talk on her speech computer and is now beginning to actually use her voice. The infinite God touches us personally. We can dream big because God is big.

If you wait, your heavenly father will pick you up, carry you into the night, and make your life sparkle. He wants to dazzle you with the wonder of his love.

Dreaming Big for Kim...God created a wonder with Kim finding work. I suspect that the jobless rate among adults who have Kim’s level of disability is close to 99 percent. When we were praying for Kim to get a job, sometimes we felt like we were praying for the sky to turn from blue to pink. But as the angel told Mary, “Nothing will be impossible with God” (Luke 1:37).

The Willingness to be Enchanted....As we wait and pray, God weaves his story and creates a wonder. Instead of drifting between comedy (denial) and tragedy (reality), we have a relationship with the living God, who is intimately involved with the details of our worlds. We are learning to watch for the story to unfold, to wait for the wonder.

To see the marvel of the stories that our Father is telling, we need to become like little children. That was the secret of C. S. Lewis’s storytelling....Alan Jacobs, author of *The Narnian*, said this about Lewis:

Lewis’s mind was above all characterized by a willingness to be enchanted, and it was this openness to enchantment that held together the various strands of his life—his delight in laughter, his willingness to accept a world made by a good and loving God, and (in some ways above all) his willingness to submit to the charms of a wonderful story.

I am enchanted by the stories that God has woven around Kim’s life.

Not Just a Job, A Calling....In the middle of our frustrating job search, Jill and I began to pray even bigger prayers for Kim. We started praying not just for a job, but for a calling—that Kim would feel God’s pleasure in her work and minister to others.

What will God do with Kim’s calling? I’m not sure, but it is fun to watch and pray. In the last year Kim has spoken several times at conferences [more on that next week]...When we told the story together...Kim smacked her head every time she thought something was funny. She had the audience rolling in the aisles. The tragedy had become a comedy.

Next week: “Living in Gospel Stories”

From *A Praying Life*, Paul E. Miller, NavPress (2009), pages 205-210 (chapter 24)

PRAYER PROMPTS

- Pray for those you know, especially those who are struggling, that the hope of God’s promises will become real to them. Pray that you may have a part in bringing that message of hope and enchantment to them.
- Reflect on this week’s worship service, the music, Scriptures, and Pastor Dave’s message “Chosen, but Free” (1 Thessalonians 1:2-5). Pray that the Lord will lead you to ways to apply the lessons learned in your own walk with Christ, as you connect with different people this week.
- Continue to pray for opportunities to invite people to our services, particularly Maundy Thursday and Easter Sunday, and to become engaged in spiritual discovery with the people of Evangel in other ways as well. Ask the Lord to open doors of conversation, connection or compassion with others to enable that engagement this week.

* A podcast of the sermon and other materials will be posted on the website by Monday.

Touch Points is e-mailed every Friday, posted on the website (www.evbapt.org), with printed copies available in the lobby. To be included in the weekly e-mail, use the Contact Us form on the website and request “add me to the Prayer Vigil list.”