

Peter and the Fish

By Jean LaRosa

While working my way through a Lenten devotional series, I came across an odd little incident described in Matthew 17:24-27. Some tax collectors from the temple came to Peter and asked him if his rabbi paid the temple tax. Peter replied that he did. Jesus later explained to Peter why he should be exempt from it, but then He did something strange. He told Peter that to avoid causing offense, he should go to the lake, cast his line, and open the mouth of the first fish he caught to find a four-drachma coin that would pay the temple tax for both of them. I have so many questions! Did Jesus do something supernatural by putting the coin in the mouth of the fish? If so, couldn't He have just allowed Peter to find the coin on the beach? Why send him on a literal fishing expedition? Was it to test his faith and see if he would follow Jesus' instructions? Or was Jesus using His omniscience to reveal to Peter the location of an existing four-drachma coin? I wonder if Peter had questions at the time. How long would it take him to catch the fish Jesus told him to catch? Were the conditions even good for fishing that day? But if he had questions, he didn't ask them, he just did what Jesus told him to do. The effort Jesus required of Peter is a crucial aspect of the miracle. It's interesting that Jesus used something Peter already knew how to do to meet their need—fish!

There's another fish story involving Peter and the resurrected Christ described in John 21:4-9. Peter and a few other disciples had been out fishing all night but had caught nothing. The post-resurrection Jesus showed up, but they didn't recognize Him when He asked if they had any fish. He told them to cast their net on the right side of the boat, and they would find some fish. Although they could have told Him that they had been out all night and hadn't



caught anything, they did what He told them to do and caught so many fish they couldn't haul in the net. John recognized Jesus then, and Peter, ever the impulsive one, jumped into the water in his haste to be with Jesus.

There are other examples where taking a specific step of faith seems to be a prerequisite for God's provision. When Jesus fed the crowds (Matthew 14:15-21 and Matthew 15:32-38), the disciples first had to scrounge up a few loaves of bread and a little bit of fish. One time Jesus encountered a blind man and put mud on his eyes, then told him to go wash in the pool of Siloam to be healed (John 9:1-7). It's as if He wanted the man to participate in the miracle He was going to do, not just be a passive observer. Of course, it doesn't always

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“Peter and the Fish,” continued...

work this way. Sometimes Jesus just healed people, like the two blind men who asked for Him to restore their sight in Matthew 20:29-34. He had compassion for them, touched their eyes, and they immediately regained their sight and followed Him.

But sometimes, like Peter, we are called to take a step of faith before we have the whole picture. As I pondered this incident, I wondered—where might God be waiting for me to take a step of obedience before He answers my prayer? I am always, every day, asking God to intervene on my behalf. Could there be something He is asking me to do?

The 5-Day Club is Coming!



Summer is quickly approaching, and that means it is almost time for our exciting annual 5-Day Club! We are grateful to partner once again with Child Evangelism Fellowship (CEF) to host this faith-filled, fun week for children ages 5 to 12. It will run from July 20 through July 24, meeting each evening from 7:00 PM to 8:30 PM. Each night will contain dynamic Bible lessons, exciting games, inspiring missionary stories, music, and outdoor activities, making it the perfect opportunity for kids to grow in their faith and make lasting summer memories. There is no charge to attend.

We would also love your help! Adults can serve in a variety of ways, especially by donating or providing snacks for the children during the week. Whether you can help for one evening or for several, your support is greatly appreciated.

If you are interested in helping or would like to learn more, please speak with Ed MacQueen at church, or you can contact him by email at e.macqueen1@comcast.net or by phone at 609-751-6584. Most importantly, please pray that God will work powerfully in the hearts of the children and families who attend.

Please share this exciting news with your friends, relatives, and neighbors. All children are welcome to join us for this unforgettable week!



Happy Birthday!

Blessings to all who celebrate a birthday this month. May you feel the love, joy and presence of the Lord as we all celebrate your special day with prayers and warmest wishes.

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| Kate Taylor | June 4 |
| Bob Seiboth | June 5 |
| Charles MacQueen | June 6 |
| Darrell Bernheisel | June 22 |

Perisseia

Perisseia, our women's growth group, will be doing an informal series this summer on an every-other-week basis beginning on June 11. We will be looking at C.S. Lewis' *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe* to help us understand how our choices affect the women we are becoming. We will take a deeper look into this in the fall and use the Biblical truths in Lewis' *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader* as the foundation for our discussions.

We will meet in the Chapel House on Thursday evenings, 7:00-8:30 pm. Those who attend are encouraged to read along in the book, but no commitment or preparation is required. It is anticipated that women will come and go as their summer schedules allow. Any questions, please see or contact Cindy Bills.

Cindy (609-275-8557) or cynthialbills@gmail.com



Elders' Corner

By Darrell S. Bernheisel

The ministry teams, including the Elder Board, have been meeting twice monthly this year to read and discuss *The Purpose Driven Church* by Rick Warren. It is an insightful book on how to position a church for success. At its core, the message is simple: align with God's purposes to cultivate a healthy church by building up its people. Warren frames this through five biblical purposes: worship, fellowship, discipleship, ministry, and evangelism. Each of these provides a strong foundation for meaningful and lasting growth.

While every chapter offers valuable takeaways, one theme has stood out and continues to stay with me: the intersection of faith and risk.

