



TRUE LIGHT

THE VAST SKY WAS MY TEACHER

I lay back onto the concrete and stretched my arms wide out the side.

Houston's night air became shockingly fickle at times, and the darkness lent an edge to the air. Cicadas' throaty songs of the day had lulled into an abrupt hush with the arrival of darkness. My fingers spread wide against the sand-papery driveway, drinking in the warmth still radiating from the day's unrelenting sun. Strategically only inches from my hand was a frosty cup of "orange Julious," as Mom called it. Fresh squeezed orange juice mixed with French vanilla ice cream - the kind that had that fancy speckling through it. Beads of condensation gathered and skittered down the cup, creating a wet halo around the base of the glass. I'd sit up, take a deep swig, slowly savoring the flavors on my tongue and settle back down on the driveway and loose myself in the vast canvas above.

I was not alone; all around me on the shadowy driveway were the dark forms of my siblings, and my parents too, sometimes. It may have looked like a family massacre, bodies strewn outstretched like this, but we didn't care. Star gazing was our right. Those evenings on the driveway were a favorite of mine. I'd feel my body relax into the concrete's warm embrace, and my eyes would peer into the vast night sky. I'm sure having been to NASA's museum and peered through a phenomenal telescope fed my curiosity of the mysterious world spread far above but only a fingerbreadth away. I'd make out as many constellations as I could and eagerly watch for a shooting star. That always felt like a little wink from God, catching one of those, because they are so easy to miss.

The sky was my first real memory of vastness.

Growing up in Texas, it was a given. Not always in the city of Houston, granted, but whenever we got out of the city and the buildings faded away into mesquite trees and tumble weed snagged in rusty barbed wire, my lungs would expand. My eyes would open wider. Later I would feel it as I stood in the foaming waves of the ocean, and again at the edge of the Grand Canyon. Something thrilled in me at the terror and delight of being so small in the face of something so big.

Sometimes I'd taste vastness more acutely in life, like when I experience the overwhelming beauty of pulling a screaming newborn to my chest for the very first time, or the shattering devastation of a traumatic and unexpected death of a sibling. I was suddenly microscopically small in the face of a yawning reality much bigger than I ever could be. Oddly, it's not a bad feeling - to realize there is a Being much bigger than we ever could be. It's stabilizing, calming, and reassuring.

Vastness doesn't always feel so safe as that concrete driveway off Buffalo Speedway in Houston, Texas. But I think it was so kind of God to start me off there, warm and cozy, surrounded by those I knew and loved.

I really like to be comfortable. Safe, you know? Funny, because one of the top things that attracted me to my husband was that he was willing to take risks. Not crazy ones, no stupid motorcycle stunts or Russian roulette kinds of foolishness. But he shifted his priorities from what was easy and pushed into what was really good - hard but good. Falling in love with him wasn't hard but waiting for that man sure was. It took five eternal years for him to come up for air from the mission field and realize he did want to be married after all. Good thing, too, because I was about to become an old maid if he didn't.

But his love for God and His word pushes on, often cutting through deep waters that may seem murky or muddled to me. He pushes for unpacking it all. And that quest for walking with God, no matter where He calls, has led us on a truly unique and powerful journey. His willingness to take risks has allowed us to experience the vastness of God's provision, of His unexpected abundance, and of His sustenance through seasons of trial.

There is so much I am just beginning to understand. Things I'm hungering to unpack. But this I know. The vast needs that spread wide before us? They are already in His hands. The staggering reality that pierces our soul? God sees it, too. The questions our teens will ask? God has already prepared. The friends and influences our children need? He already knows.

Hagar went into the desert with her precious son and expected to meet death. Instead, she came face to face with an angel of hope and summarized the scene by saying, *You are the God who sees me* (Genesis 16:13 NIV). No matter how vast the world, no matter how small we feel, we are seen by El-roi, the God who sees us (Genesis 16:13 NRSV).

Sitting in the face of these gasping moments calms me, makes me still and quiet - which is a good thing. Words come so easily, and it's easy to miss the better things when we are too busy making noise. Sometimes I see straight through a matter with crystal clear vision. Sometimes I'm certain I'm right. But then, sometimes I'm just wrong. It's humbling, but fact.

Sometimes God reveals something to us to hold in silence, like Mary, close and treasured in our hearts (Luke 2:19). God does it so we invited Him to work it like only He can while we pray over it. **Continued on back**

March 10, 2024

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES

SUNDAY

Sunday School :
9:30 a.m.
Worship:
10:15 a.m.
5:00 p.m.

WEDNESDAY

Bible Study.....7:00PM

MINISTER

Stan Dauck
573-293-5620

ELDERS

David Burleson
573-820-0329
David Carson
573-276-5567
Stan Dauck
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*"This is the day the Lord
has made. Let us rejoice
and be glad in it."*

Psalms 118:24

**We Welcome You
To All Of Our
Services**

BIRTHDAYS/ANNIVERSARIES

March 11 - Jerry & Janie Burluson (A)
 March 14 - David Billingsley
 Kim Flowers
 March 15 - Beckie Tanner
 March 17 - Brian Thomason



CHILDREN'S HOMES NEEDS

Salsa/Picante Sauce * Coffee * Cereal *
 Tissues * Velveeta Cheese *
 Chocolate Chips
 Pick up date: May 20



