

Peace Talks



Prince of Peace Lutheran Church

News for Our Community

Christmas 2008

Vincibility

Vincibility is a real word, meaning "capable of being conquered or overcome." A lot of people in our community and country are feeling vincible right now. This is my story of the first time I felt that way, and what happened as a result.

By Pastor Tom...



Corey was a sophomore in high school when I was a senior, but he was big and strong for his age and started on the

football team. Everyone liked him, so we put up with him never washing his lucky T-shirt the entire season.

After high school, Corey and I worked for the same agricultural company one summer, sharing an apartment for a few weeks as the season wound down. We were like brothers, lifting

weights together and heading down to the local swimming hole, complete with an old rope tied to a tree branch so the brave could swing out over some dangerous rocks. Those rocks didn't scare us - we were invincible. I once hit my head on a submerged rock hard enough to draw blood and jerk my neck forcefully to the side. I came up out of the water laughing. That was a close one. Ha, ha, ha.

Deep down inside, I knew I could easily have been paralyzed or killed. But I wasn't, and that's all that mattered.

I wonder if Corey felt he was invincible like that a few weeks later when a state trooper stopped him late at night after a near accident. Corey's car had veered toward oncoming traffic. He hadn't been drinking. He was just incredibly tired. The trooper advised immediate rest, but Corey just wanted to get home. Only another half hour.

Fifteen minutes later, Corey lost his life when his car ran off the road and hit a tree. I was stunned at the news. He was so much like me - young, athletic, in the prime of life. We both planned to become pastors like our dads. I had heard of people my age having their lives cut short, but I could always think of some reason it wouldn't happen to me. I would be smarter, more careful, have better reflexes. And if all that failed, I was pretty sure God would watch out for me, since I was planning to serve him. This time was different. Corey was exactly like me. It happened to him. It could happen to me.

I realized that even though God had created my body, one moment's misjudgment, one instance of being in the wrong place at the wrong time, could quickly end my life. The news about Corey did me a favor. It forced me to come to terms with what had always been true: I was "vincible."

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For Goodness' Sake, Be Good

Have you heard the one about the group of atheists who launched the advertising campaign about being “good for goodness sake?” Oh, wait. That's a true story. It sounds like a joke to me, though, because philosophically it doesn't make any sense. Who gets to define what “good” is? What is “goodness?”

I understand the point they're trying to make. They're trying to say that there's no reason to bring God into morality. Just do what's right for the sake of doing what's right, rather than because God wants you to.

But how did “right” get decided? Let's come at it from the atheist's perspective. With no God in the picture, the atheist must assume mankind evolved. Evolution is driven by survival. The fit survive and continue to evolve. The less fit do not. How does goodness provide a survival advantage? You have to look out for your self to survive. There's no room for goodness.

In response, the atheist will say that attributes we now call goodness developed among people groups as they learned to work together in communities. But what about rival communities that are competing for the same land or food supply? It's conceivable that you could define “good” as doing all you can to ensure the safety and survival of your own people, your own family, even if it involves wiping out another group of people. Terrorists fit that definition of good, advancing their own ideals at the cost of the lives and ideals of others.

Is it possible that people could “evolve” a sense of morality, simply because it works best? It seems far fetched to me, especially because so often “goodness” prompts us to do the very things we're not inclined to do.

We may feel sluggish at work, but wanting to be a “good” worker compels us to give a better effort. We may feel interested in someone other than our spouse, but “goodness” prompts us to avoid situations that could compromise our marriages. We

may feel like lashing out in anger towards others, but “goodness” often helps us to temper our words and actions. Every day, we make decisions to act contrary to our nature for good, leading me to conclude that goodness comes from another source.

Our country is so rich in religious morality, it is quite impossible, even for the atheist, to do good without it having been influenced by

belief in God. “Every good and perfect gift comes from above,” said the Biblical writer James. In English, the word “good” comes from the word God, with the understanding that all things good originate from Him. In every sense, He is Goodness. So for Goodness' sake, be good! He'll be pleased.

Pastor Tom Lange





The Shack, a Review

By Beth Lange, Member of Prince of Peace



The Shack, published in May 2008, is a fictional story centered on dialogues between a miserable main character, Mack, and three unorthodox characterizations of the Holy Trinity.

The Shack is suited for anyone who has ever dealt with disappointment, struggle, or frustration with life circumstances that have left one asking, "Why, God?" or "How could you God" or "There can't possibly be a God - and if there is He can't possibly be good!" On the other hand, it is also for believers in God that seek to understand more completely the complexity of the Trinity— Father, Son and Holy Spirit— and their desire to be a real presence in both the good and the bad of our everyday lives.

The Shack is real, dealing with real issues, real questions, and real struggles that every single person faces at some point in their life. It doesn't offer sugar-coated answers like, "Just believe in God and everything will be fine," wrap it up with a bow, and call it done. It hits chords at every level of one's faith journey.

Reading this book grew my appreciation for God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit - their very real love for each and every person, their desire to meet us right where we are, their patience in each individual's journey, and their power to heal even the most deep and difficult hurts. The author took feelings that I had experienced and used His words to beautifully paint a picture of the great depth of our triune God.

