

January 2006

Precious friends,

Well here we are at the beginning of yet another year of grace! May Jesus' favor and mercy flow into us and through us in a huge wave of revival, personal, corporate and worldwide this year!

I pray your Thanksgiving through Christmas season was warmed by family and friends and the great blessing of being in relationship to Christ. My family's Christmas was a blend of sweetness and loss as we celebrated the first year that my brother-in-law Jerry was in the Presence of Jesus. We felt his absence enormously, yet were so blessed to be confident of His utter joy in heaven.

Last quarter, it was my joy to share in a weekend retreat with a great group of Lutheran ladies from Michigan. In addition to leading worship I conducted a workshop with them. Additionally, Marlene and I attended a 4-day renewal conference in Toronto, Ontario. While there, I got to visit dear friends who have stood with Sharon and me and then me alone for some 25 years. It was wonderful to spend quality time with them.

As this 28<sup>th</sup> year of ministry continues, a pattern has fallen into place. Sundays I teach an adult Sunday School class titled "Revival 404" except when elsewhere in ministry; Monday nights much of the year I teach a Neighborhood Bible Study; Tuesdays or Thursdays as well as Fridays will find me at the Fort Wayne House of Prayer. Once or twice a month I am privileged to minister in Elkhart, Indiana. Additionally I write a weekly devotion on my website. I remain available for ministry outside of the above-mentioned events. If you desire me to come to your church or group, do call.

I'm going to begin sharing them with you in each newsletter beginning with this one, though of course I can only send one each quarter. They seem to greatly encourage those who read them, as many have written, commenting on one thought or another that ministered to their hearts. If you would care to share any thoughts after reading the one attached, feel free to write me.

Please know that you remain a great treasure to me. As you can tell from my schedule, even though I am quite busy, nearly everything I do is without earthly remuneration. This ministry is supported by brothers and sisters in the Lord who have caught the vision of God's call on my life. They pray for me and support me, thus enabling me to concentrate on ministering to the Lord and to His people

freely. It is my joy to pray for you even as you read this letter. If I can pray specifically for you about anything, please let me know. Now on to the devotion.

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## AND THE WAY UP IS DOWN

**Have you ever noticed how Father God's ways are so often diametrically opposed to the ways of men?** We see this several times in the Scriptures:

1. "The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve."
2. If you would be first, be last.
3. If you wish to save your life, lose it.
4. Strength is made perfect in weakness.
5. To be exalted, humble yourself.
6. To be rich, give away all you own....
7. If you want to attain eternal life, stop striving to gain it.

A couple of weeks ago I was privileged to sit under the teaching of **Rev Ed Piorek** who has written a book called **The Father Loves You**. I want to share some of what he said mixed with some further musings of mine.

**In Matthew 3:13-17** we read of the inauguration of Jesus' public ministry. It serves as a powerful, indeed a potentially life-changing lesson on the heart of God, both as evidenced by Christ's actions, and by His Father's and the Spirit's response to Him.

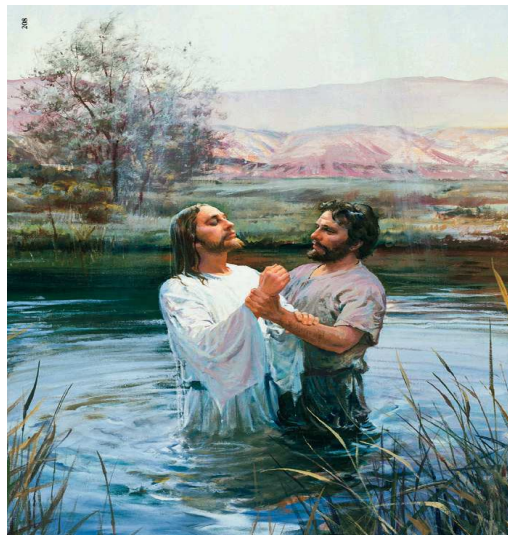
**Jesus**, Son of God, the Only One completely equal to God, one with the Father, Perfect Sinless Son, who as Man NEVER ONCE sinned against His Father. Jesus, this Jesus goes to John the Baptist, asking John to baptize Him.

**John the Baptist's teachings** on repentance were for the purpose of prodding people to deal with their carnal rebellion against God, to prepare them for the soon coming of the Messiah. So when a person came to John to be baptized, he was admitting in a very public way that he was turning from his sinful ways and coming back, if you will, to God, to agreement with God's will and God's desires.

**So when Jesus approached John, John was aghast** and said that he himself should be baptized by Jesus instead of the other way around. Jesus replied that He wanted to "fulfill all righteousness." **Notice Jesus humbling Himself here.**

**Can you picture that event? Think how this appeared** at that moment before He went down under the water. Think of what those watching probably thought about Jesus.

**He, the Exalted One**, He who made the universe, who flung the stars into space, who spoke the Jordan river into existence, He who was Himself THE Living Water come down from heaven, **let John plunge Him down, down in an action of utter self-effacement.** He was buried, as it were, in that water, held down as the waters of the Jordan closed over Him. And then He came up.



**Three things happened immediately** which give us insight into the love of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit for one another.

1) **The heavens were opened.** (Matt 3:16) When the Scriptures speak about the heavens opening, this is always a time when God does something wonderful. To have the heavens open over a person is like being positioned under God directly, with Him downloading straight into a person a message or a blessing. Let me give you a couple of examples:

**Eze 1:1** In the thirtieth year, in the fourth [month], on the fifth [day] of the month, while I was among the exiles by the Chebar Canal, the **heavens opened** and I saw visions of God.

**Ac 7:56** "Look! I see the **heavens opened** and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!" and finally

**Matt: 3:16** And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, **the heavens were opened unto him**, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:

2) **The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus** in the form of a dove (Matt 3:16b) and alit upon Him. He was anointed with the Holy Spirit, undoubtedly for the ministry that lay immediately before Him. Others witnessed God's anointing upon Him - - - and this because He humbled Himself that day.

3) **God spoke out loud to Him that day.** In Luke's description of this, He quotes Father God as saying, "You are my beloved Son; in You I am well pleased."

**What does that mean?** First of all, imagine Jesus' own heart when He heard what His Dad said. Imagine the swelling of gratitude and love that arose within Him as He heard this unbelievably sweet sentence. Let's put it in Robin's Indiana paraphrase, okay? "Son, you are my very favorite! Oh how I love you, Son. I'm so proud of you, so very pleased and thrilled with your heart and your humility."

**Wow! How about you? Don't you long to experience an open heaven between you and God?** Would you not be encouraged by a new anointing for His purposes in your life? Wouldn't you be thrilled to hear Him tell you how happy and pleased He is with you?

**Then do what Jesus did. Go to your Father. Humble yourself before Him.** Stay there and let Him come to you. You will never outwait your Beloved Father. Never. He is longing to caress you and encourage you and pour out His Spirit upon you; indeed to raise you to heights you have never known before.

**And the way up is down.**

*"Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave, became human! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death - and the worst kind of death at that: a crucifixion. Because of that obedience, God lifted him high and honored him far beyond anyone or anything..."*

*Phillipians 2: 5-9 (the Message).*