



Creator and Created!

by Mark Brunner

Look Up! (Colossians 3:1-4)

How much eye exercise do you get every day? Sound like a good idea? Unfortunately, there's some eye exercise we all need to avoid. My friend, life's a story, stayed tuned for more on This Passing Day.

I received a catalog in the mail the other day. It was from a well-known clothing retailer. Yet, the models on the cover were so scantily clad, it was enough to make the average person blush. The catalog was addressed: "Current Resident". That meant that everyone in town had that same opportunity. The question occurred to me as I walked back to the house, catalog tucked at the bottom of the pile, "Why is it that we, as Americans, have become so numbed to what, not so long ago, would have made our grandparents blush? Why do we even consider shopping in catalogs that promote the sensual alongside the mundane?"

What ever happened to shame; the shame that comes from knowing a perfect God who created man and woman perfectly and hates such things?

Here's a story: An oriental king once summoned into his presence his three sons and set before them three sealed urns—one of gold, the other of amber, and the third of clay. The king bade his eldest son to choose among these three urns that which appeared to him to contain the greatest treasures. The eldest son chose the vessel of gold, on which was written the word "Empire." He opened

it and found it full of blood. The second chose the vase of amber, whereon was written the word “Glory”; and when he opened it he found it full of the ashes of men who had made a great name in the world. The third son chose the vessel of clay, and on the bottom of this vessel was inscribed the name of God. The wise men at the king’s court voted that the third vessel weighed the most, because a single letter of the name of God weighed more than all the rest of the universe. (Macartney’s Illustrations, pg. 139)

The things of this world might appear pretty golden, but when you open them, there is usually little of value inside. The cover was nothing more than a clever device to get a person to open the catalog and purchase merchandise, most of which wasn’t needed in the first place. Scantly clad models can easily get you to turn the page. But when the last page is turned, you’ve gained nothing in the turning. The next time that you receive a catalog like this in the mail, place it down next to your Bible and I assure you the luster disappears pretty quickly. When you are tempted by the things of this world, the key is to look up, toward the beauty of heaven and the Creator of all things beautiful! Discard those things which distract you. There is something worth looking for beyond and above this life. It’s called eternal life in Christ. The rest is but dust and ashes.

“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own” (Matt 6:34)

Is Your Life Coming Together? (Colossians 3:12)

How’s your attention to details? Some of us are generalists and others detail persons. When it comes to our faith, however, which is best? My friend, life’s a story, stayed tuned for more on This Passing Day.

Delicate strokes. I guess that’s how I would describe the way my mother-in-law does her needlework. Each little push-and-pull is but a tiny line of colored thread. It’s remarkable how she spends hours upon hours as she pushes-and-pulls literally hundreds of these little strokes of color. Each one, by itself, isn’t much to look at. But, when they’re taken as a whole, as a part of an entire needlework piece, they become a thing of beauty. The color threads integrate

into one unified, strongly knit piece of artwork; tiny delicate strokes in and of themselves not much-taken as a whole, a work of art.

When you step back to look at your life, the fabric of life that makes you unique, is it a work of art in the making or is it not quite coming together?

Here's a story: A spider weaves a beautifully intricate, yet practical web. On the one hand it a gentle thing. It seems fragile and unassuming as it gentle waves in the breeze. Although beautiful and delicate in design, a spider's web is intended for one use: to capture the spider's food while enduring the elements – rain, wind, or snow. In that respect a spider's web must be deceptively strong and enduring. Often, a spider's web is best seen glistening proudly in the sun after a rainstorm. It looks like a thousand delicate jewels reflecting the sun's light. But, it is also testimony to its enduring strength. It endures the harshest of elements, only to remain intact and ready to be used as God intended. (Donna Marie)

Have you thought of your faith this way? God created you and I to have faith like that spider's web. He's equipped us with the ability to weave beautifully intricate and delicate examples of His love and grace. Paul writes in Colossians 3:12: "Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience." He has also equipped us with faith that will ultimately be used for one purpose: to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. As God intended, we ought to stand firm in our faith, proudly displaying the beauty of His grace while allowing the world to see the strong and practical side of faith. Are you, today in your walk with Jesus Christ being all He intended you to be? How is the fabric of your Christian life coming together? Is your faith weathering the elements of life's storms? Perhaps today would be the day to start weaving that web of faith so that others might see your gentleness shining forth through His strength.

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Nut Like Faith! (Colossians 2:6)

How good is your grasp on reality? For most of us that is of daily

importance. We don't want people to think that we are a little nutty, or do we? My friend, life's a story, stayed tuned for more on This Passing Day.

Remember that old jingle: "Sometimes you feel like a nut, sometimes you don't?" It was a jingle advertising the Mounds candy bar back in the 1970's. It was so commonly heard on TV that many people began to incorporate the jingle into their everyday lives. Or, if they did something rather nutty, they would launch into this jingle to explain their behavior. I was in college in those days and my good friend, Mike Brophy, used the jingle all the time. Whenever he got a bad grade on a college exam, he'd utter it with a little change: "Sometimes you feel like an "A", sometimes you don't." In a sense, Mike was justifying stepping in and out of character as a college student. It was OK to rationalize a bad grade every now and then. It was his way of dealing with reality.

When it comes to believing that God will provide our every need in this life, even when that seems, well, nutty, is it OK to act like a nut?

Here's a story. The fields were parched and brown from lack of rain, and the crops lay wilting from thirst. People were anxious and irritable as they searched the sky for any sign of relief. Days turned into arid weeks. No rain came. The ministers of the local churches called for an hour of prayer on the town square the following Saturday. At high noon on the appointed Saturday the townspeople turned out en masse, filling the square with anxious faces and hopeful hearts. The ministers were touched to see the variety of objects clutched in prayerful hands—Bibles and crosses. When the hour ended, as if on magical command, rain began to fall. Cheers swept the crowd as they lifted their crosses and Bibles high in gratitude and praise. From the middle of the crowd, however, one faith symbol seemed to overshadow all the others. A small nine-year-old child had brought an umbrella. (Author unknown.)