Warren emphasizes that ministry must be both faithful and fruitful. Faithfulness may seem straightforward, but it goes beyond simply holding to orthodox beliefs, something I'll return to in a moment. Fruitfulness, however, raises an important question: what does success look like? Jesus calls us to fulfill the Great Commission (*Matthew 28:18–20*), and in doing so, we participate in His mission. That is a clear measure of purpose and success. But where does risk enter the equation?

In *Matthew 25:14–30*, Jesus shares the parable of the talents. Two servants invest in what they are given and double it, while the third, out of fear, hides his talent and produces nothing. The first two are commended as "good and faithful," while the third is rebuked as "wicked and lazy."

At first glance, this may feel harsh. After all, the third servant didn't squander the gift recklessly (like the prodigal son!). Yet, upon reflection, his inaction may be the greater failure. God entrusts each of us with gifts, skills, opportunities, resources, and potential. It's not about safely preserving them but to put them to work. Faith that remains hidden, like something tucked away in a sock drawer, calls into question whether it is truly active faith at all. While God does not expect us to achieve beyond what we are capable of, He does expect us to act—to steward what we've been given and trust Him for the outcome.

Each of us is a steward of the Master's resources until He returns. Our willingness to take risks for Him often correlates with the fruit we bear. This calls for honest reflection: how are we using the life and opportunities God has given us? Faithfulness requires action, it invites us to step forward, invest, and engage.

The reality is that everyone has something to offer. There is no guarantee that every effort will succeed. But Scripture reminds us in *Matthew 17:20* and *Luke 17:6* that even faith as small as a mustard seed can move mountains. Starting small is not a limitation, it is often the beginning of something significant. What matters most is not the scale of what we begin with, but the faith we bring to it.

It is also worth noting that the first two servants in the parable were given different amounts yet received the same praise because both were faithful with what they had. This reminds us not to compare starting points, but to focus on faithful stewardship.

So, let's be willing to take risks for Him. Step forward in faith, use what He has given you, and trust Him with the results. The reward, as Scripture promises, will be great.

Please know that the Elder Board continues to faithfully pray for each of you. If there are areas of your life where you would like us to come alongside you in prayer, it would be our joy and privilege to do so.

Financial Update

(Through April 30, 2026)

| | Actual | Budget |
|---------|----------|----------|
| Income | \$41,863 | \$59,000 |
| Expense | \$75,877 | \$59,000 |

"And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus"

(Philippians 4:19)

Praise God!

Further Up and Further In

*Inviting dialogue to encourage growth in
and among us*



By Cindy Bills

Lights of the World

The Bible is God's revelation of Himself to humankind. Incomprehensibly, God loves us and wants to reveal Himself to us, that everyone might know Him by faith. This is not a New Testament concept. When the LORD called Abraham as the progenitor of the nation of Israel, He promised Abraham that in Abraham all families of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 12:3b). The Promised Land was strategically located on a trade route, bringing non-Israelite travelers through on a regular basis, giving them an opportunity to hear about the one God, Yahweh. The LORD also provided for sojourners in Israelite territory that they might experience the goodness of God: The rest of the Sabbath applied to them as well as to the Israelites (Exodus 20:10); the Law applied to Israelites and sojourners alike (Exodus 9:14); and the prophet Ezekiel chastised the people for oppressing sojourners among them (Ezekiel 22:29). Our God wants *all* people to know His goodness as well as His greatness....

The theme continues and expands in the New Testament. Jesus proclaims that believers are both salt (Matthew 5:13) and light (Matthew 5:14-16). We are to join John the Baptist in proclaiming that the kingdom of God is at hand! And just before the resurrected Christ returns to heaven, He gives His disciples the Great Commission: *Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.* (Matthew 28:19-20).

We are to be about our Lord's business, proclaiming the Gospel to unbelievers. It is our privilege to do so. But it is not always clear how to fulfill this calling. Pastor Jame has called us to prayer, for the Lord to identify and lead us to nonbelievers who He is drawing to Himself. This is

an excellent approach! But it doesn't have to be our exclusive way to proclaim the Gospel....

One of my favorite movie lines, from *Ocean's Eleven*, describes a foundational theme of the film: "There is always someone watching." Like it or not, this is a very true statement even outside of Hollywood. While we may not be intentionally watched, our words and actions, and even our expressions and attitudes, are noticed. The way we treat others and respond under stress can make a big impression. Jesus teaches His disciples this principle even before He gives them the Great Commission: *Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.* (Matthew 5:16)

The lifestyle approach to evangelism, as I have coined it, is not as focused and intentional as the more direct, intentional approach. But it can be just as demanding if not more so. We need to consider ourselves in "evangelism mode" whenever and wherever we are out and about. And if we are to be prepared to manifest the Lord in any place and at any time, we must be prayerfully welcoming and nurturing the Lord's sanctifying work in us with every breath. We cannot manifest the Lord without Him! Trying to fake the fruits of the Spirit will be counterproductive for those with whom we come in contact; and worse, it will tempt us to think that we can become who the Lord has created and called us to be by our own wisdom and strength. But if we surrender to His ways of working within us, we will become increasingly able both to know and to share His goodness and grace. As the Light of the world shines within us, we will become beacons of hope in our desperately needy world.

Please feel free to contact Cindy (609-275-8557) or cynthialbills@gmail.com to continue the dialogue....

If you have any items or information you would like to share in the newsletter, please e-mail:

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