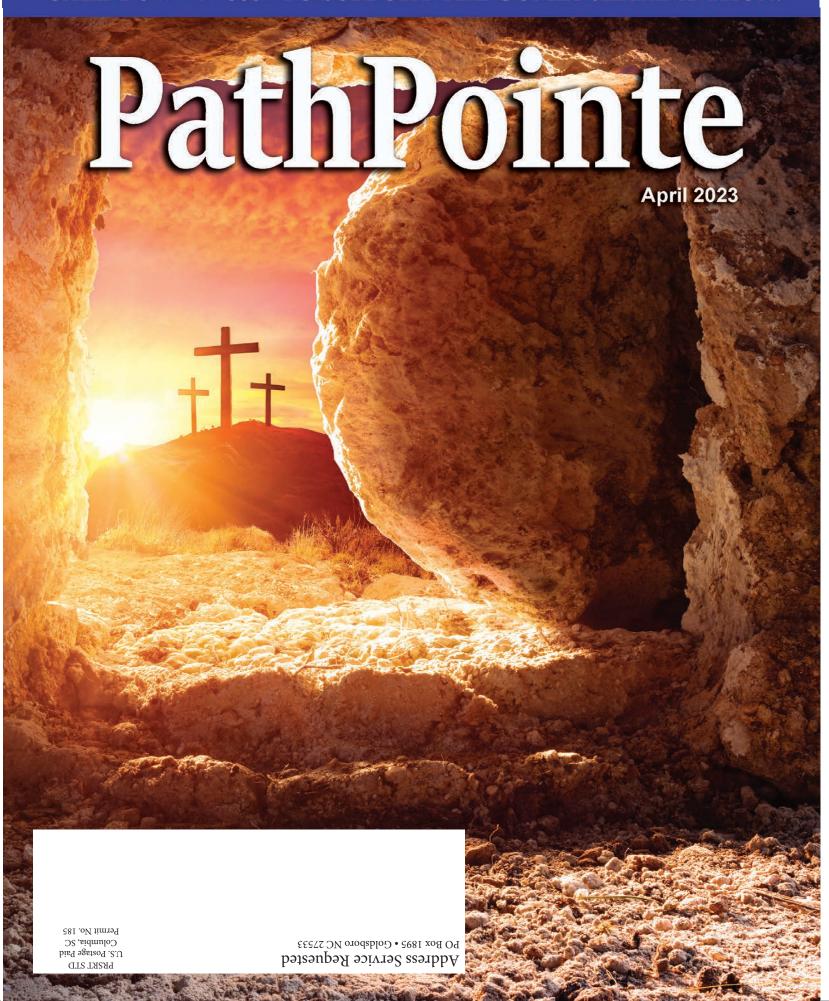
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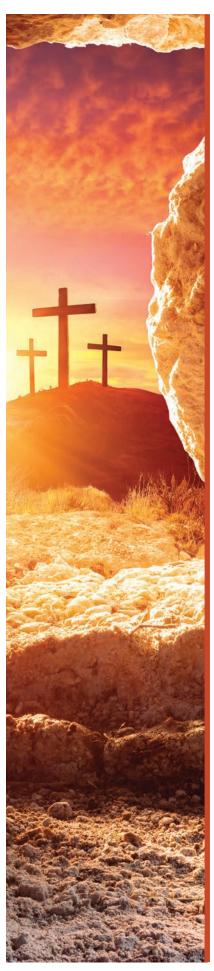
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"Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not."

Isaiah 53:1-3

There really is no middle ground. Either Jesus was the Jewish Messiah, or He wasn't. If He was, how is it that the Jewish people by and large didn't recognize him when he came 2000 years ago? Isaiah tells us that the people

misunderstood Jesus when He came. How did that happen? Each verse gives us one part of the answer.

I. They did not believe His message.

"Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?" Isaiah 53:1

The question is asked regarding who believed the message? The answer is, almost no one. Jesus came as the Messiah, but Israel wanted nothing to do with Him. We know that for a time Jesus had a powerful and growing ministry, especially in Galilee. Thousands flocked to hear Him speak and watch Him heal the sick. As His reputation grew, the common people heard Him gladly.

If they did not know who He was, they instinctively knew He was not like the other religious leaders.

We also know that many people followed Him for shallow reasons. They thought He would proclaim Himself king and lead a revolt against Rome. Or they liked His miracles. Or they admired His courage. Or perhaps they were drawn to the beauty of His teaching. But multitudes turned back when confronted with the call to become His followers. So many left that at one point Jesus asked his inner circle, "Will ye also go away?" John 6:67

By the time Jesus came to Jerusalem for the final time, the nation was deeply divided over Him. Even though the common people heard Him gladly, they did not know who He was. They liked Him, but they did not worship Him. To them He was a great teacher and a great miracle-worker, nothing more.

The leaders were a different story. With few exceptions, they wanted nothing to do with Him. They accused Him of being in league with the devil. They hated Him so much that they plotted to kill Him. As we all know, in due time they succeeded.

John says it this way: "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11). He came to His own people—the nation of Israel, and they did not receive Him. They should have known better. They knew He was coming. God had told them over and over again many times and in many ways. They had ample warning. Even some pagan astrologers in Persia figured it out when they saw His star in the east.

He came to His own people, to the one place where he might be welcomed. He came to His "hometown" and to "His own family." Yet, they did not want Him. They did not receive Him, nor did they believe Him. Finally, they crucified Him. That rejection continues in large part to this very day. The next verse explains why the nation misunderstood who Jesus really was.

