Dear Lexie,

"The Treasurer Throw-Away Food"

Recently, I saw a post on Facebook by Lysa TerKeurst entitled, "The Treasure of Thrown-Away Food" and it caught my attention. How could thrown-away food be a treasure? A Liberian boy had written a story about the corruption and greed that caused the civil war in his country. He had lived the first 13 years of his life in an orphanage there and "he described what it felt like to be naked digging through the trash looking for the treasure of thrown-away food." Most of us have never been hungry enough to have to search the trash to find food to eat. And yet, in the richest country in the world, according to Hunger in America, there are over 50 million people that go hungry in America. That is 1 in 6 of the U.S. population - including more than 1 in 5 children!
This Sabbath:
November 30, 2013

Speaker:
Charles Tapp, "Living with Hope"

Special Musical Guests:
Soraya Homayouni, Soprano

The Wonder of Worship
A Fest of Praise

This Thanksgiving season I feel very grateful. I am thankful for my loving family and our happy home. For most of us, home is the heart of our Thanksgiving gathering...

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God's perfect timing
A thought by Jamie Jean Schneider

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We have this Hope
Advent Season 2014
From November 30 to December 28 Sligo church will be celebrating the reason for the season. This year's theme is We have this Hope! Join us and bring a friend!

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The Treasure of Thrown-Away Food

Recently, I saw a post on Facebook by Lysa TerKeurst entitled, “The Treasure of Thrown-Away Food” and it caught my attention. How could thrown-away food be a treasure? A Liberian boy had written a story about the corruption and greed that caused the civil war in his country. He had lived the first 13 years of his life in an orphanage there and “he described what it felt like to be naked digging through the trash looking for the treasure of thrown-away food.” Most of us have never been hungry enough to have to search the trash to find food to eat. And yet, in the richest country in the world, according to Hunger in America, there are over 50 million people that go hungry in America. That is 1 in 6 of the U.S. population – including more than 1 in 5 children!

Back in 1970, forty-three years ago, the Festival of Praise began in a rather inauspicious way as Kitt Watts envisioned the Sabbath before Thanksgiving as a time when Sligo members would bring food to share with those in need. From its humble beginnings, it has become a tradition for outreach in a worship service where music and praise mingle as hundreds of worshippers bring gifts of food in dozens and dozens of grocery bags. And then dozens of Pathfinders, Youth and Adults prepare the food for distribution to over 1,000 families with the assistance of Adventist Community Services of Greater Washington. This is the way we celebrated God’s divine goodness last Sabbath. It was truly thanksgiving to God.

As I contemplate the gifts for which I’m thankful, first of all it’s for the gift of God’s Son. And then I’m especially grateful for my family—including my Sligo family. As you celebrate Thanksgiving with your loved ones, I would like to challenge you to pause, notice and choose something for which you can truly be thankful.
The Wonder of Worship: A Feast of Praise

This Thanksgiving season I feel very grateful. I am thankful for my loving family and our happy home. For most of us, home is the heart of our Thanksgiving gathering. We drive miles through unbearable traffic, pack into planes and fly across oceans to arrive at the place we call home. For this one day celebration, we painstakingly prepare. We spruce up our decor, cook delectable dishes, set the table and eagerly wait for the feast and fellowship to begin. In this warm atmosphere of family and friends, we partake without reservation. We eat until we are full and savor the notion that this gathering will happen again next year. Our Thanksgiving feast is a success only when all have fellowshipped.

I also feel very grateful to be the Pastor for Worship here at Sligo Church. To me this sacred responsibility to create an atmosphere of worship can become the heart of our gathering. Our church home is where our family celebrates God’s goodness during the sacred Sabbath hours. We travel from miles around through traffic and across rivers to gather in the Lord’s house. We admire our beautiful edifice and praise our active ministries. We enjoy our fun-filled festivities. We painstakingly prepare to experience God in each week. We plan the worship flow with our Sligo family in mind, and eagerly wait for the fellowship to begin so we can partake until we are full. To us, it is a menu of worship filled with delight.

Yet God’s house is a house of prayer for all people (Is. 56:7). When we come together family, friends and guests alike should feel warm and welcome. It is time for us to prepare God’s house for our community. Guests and friends should be regular partakers in our hallowed time of worship. For our Sabbath celebration, every room should be spruced up, the decor fine, the ambiance warm and inviting. As we prepare God’s house for community fellowship, He sets the tone for a feast of praise. The sanctuary and our demeanors will be full of love and grace as we eagerly greet God’s invited friends and guests. Our church home will reflect our transformed lives. This warm atmosphere will create a delightful menu which makes every smile, hug, hymn, Scripture, prayer, sermon, and offering a weekly feast of praise.

In this welcoming ambience, we will give God glory without reservation. In this warm atmosphere of thanksgiving we will set a welcome table on Sabbath day and eagerly bring friends and family into our fellowship. For each guest, our church home will be the heart of our gathering. Our lifestyle of worship that attracts the community will fill our souls and create an eternal feast of praise.
God’s Perfect Timing: Can You Hear Me Now?

