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# THE CROSSWORD

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## WHAT CAN I DO!?

*from Pastor Nathan Erb*

**E**xciting things have been taking place ever since Holy Cross members decided to adopt a new governance structure! Even though it might not be apparent, I've noticed a change in the atmosphere whenever I discuss what it means with others.

Panic set in at first. When we announced that there would be no more Commission Directors, many people expressed concern, asking, "How will things get done?"

That is exactly the question we wanted people to begin asking, and it is one that the Board of Directors and I must also ask.

Do you recall when Jesus' disciples expressed concern about the growing crowd that had gathered to hear Jesus preach? They immediately thought of food, as good Lutherans do, and asked Jesus, "How are all these people going to eat?" "We should send them away to buy food."

"Do not send them away—YOU give them something to eat!" Jesus said to them.

This, of course, sounded ridiculous to them because all they had to eat between them was five loaves of bread and two fish.

**But this was enough.**

Why was it enough? Was it as a result of Jesus' blessing? That's how the story goes, but keep in mind that Jesus told his disciples to start feeding the crowds despite how little they had. I have little doubt that the same miracle would have occurred if the disciples had simply obeyed Jesus and started feeding the people with what they had. It would not have been because of the disciples' abilities but because of their faith in what God can do—even with so little.

The same holds true for us. Holy Cross is not the largest church in town. You could say, compared to others, that we have the equivalent of five loaves and two fish. But we also have God's command to teach, preach, baptize, and make disciples! Christ also commands us to "love and serve our neighbors."

The answer to the question "how?" or even "who?" is YOU! The question we should all be enthusiastically asking is, "What can I do!?"

God has uniquely gifted you and called you to this congregation not only to receive but also to give and use the gifts and talents you possess to carry out our mission to make disciples.

This also allows us to pause and ask a different set of questions about the "why" of what we have done and will do in the future. At the annual meeting, I spoke about the "Three S's" of ministry: that everything we do should be a balance of spiritual, service, and social opportunities. In essence, let us all ask ourselves, "How can we grow in faith, serve in love, and be together in Christ?"

**I look forward to hearing your answers!**

*Pastor Nathan Erb*

# PRESIDENT'S JOURNAL

from Kerry Geffert

*“This little light of mine, I’m going to let it shine.”*

Let you were singing the words by the time you got to “shine.” Regardless of your age, it’s a song most of us learned as children in Sunday School. Our children, grandchildren, nieces, nephews, etc., probably know the song, too. And if they don’t...well, that’s a topic for another blog.

Our Lenten theme, *Promised Treasures*, included consideration of the element of Light. For a refresher, you can listen to the March 15 service on our church’s YouTube channel – <https://www.youtube.com/@hcltrumbull>. For me, the message recalled the children’s song mentioned above and how we, the members of Holy Cross, “let it shine, all the time, let it shine.”

*“Hide it under a bushel, no!”*

Many years ago, an international student at the university where I worked appeared in my office. This student was familiar to me as we’d had many interactions. He was a student who tended to push the envelope so his appearance in my doorway set my defenses into play. We chatted for a while, then he abruptly said, “Mr. Geffert, you’re a Christian, aren’t you. I can tell.” I was humbled, and fortunate. Although this student was sometimes a source of aggravation, the Lord was still able to work through me to let His light shine.

And so it is for each one of us. God’s light is able to work through us, even when we’re unaware it’s happening. But what this student taught me was how much stronger God’s light can shine when we intentionally refuse to “hide it under a bushel.”

*“All around the neighborhood”*

Consider the brightness of our collective light when all Holy Cross members “let their lights shine!” Think about the power of our statement! We, the members of Holy Cross, let our light shine “all around the neighborhood” through involvement in programs such as Covenant to Care, Bridgeport Rescue Mission, Gbarnga and others. We also let our light shine through participation in Bible Studies, regular worship attendance, service on Ministry Teams and committees, stewardship and through programs being developed.