Are you a little nuts? Are there times when even your friends question your grasp of reality? Most of us would probably answer "no." We don't want to be classified as nutty, and we do want people to believe that we have a good grasp on reality. "Get real" is a remark that we really don't want to hear; especially from our friends. But, when it comes to our faith, how attached to reality do we really want to be? Believe in Jesus and the full forgiveness of sins and an

eternal life in heaven? The fact that we believe God will provide even when that seems unrealistic, sometimes requires pulling out an umbrella on a bright and sunny day. From a faith standpoint, feeling like a nut is probably not that nutty at all, and it is never a “sometimes” thing.

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He Suffers With Us! (Colossians 1:24-29)

There are few things better than the unexpected good thing. You know, when something good happens when you were expecting something bad? My friend, life's a story, stayed tuned for more on This Passing Day.

Here's a story: Two of the most opposed characters from the early history of our nation were presidents John Adams and Thomas Jefferson. Adams was a Whig and believed in a strong Federal government with closer ties to European powers. Jefferson, a Democrat, opposed strong government and preferred a more antagonistic approach to European affairs. After President Washington passed away, Adams was president at the time and Jefferson was about to become president only a term later. The animosity between these men was notorious. Adams and Jefferson were truly political enemies that had become personal enemies and never missed an opportunity to point out their differences and snipe at one another.

As the years passed both men became less antagonistic. After Jefferson left the presidency in 1808 he retired to his Monticello home. Adams, already retired, lived quietly in Quincy, Massachusetts. Both went to work writing and publishing considerable correspondence. As they wrote, they discovered some of the political differences that had separated them were becoming less important. Finally, in 1814, both began a correspondence that would last until their deaths. A mutual respect grew and they became close friends. Then, on July 4, 1826, the 50th anniversary of the American independence which both men had personally shaped, Adams and Jefferson lay in death's grip. At 91 years, Adams was the patriarch of the Revolution. And Jefferson, at 83, had outlived many of his contemporaries. Ironically, these two men, who had hated

one another, were suffering together—passing from life together on the anniversary of the event that had once bonded them long before their mutual hatreds developed. At 2:30 in the afternoon, Adams quietly passed away. Only moments later, Jefferson uttered his last words, “Does Adams still live?” Although the doctors could not have known Adams had passed away, Jefferson did. He closed his eyes and died only hours after his friend Adams had passed.

Like these two men, we once were God’s enemies and the mere mention of His name filled us with fear.

The Apostle Paul often preached about how with Christ we are now reconciled to God. As we are reconciled, we share in His suffering and He in ours. Christ still suffers with us every time we do. We are one with Him and our hopes, our hurts, our joys and our sorrows are also His. We were alienated from our God for so long and then Christ came to live the perfect life that brought us together with God again. We were once enemies and now we are friends—friends that live and die together in a mystical union that only God can explain. Unlike Jefferson, however, we will at our death not have to ask, “Does Christ yet live?” We know that OUR Redeemer lives! We are reconciled both now AND forever.

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Mark Of A True Craftsman! (Colossians 1:15-20)

When you look into the mirror, what do you see? For most of us it usually isn't what we would prefer to see. Are we seeing what we ought to be though? My friend, life's a story, stayed tuned for more on This Passing Day.

Over the years I have made other pieces of furniture. Nevertheless, my “crafting” was rude at best. If you look closely at any of these pieces you will see obvious flaws the result of inexperience, improper tooling, and carelessness. Any one of these errors would cause my work to be cast as amateur at best. But even these errors don’t truly separate my craftsmanship from that of a friend of mine who is a very skilled woodworker.

My friend builds grandfather clocks, complete dining room sets, elaborate bedsteads and entire collections of cute wooden toys. But even these more grandiose creations don't separate the "men from the boys" so to speak. No, it's not the product of his work that truly marks him as a fine craftsman. Rather it is one very important difference that makes my work outside of his class. He literally is able to make something out of nothing! I have seen him take a piece of rough hewn walnut, replete with knots, twists, and reverse grains and craft something beautiful from it. His great patience and an innate ability to be able to see into the wood something that isn't there yet but will be is what makes him a fine craftsman. Ultimately, it isn't even the lack of flaws that eventually separates his work from mine. It is something far less apparent but far more impacting than mere error. A great craftsman puts himself into every piece of work he produces. It starts when virgin wood meets rough hands and is consummated when the wood has become something much beyond its original promise, glowing under the tender strokes of the finishing cloth. There is now a union between creator and the created, one that can only result from the love of one who fashions another into something exquisitely beautiful.

In such a way God separates Himself from all manmade creation as the only Creator capable of fashioning out of nothing, something truly exquisite and beautiful. Whereas we humbly ply our skills with imperfect hands and hearts, God created all things from a state of eternal perfection that dwells within His being. Think about it, this world is perfect! There is no flaw in its creation; no gaps, drips, or unsightly scratches. When our Creator God was finished with His handiwork, he declared it good. Nothing imperfect can stand in His sight. It can't be any other way for God, the Eternal Craftsman of all things good and perfect, started with virgin material, His Holy Word, and crafted from it something of great promise, you and I. When He was finished, there existed a union, an eternal bond between Creator and the created which could never be broken, even when sin intervened. What an eternal comfort it is to know that He is in us and we in Him. The mark of a true craftsman, our Heavenly Father.

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