Jamie Jean

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” (Jeremiah 29:11)

If patience is a virtue, I have the patience of a sinner. Thankfully, there have been times when I’ve been blessed to know that I am exactly where the Lord wants me to be. In fact, the Lord tends to be abundantly clear when I choose to listen, and I hopefully have learned to patiently await his guidance during His silences.

I would have never dreamed that I would someday work at the Smithsonian. To me, it was a revered place of worldly knowledge and art that one could visit. Several years ago, I was extremely unhappy with my job and desperately searching for something that would allow me to have a balanced life—one that would not conflict with my spiritual desires and would permit me the time needed to invest in my personal relationships.

I prayed earnestly, and grew impatient with God’s timing. I declined several offers which I knew were not right for me, or I was the runner up for positions I thought were perfect. One such lost opportunity turned out to be a blessing. Not long after another candidate was awarded the position, it was terminated as a result of budget cuts. Even so, I felt exhausted and stuck in a holding pattern—eventually I decided to take a break from my search.

Turns out that God had better plans for me. One particularly character-building day, I was suddenly bombarded with emails from three different people about a job opportunity at the Smithsonian. When the first email came, I decided not to set myself up for failure once again and ignored it. Then two more emails came, and my curiosity was piqued. Upon further review, the position seemed perfect for me but the deadline to apply was that evening. The Lord in His wisdom knew that if I had time to think about it, I would become discouraged and not apply. The adrenaline rush kicked in, and I spent the next seven hours submitting my resume, cover letter, and marketing samples as well as going through the grueling questionnaire required for all government positions. I submitted my completed application a mere five minutes to midnight.

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31)

Not expecting a response anytime soon, I returned to life as usual. The next week, I received an email asking if I would be willing to come down for an interview. I said yes, and one was scheduled for later that same week.

On the day of my interview, the security guard struck up a conversation with me as I nervously waited. Upon realizing the reason for my visit, the security guard sprung into a sermonite about trusting the will of God and obediently claiming that which was laid before me. Only later did I realize that he did this at considerable personal risk given that he was violating strict federal rules against evangelizing at work. He personally escorted me down to my interview and blessed me. Stunned, I knew the Lord was leading me and that I already had this job. He had spoken to me through his servant and given me the necessary confidence to impress. Less than a week later, I was negotiating the terms of my contract.

I was hired in less than two weeks from the day I applied for the position, and my background check cleared in a week (during the Easter holiday), which, as anyone who works for the government knows, is an impossibly short time frame.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.” (Proverbs 3:5)

While there are many more details I could share to convince you of God’s leading, I think His hand in this life-changing moment is clear. I realize now that God’s plan far exceeded my expectations. I could not ask for a better situation than what I have now. That doesn’t mean I won’t have trials, but it does mean I need to trust in the Lord in order to navigate those trials.

“And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose.” (Romans 8:28)
Just when I thought I couldn’t take any more, He picked me up and told me it was time to move on to something better. It’s wonderful knowing that I am exactly where I need to be at this time. There is always free-will. I could have decided to ignore the promptings of the spirit, but I would have forsaken the blessing and the purpose He had for me. It is in these moments that my faith is affirmed, so that when the next storm comes, I’ll remember the time that God reached down and personally directed my path.

“Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.” (Joshua 1:9)
Kierkegaard Looks Back

Barry Casey

Life must be lived forward, but can only be understood backwards. — Soren Kierkegaard

For a good part of my life I saw religion as a duty which must be accomplished with dedication if not enjoyment. Since all people are sinners and sinners must seek salvation it did not occur to me that some people might not see the point in all this religion business. “Oh, I’m not religious,” some friends would say to me, as if it were genetically transmitted or perhaps an acquired taste. They would blithely go about their lives, unencumbered by guilt, enjoying their sins, and occasionally pausing to shake their heads at my dutifulness. “Why do you bother?” they would ask curiously.

For my part, I could not understand how religion could be regarded as an accessory. It was core, at the heart, deep inside, that which guided and prompted all that was good and pure and true. One could no more shuck it off and live a decent upright life than one could see one’s hand in a room without light. There was one way to salvation and that was through obedience to the rules, as inexplicable as they appeared sometimes. And yet I continued to meet people who claimed no religious allegiance, but seemed to me honest and good, the kind of people who would take you in during a storm or give you a lift miles out of their way. It was disconcerting. Some of them even smoked.

So I tried harder, tried to be dutiful, tried to be aligned without completely losing myself. But “myself” would slip out of my grasp at the most inopportune moments and do something embarrassing, like refusing to stand and go forward for altar calls. Even if I had made a clear and heartfelt decision years before to join the side of the angels, I squirmed in the pew when the preacher began his pitch. I felt that I owed it to the unchurched and the disbelievers in the house to stand yet again and be a living example. Despite my inner diatribe that religion was personal and that honesty demanded a consonance between motivation, belief and action, I felt I was letting down the team.