And that’s where you come in. Each of us has a light to shine. Sometimes we must use our own light to spark someone else’s light. But consider how brightly our Holy Cross light will shine when we bring our lights together!

I’m willing to work for this. Are you?+

*“Let it shine, all the time, let it shine.”*



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## THE CROSSWORD

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# THE WORD OF LIFE

from Cliff Schrock

In this supplement to Pastor Erb's monthly focus on a Bible Verse of the Month, the April theme is "The Resurrection," with the Biblical reference from Job, Chapter 19, Verses 25 and 26.

How appropriate it is that a Biblical character who is revered for his faithfulness through suffering and pain and who steadfastly witnessed to the greatness of God through their adversity would be the focus of this month's lesson during Easter time.

No, not Jesus Christ, although we will, of course, rightfully give Him our attention in thought and worship. The character referred to here is, rather, Job, the Old Testament character known for his patience and faith. The book of Job is about faith despite undeserved suffering, specifically the continual and devastating suffering that strikes Job. We know Job to be prosperous and someone with great wisdom about living a pious and God-fearing life. But unbeknownst to Job, he is a pawn in a game Satan plays to test how much bad stuff can be dumped on this faithful man before he breaks and turns on God and curses Him for all the horrors he's been subjected to, including the loss of his 10 children, all that he owned, and health woes. We would not expect any of that be heaped upon someone so undeserving of it.

Job is a heroic figure because when he holds fast to his love of God and is faithful without complaining, he sets an example all of us can only hope to follow—if we were ever in similar situations. Job never does come to a conclusion or solution about why he suffered but he believes firmly that his conviction of being faithful through all of it was the only way to proceed. Job is not small-minded in how he sees that all that God does is for a purpose even though we may not understand it or agree with it or see the logic of it.

In Chapter 1 we read a dialogue God has with His angels. They have come to present themselves to God. Satan has tagged along (my words) with them to do the same. We can sense the consternation God has with seeing Satan in this way and He asks where it has come from. The response: I have been roaming the earth. God asks Satan if it has seen Job, saying there is no one like him on earth. He fears God and shuns evil. From here we're familiar with Satan saying Job is only good because God has done nothing but blessed him. Put some severe bumps in the road in front of him, Satan says, and he'll turn on God quickly.

God grants Satan the power to damage Job; in stages Satan can harm him in any way except physical; then harm him physically but spare his life, as battered as it may get.

MY  
REDEEMER  
LIVES!

From this moment on we are both shocked and inspired by the events that occur. Job's herds and property are destroyed, family's lives ruined, children killed. Yet, the legendary patience of Job rises above the turmoil. Familiar philosophical nuggets we admire, such as "we come into this world with nothing, and we leave it with nothing," and "the Lord giveth and the Lord taketh away, may the name of the Lord be praised." A philosophical question Job poses is: Are we only supposed to accept the good from God but not the trouble that can come as well?

The philosophical dialogue Job has by himself or with his three "comforters," Eliphaz, Sophar and Bildad, is some of the best commentaries we have on suffering. The threesome expresses feelings ranging from sympathy and compassion to agitation, which is in contrast to Job's monotone consistency of faith, servanthood and witnessing.

By chapter 19, this month's focus chapter, Job is weary of his friends' bombardment and asks how much longer they plan on tormenting him with destructive words.

[Continued on page 4](#)

Aren't they ashamed to do so, he asks. If he has spoken wrongly, Job says that's his problem.

By now, Job has been abandoned by his entire social circle, family and friends, many of whom now abhor him and are even angry that he's not cursing God for the misery heaped on him. Job's steadfastness confounds them. Job feels harmed by their "comfort," but it's not their judgment that concerns him but God's, who seems to have stopped showing care for Job at this point, and even appears to be hostile.

Job's subsequent witness to the Redeemer is amazing for someone who will not see Christ the Redeemer come during his lifetime or to know that He has come. He has faith that even after his own flesh has been destroyed, he believes he will see God and the Redeemer.

