

Dear Family,

God is not a hand-maid. He is not a harsh set of rules, a bag of fly-swatters, or a doting grandfather who slips you a twenty dollar bill every time you visit. He is the highest and best of beings; the Creator for whom the creation was created, and He rightly understands that He (and not the Church) is the focus of the universe. His goal is *His* glory, as that is the highest goal any being could have. This eternal purpose is the very navigational pole of all creation, and therefore of each of us. It is true that God is so very good that His pursuit of His glory veritably slings out showers of blessing in every direction for His people as He is about His goal. As the queen of Sheba remarked to King Solomon, “Blessed are your *servants* who daily stand and hear *your wisdom*”.

I encourage you to read, with this understanding, and for the increase of this understanding. Occasionally, I encounter someone who rather foolishly says, “But I just don’t like to read.” That is like someone telling you, “I don’t like to eat.” That person just hasn’t discovered pasta or chocolate! Keep eating a variety of things and you will soon find the problem is not eating but limiting your eating.

May I recommend C.S. Lewis. EVERYTHING by this saint and Oxford/Cambridge professor is a *treasure*. He writes with a decidedly Christian perspective on a broad range of topics, including the problem of pain, the reasonableness of the faith, the sorrow of grief and “unanswered prayer”, a witty insight to spiritual warfare, and, of course, *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Lewis marvelously embraced the majesty and sovereignty of God without denying His personal fondness and affection for His elect. In *The Silver Chair* young Jill finds herself in Narnia, lost, desperately thirsty, and coming upon a cool hillside stream. . . with a fearsome and powerful Lion lying next to it:

“Are you not thirsty,” said the Lion.

“I am dying of thirst,” said Jill.

“Then drink,” said the Lion.

“May I- could I- would you mind going away while I do?” said Jill.

The Lion answered this only by a look and a very low growl. And as Jill gazed at its motionless bulk, she realized that she might as well have asked the whole mountain to move aside for her convenience.

The delicious rippling noise of the stream was nearly driving her frantic.

“Will you promise not to- do anything to me, if I do come?” said Jill.

“I make no promise,” said the Lion.

Jill was so thirsty now that, without noticing it, she had come a step nearer.

“Do you eat girls?” she said.

“I have swallowed up girls and boys, women and men, kings and emperors, cities

and realms” said the Lion. It didn’t say this as if it were boasting, nor as if it were sorry, nor as if it were angry. It just said it.

“I daren’t come and drink,” said Jill.

“Then you will die of thirst,” said the Lion.

“Oh dear!” said Jill, coming another step nearer.

“I suppose I must go and look for another stream then.”

“There is no other stream,” said the Lion.

One Lewis biographer, Terry Glaspey, observes, “You see, Aslan is not a tame Lion. It involves risk on the part of the children to even approach him.

Like Christ, he cannot be bargained with. They must trust and *surrender*.”

I say, “Amen”.

Dear family, good books, written by thinking and gifted authors, help us to come at the gospel of Christ and its endless ramifications, again and again, sharpening our understanding, increasing our faith and love, and driving us to our knees in humble, holy worship. Read the Word of God, and read about the Word of God, and read in general. But don’t waste your time? Read those books that come highly recommended by people you trust (and if they are wrong, rebuke them, that’s what I do!). The ancients raised their children by the motto, “We study not for school, but for life.” Christians study for this life and the next. Brothers and sister, read.

As we consider the Pauline exhortation that we are to walk in truth *and love*, let me encourage you with something that happened to me this past Lord’s day. As I was helping to set up for our morning worship, the clan McCoggins arrived for the same purpose. Will, 14, came up to me first thing and hugged me, really! (Okay, it was *like* a hug. You see, Will is nearly as tall now as Tyler Zeller, so it was sort of like a giraffe hugging a raccoon, but still all the sentiment was there). I cannot tell you how incredibly wonderful such a simple communication of fondness meant to me. Surely this is what Paul means, under inspiration of the Holy Spirit, when he invites us, “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” Dear family, let us not love in word or in tongue (or mere handshakes) but in deed, truth, and holy embraces. Many people you know need just such a personal communication of fondness and attention. May all men know that we are disciples of Christ by our love (and hugs) for one another!

Be aware that on December 21 we will have our now annual Candelight Christmas at historic Saint Thomas, as 6:00 pm. Please save the date and start inviting everyone you know; even your Jewish friends expect such an invitation this time

of year, don't disappoint them. And pray that God's praise would be glorious. We will have a string quartet and special music (and I promise *not* to play).

Please remember Fitz and Ann, and all who travel, for Thanksgiving. Pray for safety and for holy boldness. We will have regular service Thanksgiving Sunday morning and evening Bible study. Please pray for me; my value to you is a direct function of your prayers which I dearly covet.

With great thanksgiving for each of you, and praise to the Almighty,

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