And yet I was always fascinated by religion, or rather by the quest for God and transcendence. Growing up in California in the 60s, I was surrounded by those who sought a shortcut to enlightenment or at least bliss. I plodded along, waving as they roared past, secure that I had the safer path if by far the slower one. If it was there, I thought, I’d find it eventually by dint of just keeping at it, one foot in front of the other. But I didn’t.

I studied theology, philosophy of religion, eventually got a doctorate and taught religion for some years. I had no doubt I should be there and yet I constantly felt like an imposter. I could not be like my colleagues, men who had signed up for the church for life and who seemingly could overlook all manner of missteps and outright lies on the part of the church. I struggled to understand how to avoid the sin of self-righteousness while side-stepping hypocrisy. But pride goes before a fall—and I took a fall of my own making.

Years later I am seeing some things much differently. I am learning not to let the foibles of the official church body distract me from my own spiritual quest. I have met the enemy, like Pogo, and they are me. I know what I am capable of doing against my better judgment and where most of the fault lines appear in my foundations.

And I have learned, or perhaps discovered, that signing up for a set of beliefs is not the point. Some beliefs fall away over the years because they never really found a place because I never really believed them. Others simply don’t make sense no matter how I’ve tried. But the vast majority of religious beliefs ought to be seen as practices. We practice them because in the practicing comes understanding and with understanding comes the willingness to live in grace, to be in God. “Religion is a practical discipline that teaches us to discover new capacities of mind and heart,” says Karen Armstrong in The Case for God. “You will discover their truth—or lack of it—only if you translate these doctrines into ritual or ethical action.”

Orthopraxy over orthodoxy—right action over right belief is how I see it—but with two important caveats. First, we do not earn our way through “right” action because this is not a contractual relationship. God is in the giving business, not the litigation business. Thus, I have nothing to fear from him; I have no need to protect myself. Second, belief is not abandoned, but made firm through action. “Like any skill,” continues Armstrong, “religion requires perseverance, hard work, and discipline. Some people will be better at it than others, some appallingly inept, and some will miss the point entirely. But those who do not apply themselves will get nowhere at all.”

In the end—and in fact, in the beginning and in the middle, is grace. That is what makes this whole venture possible. Room to move, to experiment, to make mistakes and learn from them. Here is the mysterious presence of the Christ. T. S. Eliot knew something of this, laying down the lines in The Wasteland:
“Who is the third who walks always beside you?

When I count, there are only you and I together

But when I look ahead up the white road

There is always another one walking beside you . . .”

And that is enough for the time being.
Advent Season 2013: WE HAVE THIS HOPE

By pesposito On November 27, 2013 · In ,

DUE TO THE INCLEMENT WEATHER THIS WEEK THE DECEMBER 12TH AND 13TH CONCERTS HAVE BEEN POSTPONED. WE WILL UPDATE THE NEW DATES SHORTLY.
| **FRIDAY**  
| **Dec. 6** |  
| **WAU Christmas Concert, 7:30 p.m., Sanctuary** |  
| WAU Department of Music featuring the Columbia Collegiate Chorale of Washington Adventist University and the New England Youth Ensemble of Washington Adventist University |  

| **SECOND WEEK OF ADVENT** |  
| **SATURDAY**  
| **Dec. 7** |  
| **The Church at Worship, 8:45 & 11:15 a.m., Sanctuary** |  
| Symbols of Hope, Charles A. Tapp, Senior Pastor |  
| Music by: The Washington Concert Winds of Washington Adventist University |  

| **THURSDAY**  
| **Dec. 12** |  
| **Sligo Adventist School Christmas Program, 7:00 p.m., Sanctuary** |  
| O Little Christmas Town |  

| **FRIDAY**  
| **Dec. 13** |  
| **Takoma Academy Fine Arts Present “Great Joy” 7:00 p.m., Sanctuary** |  
| A Musical and Dramatic Celebration of the Birth of Christ. By Drama Troupe, Band, String Ensemble, Chorale and Camerata |  

| **THIRD WEEK OF ADVENT** |  
| **SATURDAY**  
| **Dec. 14** |  
| **The Church at Worship, 8:45 & 11:15 a.m., Sanctuary** |  
| The Birth Of Hope, Charles A. Tapp, Senior Pastor |  

| **FOURTH WEEK OF ADVENT** |  
| **SATURDAY**  
| **Dec. 21** |  
| **Sligo Christmas Program, 8:45 & 11:15 a.m., Sanctuary** |  
| The Hope of His Coming — Dramatic Worship Service Featuring: persona poetry, seasonal hymns, and musical selection from Sligo Combined Choirs, Sligo Sanctuary Choir, Sligo Youth Choir, and Sligo Children’s choir |  

| **SATURDAY**  
| **Dec. 28** |  
| **The Church at Worship, 8:45 & 11:15 a.m., Sanctuary** |  
| We Have This Hope, Charles A. Tapp, Senior Pastor |  

www.sligochurch.org