In chapter 19, Job is giving his second reply to Bildad, reproaching him (and the others) for unjustly questioning his character and motives and for the torment they have caused him. That's a theme of this chapter, that Job is taking issue with being mistreated. If he has sinned, it's his business, not theirs. In Verse 3, we assume, he has even kept track of how many times they've doubted him when he uses the number 10. The chapter slowly builds from this reproach to Job feeling God was the author of his

afflictions and has abandoned him, and that Job has been deserted by everyone and he now is pleading for pity. It's, of course, an error to think that everything that has happened to him comes from God. He does not know that all that has befallen him has come from Satan and that God allowed it because He had confidence in Job not wilting under all the hardships but remain faithful.

*"He lives, all glory to His name!  
He lives, my Jesus, still the same;  
Oh, the sweet joy this sentence gives:  
I know that my Redeemer lives!"*

"I Know That My Redeemer Lives," LSB, 461, verse 8


And it's at this particular low point, perhaps sensing that his friends cannot be convinced of his own innocence in all that has struck him, that Job shows his unshakable confidence in the living Redeemer. In verses 25 and 26, he says, "As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and that at the end of time he will stand over the dust. Then, even after my skin has been destroyed, nevertheless, in my own flesh I will see God."

Job has great understanding and belief in what the Redeemer will do even though Christ THE Redeemer won't be born until thousands of years later. But at this point in his commentary, Job clings

to the one faith aspect that will bring everlasting hope and joy, that God will vindicate him for his faithfulness and that God will be his Redeemer.

Resurrection doctrine appears several times in the Old Testament, such as here, not to be more fully expanded until New Testament teaching. But regardless of when the Redeemer was discussed in the Bible, in your Easter celebration this year, rejoice in knowing that your Redeemer lives. Job had faith that God would be standing on earth on the last day and that even though he was dead, he would see God in the flesh. At Job's time of deepest grief and despair, he is testifying to the resurrection of believers' bodies. And for

us New Testament believers, we know God the Son, known as Jesus Christ, will stand on the earth on Judgment Day.

What comfort that sweet sentence gives! 

*Prayer: Dear God, Your faithful servant Job, through all he endured, did not get to see the Savior of the World born to be the Redeemer, but he had great faith that he would be redeemed and the Redeemer would rule at the last. Help us to rejoice in knowing that Our Redeemer lives and we will live with Him in eternity. Amen.*



# BUILDING BLOCKS

from Holy Cross Christian Preschool

He is risen! With great joy we will celebrate Easter this month! We rejoice that Jesus overcame death and grants us the promise of new life through His death and resurrection. Our Bible stories this month will focus on Jesus' appearance to the women at the tomb and to His disciples. We will learn how Jesus prepares them for a life of ministry and how we can share the Good News.

**Our focus in April will be Easter, spring and insects.** The Easter theme also gives us many opportunities to use plastic eggs in creative ways. The children will paint with plastic egg halves, build towers with them, match upper and lower case letters and make their own resurrection garden. We will plant bean and pumpkin seeds and watch them grow. The children will predict which will sprout first and will learn what a plant needs to make it grow. We'll close out the month by talking about insects, exploring the many insects that

God created. The children will learn what makes an insect an insect! To tie in with the insect curriculum—if the temperatures stay consistently warm—we will have five “live” chrysalises by the end of the month. The children will see firsthand the metamorphosis of a caterpillar to a butterfly.

**Registration for our Summer Camp is underway.** Camp is open to children ages 3-5 and will run from June 19-July 28.

May you have a blessed and joyous Easter!

## LOOKING FOR A GREAT PRESCHOOL?

Registration for the 2023-2024 school year is ongoing, with both full-time and part-time options. Class sizes are limited. Please recommend us to your family and friends! Contact Michele Glennon, at 203-268-6471 or [preschool@holycrosstrumbull.com](mailto:preschool@holycrosstrumbull.com).