While some reviews of *The Shack* have portrayed it as controversial, I found the book mind stretching. The author does not claim that his book is doctrinal in nature. I describe the book as a parable, which by definition is "an earthly story with a heavenly meaning." The author used real earthly experiences and real people to explain God. His use of very unique, unconventional (for some controversial) images to portray God demonstrate God's desire to meet each person where they are. Taking on the challenge of explaining God, His triune nature, and His role in the most challenging times of life (tragedies) is monumental to say the least. This is the best attempt at this challenge that I have ever experienced.

Note: The author, William P. Young, wrote *The Shack* in 2005 to open up his heart and his thinking to his children, now ages 14 to 27. "The book was meant to be like the box top on a jigsaw puzzle, the picture that shows where all the pieces fit," Young says. To learn more about the author and the book, visit www.theshackbook.com, or join us for a Bible Study on *The Shack*, starting in early 2009!



Family Nest



All I want for Christmas is...



Kristin Echols is serving Prince of Peace as interim Youth and Family Minister before moving to Virginia to join her new husband in January.

By Kristin Echols, CFLE

One question that is all too familiar at this time of year is, "What do you want for Christmas?". People of all ages ask it. However, it is most commonly asked by parents to their children. In fact, I would venture to guess that the response of most children begins with, "I want..." and is accompanied with a list of toys.

But what about those of us who are adults. How would we respond if someone asked us what we wanted for Christmas? Would our response be, "I want an iPhone, a digital camera, or maybe a GPS?" Unfortunately, there are a number of us who might answer the question this way, "I want a job that will help me pay the bills." Stop and think, what will be your response?

This year my response would be, "I want to focus on the gifts I have already been given, instead of the 'things' I want." This answer has caused me to ask another question, "Why do we give Christmas gifts anyway?" For generations our culture has practiced the act of gift giving, which was all started because of a man named Saint Nicholas.

Approximately 300 years after Jesus died, God called a man named Nicholas to be a pastor in what is now known as modern day Turkey. He gave gifts to others out of thankfulness for the greatest gift of all - our Savior Jesus Christ. It is through our faith in Him that we receive the gifts of forgiveness and the promise of eternal life with Him in heaven. These are gifts that never wear out or break; you cannot get any better than that!

So, as you go about your holiday shopping, it is my prayer that you might stop and think about your response to gift giving this Christmas season. Will you get caught up in the "I wants" or the "I am thankful for..."

Check out this year's top ten Christmas gifts and my top ten (next page). How do yours match up?



Top Ten Christmas Gifts 2008

(As found on: <http://festivals.iloveindia.com/christmas/christmas-gifts/top-10-gifts.html>)

- Digital Camera
- Nintendo Wii
- Apple iPod Touch
- Caster Board
- Apple iPhone
- Universal Remote
- Hannah Montana Toys
- Lamaze Toys
- Robot Dog
- LCD TV

My Top Ten Christmas Gifts

- Faith in Jesus Christ
- My fiancé Ben
- Family (Immediate, Extended, and Church)
- Friends
- A job that allows me to educate people about Jesus
- A home to live in
- Food to fill my stomach
- Clothes to keep me warm
- Water to drink
- My health

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Our nation is in a time of “vincibility” right now. Corporations are threatening to close their doors. Blue chip stocks are in code red. Our homes are worth little; our investments are worth less. And the global security situation doesn't look to improve any time soon (a recent report from Congress tells us we can expect a major biological or nuclear attack in the next five years).

Are you feeling “vincible?” It's not a pleasant feeling. But it is reality. You've always been vincible, and you always will be. The key is learning to deal with it.

When Corey died, my self-reliant sense of invincibility began to die too. There were a lot of factors I knew I couldn't control. But God could. I realized that He gave me Jesus as my Savior to be my invincibility shield. Could anything happen to me if He didn't want it to? No. Does He know what's coming up, and can He help, even in tough times? Yes.

Corey believed in God too. He had his invincibility shield, and he died. But he lives on to this day in his invincible spirit, according to the words of Jesus; “Whoever lives and believes in me will never die.”

Our bodies are “vincible.” As unsettling as that is, it's all right. It's even good to know it and come to terms with it, so we can do something about it, like thinking eternally. Do you have an invincibility plan in place?

Holiday Worship Schedule

Christmas Eve Worship

5:00 pm - Family Worship

7:30 pm - Candlelight Service

Christmas Day Worship

10:00 am

New Years Eve Worship

7:30 pm

Coming in 2009...

Bible Study on “The Shack”

Study Series on Revelation

Kick off of the Middle School After Hours Program

For More Information, Contact the Office at 248.553.3380.

poplcms.org



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Join us for our Christmas Celebration



Christmas Eve Worship

5:00 pm - Family Worship

Based on Max Lucado's Christmas Tale, "The Crippled Lamb"

7:30 pm - Candlelight Service

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Christmas Day Worship

10:00 am



Sunday Worship Schedule

8:15 am: *Traditional Service* • 9:30 am: *Kingdom Quest* • 10:45 am: *Family Worship*

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