Attendance for March 3: 106

Contribution for March 3: \$5367

REMEMBER IN PRAYER

Jess Lecroy was briefly hospitalized last week for pneumonia but is home and doing much better * Millie Dauck at home with COVID * Amelia Garner was sick last week but is feeling much better * Marty Watson recovering from a few broken ribs following a fall * Becky Johnson will be having additional surgery in a few months * Roxanne Carson, Rodney Britt, and Joe Vincent currently undergoing treatments for cancer * Sue Flowers continuing to decline but has had a few good days recently * Maura Thomason will be having a fluoroscopy and a steroid epidural on her spine April 11 * David Vinson diagnosed with wide spread cancer and has been placed on hospice care

Continue praying for these members of our church family: David Burluson * David Carson * Scott and Judy Flannery * Karen Forkum * Patsy (Hardy) Gregg * Darlene McGowan * Helen McGowan * Jeff McGowan * Donna McKuin * Gloria Moore * Ida Roberts * Waynetta Rodgers * David Terrill * Bettie Thurston * Marty Watson * Woody Wood

Those dealing with cancer (non congregational) :

Melinda Akers * Chastity Beard * Cathy Bennett * Roxanne Carson * Sherry Chambers * Randy Cravens * Barbara Denson * Bill Fitzpatrick * Patricia Greninger * Nolan Hollowell * LeAnn Jacques * Tommy Jacques * Pam Jeralds * Holly Johnson * Kristin Meadows * Connie Lemmons * Ponna Mahan * Mike Napier * Betty Nicholson * Keagan Owens * Bill Peck * Nikki Reif * Bobby Thornton * Mindy Tomah * Alan Woodward

Other health issues (non-congregational):

Dixie Billingsley * DeeDee Burch * Mary Burke * Brynlee Douglas * Shirley Grimes * Katie Hicks * Grant Howard * Clyde Jacques * Lola Johnson * Beckie King * Eva Latham * Nikki Lawrence * Tim Lecroy * Shug Lee * Brenda Robinson * Kevin Steed * Traci Suiter * Heather Whitehead *

Our Shut Ins

Sue Flowers * Bettie Thurston * Marty Watson

Looking Ahead

Our Wednesday fellowship meal will be BBQ, baked potatoes, baked beans and coleslaw. Desserts will be needed.

March 12 - Ladies' Lunch Out at 11:30 at MaryAda's in Portageville. There is a sign up sheet on the table in the foyer; if there is enough interest we will take the van.

March 17 - 20: Gospel Meeting at Gideon with guest speaker Brent Newton. The theme is on practical applications from James. Sunday they will have a 1 p.m. evening service; Monday-Wednesday they will meet at 7.

March 20-22 - Evangelism Seminar at the West End Congregation. More information is on the bulletin board by the nursery.

March 24-27 - Gospel Meeting at Fisk with guest speaker Todd Clippard.

March 31 - We MAY have an Easter dinner in the fellowship room following morning worship if there is enough interest. A sign up sheet is on the table in the foyer. If you think you'd like to be a part of this meal, please please sign the sheet.

April 7-10 - Our Gospel Meeting with Brent Newton. Be praying now for a successful meeting.

WILLING TO SERVE

March 10, 2024

Morning Worship:

Song Leader.....Rodney Williams
 Opening Prayer.....David Carson
 Scripture.....Ron Garner
 Prayer.....Zack Tanner
 Closing Prayer.....Justin Allen

Evening Worship:

Song Leader.....David Carson
 Prayer.....Rodney Williams
 Scripture.....Jeff Rodgers
 Dismissal.....Jerry Burluson

Wednesday, March 13, 2024

Song Leader.....Dylan Seabaugh
 Prayer.....Jacob Clayton
 Dismissal.....Mike Duley

March 17, 2024

Morning Worship:

Song Leader.....Derek Mays
 Opening Prayer.....Jon Neely
 Scripture.....Jason Karnes
 Prayer.....Sam Garner
 Closing Prayer.....Jess Lecroy

Evening Worship:

Song Leader.....Ron Garner
 Prayer.....Rodney Williams
 Scripture.....Derek Mays
 Dismissal.....David Burluson

Continued from front

Sometimes it is time to speak, sometimes it is more important to pause, to lean in, to hold a finger to our own lips and look up. To lean in and listen.

In that quietness and in the listening, I'm discovering something so unexpected.

We all know relationships take work, time, and words. But sometimes, in the most unexpected places, when I have no words, I discover how fully I am known by my Father. Without me even having the right words, or the ability to express myself. I'm understood. Held. Treasured. It's simply life-changing. Like that little freckled girl laying on the driveway, lost under the awe of glittering stars: I am held by His warm embrace.

To be known, fully and completely known, is staggering. ALL of me, my best and my worst, the whole package, seen in entirety and accepted. Not left to stay in that incomplete stage, but fully loved and embraced, THAT is life-changing.

I'm still puzzling over the constellations above. Some things in life are just bitter. There are knots and tangles that vex my very impatient soul. But I'm increasingly aware that in this immense vast life, both mortal and immortal, God is over all. His name is over it all.

In my failures, He can redeem. In betrayals, He can restore. The broken, He came to heal. The lost He calls home.

It is a beautiful, humbling exhilarating process we are invited to witness, and at beautiful times, participate in.

My breathing steadies. My fingers relax. He really is over it all. Come, pull up a spot next to me on this warm driveway, and let us loose ourselves in this vast spread of His presence, His promise, all around us. Come on, it's warm here. I've got a spot for you.

Melissa Troyer, heartlight.com

Bible trivia: What Bible character hid his belt (girdle - KJV) in the crevice of the rock? * What is the name of the young virgin who kept King David warm during his old age?

A: Jeremiah (Jeremiah 13:3-5) * Abishag (1 Kings 1:11-13)