Top: Men from Holy Cross gathered at Old Towne Restaurant for breakfast on Saturday, April 1.

Right: Great conversations about ways the men of Holy Cross can lead our congregation and serve the community.



## BIBLE, BACON, AND BROTHERS IN CHRIST

Belonging to the church also implies that you are involved in it. In Christ, God incorporates all of the various members into ONE BODY. Each of us has unique gifts, skills, and abilities that we are called to use to serve others! This is true in the church for men, women, and even children. Never believe that God cannot use you! Each member has a unique gift and is called to use it.

God has called on men to be leaders in His Church. To set a good example of loving service to one another and the larger community. This was a major theme and the spark for more opportunities as the men of Holy Cross gathered to kickoff the Men's Group. [Learn more at holycross.life/men/](http://holycross.life/men/)

# Did Celebrity Kill Jesus?

Popularity is dangerous. We've all heard the cautionary tale of a celebrity whose rising star crashes to earth. Or maybe we've watched narcissistic leaders who use and abuse those around them. When people start drawing a crowd, it rarely ends well.

But knowing this truth doesn't keep us from dreaming of fame. Nor does it keep us from following the famous. As humans, we incessantly crave celebrity for ourselves or, at the very least, hope to somehow bask in its glory through others.

Of course, there's nothing new about this phenomenon. It's seemingly as old as humanity. But this is one way Jesus's character is unique. He was strangely unfazed by celebrity. He never went looking for the crowds—and when the crowds came looking for him, it led to his finest hour.

## Gospel of Glory

As you read the Gospel of John, it's hard to miss the theme of popularity. Right away, John lets us know he's a witness to Jesus's glory (1:14). And from the outset, that glory becomes a spectacle (1:50). Jesus wows the crowds with his miracles (2:23). Immediately, some see this as a threat. The followers of John the Baptist warn that "all are going to him" (3:26).

But John's not concerned with the challenge to his personal acclaim. He's happy to see his platform fade if Jesus's is raised (3:30).

This contrasts sharply with the Pharisees. Throughout John's Gospel, they consistently pursue glory from others (5:44). But they're not the only ones. Jesus says the reason many hesitate to follow him is they love "the glory that comes from man more than the glory that comes from God" (12:43). Their desire for human approval manifests in fearing what others—especially the influential—might think or say or do (7:13; 9:22; 12:42; 19:38; 20:19).

Of course, we expect such cowering from the weak in society. But ironically in John's Gospel—as in all of life—it's the powerful like Pilate who constantly pander to the masses (18:28–19:16). Popular opinion turns everyone into a puppet.

Except for Jesus. Throughout John's Gospel, Jesus lives for an audience of One. He's clearly not out to draw a crowd. In fact, his brothers mock him for his modesty. They think he should capitalize on his celebrity, so they try to cajole him into making a name for himself. "Show yourself to the world," they urge (7:4). Meanwhile, the bigwigs in Jerusalem obsess over Jesus's fame in the Galilean countryside. If he takes his show on the road, they wonder if he'll gain a following among the Greeks (7:35).

This is their great fear: that Jesus will win the popularity contest of their day. That he'll get more glory than them. And in Jesus's final visit to Jerusalem, the competition comes to a climax. As Jesus rides in with the crowds crying "Hosanna!" we overhear the Pharisees mumbling to themselves a version of what John's disciples first complained: "Look, the world has gone after him" (12:19).

## Greek Seekers

At this point in John's Gospel, we realize the Pharisees have more than just a problem with pride. They have a problem with perspective. Clearly the whole world wasn't on Jesus's heels. It's not

as if he was making global headlines. Jesus didn't have millions of social media subscribers. Sure, this Rabbi from Nazareth was popular. But when it comes to his following, Jesus couldn't hold a candle to today's celebrities and influencers.

However, the size of the crowd isn't of primary importance. While John clearly paints the Pharisees as paranoid, he agrees with their opinion. The next line in his Gospel confirms Jesus's global pull: "Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks," and they come looking for Jesus (12:20–21). Sure enough, Jesus isn't drawing a crowd only from Jerusalem or Bethany where he's just raised Lazarus from the dead. He's drawing Gentiles from who-knows-where.

But what happens next is nothing short of amazing. When the Greeks ask for an audience, Jesus immediately starts talking about his glorification—and his death:

The hour has come for the Son of man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. . . . 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. (12:23–24, 27)

Jesus isn't enthralled by adoring fans from far away—attention the Pharisees could only dream of. Instead, these Greek seekers serve as a kind of trigger that starts the ticking clock. All throughout John's Gospel, the reader is primed for the coming of Jesus's "hour." And here it is. At this very moment, when the world comes to Jesus, he must go to the cross. It's time for the Son of Man to fall to the earth and die.

When the world comes to Jesus, that's when he must go to the cross.

## Drawing a Crowd

Readers of John's Gospel will likely wonder what happened next to the Gentile seekers. Perhaps they met Jesus. But it doesn't really matter. Because on

that day, Jesus knew what the Greeks needed most wasn't to meet him. They didn't need to witness a miracle or see a sign. They certainly didn't need to get his autograph. What they needed—what the world needed—was for Jesus to die (cf. 1 John. 2:2). That's why he came. To deal with the glory-seeking, others-using pride in all our hearts by humbly laying down his life for the sin of the world (John 1:29).

As Jesus said, when he was lifted up, he'd draw all people to himself (12:32). So in one sense, you could say Jesus went to the cross to draw a crowd. But not

because our leader is a narcissist who lives for the spotlight or demands to have his way. No, we serve a King whose finest moment was the hour of his self-giving and sacrifice. Whose lifting up was his lowering down. Whose exaltation was his suffering. Whose glory was his shame.

**We serve a King whose finest moment was the hour of his self-giving and sacrifice.**

At one level, Jesus died because of his popularity. It truly was dangerous. The Pharisees and Sadducees couldn't stand his growing influence, so they decided to silence him (11:45–53). But at another level, Jesus died because it was his purpose all along (12:27). He didn't succumb to a Jewish plot, a Roman ruler, or an angry mob. As Jesus told pompous Pilate, no political authority or military guard could take him by force (19:11). Instead, he lay down his life out of love for the world. Yes, the crowds sent Jesus to the cross—because it was the crowds he came to save.

This is the stunning nature of Jesus's celebrity. Here is a man unfazed by human acclaim and fearless of human indignity. Here is a God whose greatness is shown in his condescension and care. At Christmas, we're right to remember what happened when he came to the world. But at Easter, we should celebrate what happened when the world came to Jesus. This is truly the hour of his glory. +

**We serve a King  
whose finest moment  
was the hour of his  
self-giving and  
sacrifice.**

Written by Elliot Clark | The Gospel Coalition

Used by Permission. Original article can be found at <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/did-celebrity-kill-jesus/>

# A Study in Acts

from Cliff Schrock

## ACTS 23:1-35

*Twenty-two chapters into our study of Acts, even the most casual observer of suspense in pop culture would recognize the traumatic drama going on in the Apostle Paul's world. In a novel he would be the main character living on the edge trying to dodge all sort of bad scenarios but through bravery was surviving every danger. With six chapters left in this journey through Acts, Paul's resolve is unwavering in his latest situation. After you have read Chapter 23, please pick up with the following analysis.*

As Chapter 22 had ended, Paul had been able to negotiate his way out of being flogged; he had been arrested once again because the locals had threatened to kill him. But after being tied up, Paul was able to use his citizenship to his advantage and claimed immunity as a Roman. His case was now in appeal mode and he had to hope that proper protocol would be honored and he would be safe. As the appeal process begins, Paul has been released and the chief priests and full council been ordered to meet. Paul was brought down to stand before them, which is where Chapter 23 begins.

The group Paul now faced is known as the Sanhedrin. As usual, he wasn't fearful of facing such a powerful body and he was ready to give an honest testimony even though he had to know he was up against unmovable hearts and minds. Sure enough, that's what happened. As soon as Paul said he had lived his life with a clear conscience before God, the high priest Ananias ordered

Paul to be struck in the mouth. We can suspect that was because he believed Paul to be lying. At that stunning strike, Paul didn't back down and he accused Ananias of hypocrisy, basically, with the bold prediction that God would strike Ananias down, who he called a "whitewashed wall," a reference to someone who covers up and deceives. Paul accuses Ananias of judging Paul while at the same time violating law by having Paul struck.

Paul then stirs the pot of confusion by bringing up the topic of resurrection of the dead, which the Pharisees acknowledge, so that there was dissension between the Pharisees and Sadducees on the council regarding what to do with Paul. One side wanted him released, the other side said he deserved death. There was so much rancor that the tribune ordered the soldiers to take Paul back to the barracks. That night, in one of the five times the Lord appeared to Paul, He told Paul to be strong because the testimony he said in Jerusalem would be needed in Rome.

The following morning, 40 Jews vowed to not eat or drink until Paul was killed. They asked the chief priests and council to order Paul brought to them again for examination and while en route they would kill him. But in a plan begun by Paul's nephew, the son of his sister, Paul had the boy go to the tribune and spill the beans to him on the plot. Likely because he knew the Jews were being deceptive, the tribune arranged for a contingent to take Paul to Caesarea at night to be with Felix the Governor. In a letter the tribune wrote for Felix, he provided background on Paul and said he was sending him to the governor for him to directly hear accusations from the Jews. Because of the tribune's initiative, Paul was able to get out of harm's way in Jerusalem and get to Felix safely, with the Jews none the wiser for the end-around. There Paul was held until he could have a hearing in front of his accusers, another defense he will put up, in Chapter 24. ⊕

**Sources** | Harper Study Bible; The Everyday Bible: New Testament; Egermeier's Bible Story Book; The Acts of the Apostles, Neal M. Flanagan.

**Next Month:** Acts, Chapter 24, which describes the trial of Paul before Felix at Caesarea as the high priest Ananias and others make their accusations.



# Celebrating this Month

**APRIL**

It's fun to be recognized on your special day! Even more so, it's special to know others are praying for you. It is our hope that as you spend time in daily prayer,

## **BIRTHDAYS**

<i>Date</i>	<i>Name</i>
1	Nicole Hackney
7	John Anantharaj
7	Paul Hagberg
8	Bobby Kravecs
9	Donna Bogen
10	Donald Erickson
11	Kelley Geffert
12	Stephanie Helminger
13	Gary DiLalla
14	Marion Dale
23	Anita Schoch
23	Richard Van Wart
23	Sadie Veteri
24	Sheryl John
25	Jenzy Halls
28	Lillian Gagliardi
28	Jennifer Rentz
29	Dan Senft
30	Jessica Connic
30	Amanda Weldon

## **BAPTISM BIRTHDAYS**

Doris Bernt  
DJ Broadbin  
Cheryl Conte  
Cristina Curto  
Jennifer Deloge  
Jim Finch  
Nicole Hackney  
Valerie Huydic  
Kaylyn Hwang  
Thomas Hwang  
Jack Messerschmitt  
Audrey Paray  
Emily Rentz  
Luke Riccio  
Samantha Sylling

## **WEDDING ANNIVERSARIES**

<i>Date</i>	<i>Name</i>
4	Joe and Amy Cardone
8	Robert and Carol Burns
8	Ronald and Julie Sjoblom
17	Robert and Jesse Kravecs
24	Patsy and Ingrid Cerone
28	Chris and Jennifer Deloge

*If there is someone that should be on one of these lists, but isn't...please alert the office so we can update our records!*