II. They judged Him insignificant.

Jesus was not born in Rome. He wasn't even born in Jerusalem. When God decided to enter the world, He came in a most unlikely way. He came not as a conqueror

or a world leader but as a helpless little baby, born in a stable, in the little village of Bethlehem. He came as a tender plant. Years later His critics dismissed Him by asking, "Is not this the carpenter's son?" (Matthew 13:55)

Jesus wasn't born to royalty. Sometimes we look at someone and say, "He's an average kind of guy." That's exactly what the leaders said about Jesus. They didn't see any reason to take Him seriously, so they didn't. He didn't come with the usual marks of greatness, so the rulers completely misunderstood Him and his mission on the earth. He had an ordinary appearance. The Bible says He had, "no form nor comliness." He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him, nothing in His appearance indicated that we should desire Him.

For 2000 years people have wondered what Jesus looked like. Artists in every era have painted Jesus as they imagined Him to be. Most of those paintings tell us more about the artist than they do about

Jesus. Perhaps that is inevitable since the gospel writers tell us virtually nothing at all about Jesus' physical appearance. We know He was Jewish, and that He was raised in the Middle East, and we know He was raised in a workingman's home. But that doesn't tell us anything about His height, His weight, the color of His eyes, or anything about His distinctive features. Sunday School children in North America usually see pictures of a Jesus who is taller than His disciples, with long flowing hair, light skin, and dark brown eyes.

I have no real quarrel with the way Jesus has been portrayed across the centuries, so long as we all remember that no one knows what He really looked like. We have a pretty vivid description of Him later in Revelation but not so during His earthly ministry.

In most Hollywood productions, Jesus almost always stands out from the crowd. But Isaiah makes the opposite point. The people who rejected Him did so precisely





because He wasn't very impressive. He was not a natural head-turner. He was not a born leader, at least not in the way we normally use that phrase. Though He was the Son of God, He appeared on the earth as an ordinary man. Though He came from the majesty of heaven, He hid that majesty behind a workingman's face.

The Jews of Jesus' day missed this, just as many people miss it today. Jesus' contemporaries had various opinions about our Lord, most of them quite wrong. In this instance, they concluded that Jesus simply could not be the Messiah. Let me remind you of this. You can be wrong about many things and still go to heaven, but you can't be wrong about Jesus and still obtain salvation. That's the reality of unbelief then and now.

III. They despised him for his suffering.

Isaiah 53 contains the good news we all need. He was bruised—for us. He was wounded—for us. He

was beaten, betrayed, mocked, scourged, crowned with thorns, crucified—all for us. Our sins drove Jesus to the cross. But He did not go unwillingly. If our sins drove Him there, His love for us kept Him there.

"and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not."

Twice Isaiah reminds us that people "despised" our Lord. That goes beyond rejection to a kind of settled hatred. They saw His suffering, and concluded that He could not be the promised Messiah. "We esteemed him not" means something like, "He's a nobody to us." The Hebrew word means to calculate or to reckon something, to add up all the facts and come to a settled conclusion. The Jewish leaders added it all up and decided that Jesus was worth, well...maybe thirty pieces of silver at the most.

That the Son of God should become a man is mystery enough, but that He should become a man of sorrows, familiar with suffering, should drive us to our knees in holy wonder and awe. And yet, Isaiah says, "We esteemed him not ...we considered him stricken by God, smitten and afflicted." And basically, mankind could care less.

Jesus was truly the misunderstood Messiah. His own people misread Him completely. They had Him in a box labeled "Insignificant Rabbi from Nazareth." The more He proved He didn't belong in that box, the more they hated Him, counted Him a nobody, and ultimately despised Him. No wonder they were so rabid to kill Him in the end. May I say, He is still misunderstood today. The greatest mistake is to ignore Him as if He doesn't matter or to think that you can postpone a decision. He came to this earth 2,000 years ago as the promised Messiah who is the Son of God and the Saviour of the world. Christ has come!

Jesus died for sinners. Are you a sinner? Then come near to the cross of Jesus. Look upon the Saviour. See His arms outstretched in love for you. Look, and believe, and receive the free gift of eternal life.

To those who receive Him He gives the right to become the children of God. What will you do with Jesus?



Dr. Worthington has been in the ministry for over forty-five years and serves as President of Pathway Ministries and Christian Bible College.















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Do you ever talk to yourself? Sure, we all do. So, what do you say to yourself when you talk to yourself? I'm talking about the ongoing self-talk - the stuff you say to yourself over and over and over again in your mind. If you're like a lot of people, unfortunately, you get stuck in what we might call a negative loop.

Scripture instructs us in **Proverbs**4:23 that we must, "Keep thy
heart with all diligence; for out
of it are the issues of life." The



writer is saying we must be careful how we think, because what we think shapes our lives. Your life is always moving in the direction of your strongest thoughts.

Who is the most influential person in vour life? No one is more influential in your life than you are, because no one talks to you more than you do and you do not listen to anyone more intently than you listen to yourself. But sadly, some of us are talking ourselves into a life that we will come to despise. However, the good news is you're not a victim of your thoughts. By the power of God, you can actually choose what you think about. What you think about determines how you live.

As we approach the final few days of our *Spring Share-A-Thon*, it is

our prayer that you will dwell on thoughts of victory. Please help us pray that a positive spirit of optimism will prevail as we attempt to finish the work we have started.

Please, if you have not considered a contribution yet, won't you take a moment to do so right now? The April edition of the fund drive starts on **Wednesday**, **April 5th**.

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In The Garden

Pharmacist C. Austin Miles wrote the well-loved song "In The Garden" in the spring of 1912 after reading through John 20. Miles stated, "As I read it that day, I seemed to be part of the scene. I became a silent witness to that dramatic moment in Mary's life when she knelt before her Lord and cried, 'Rabboni.'"

We all know the simple chorus:

And He walks with me, and He talks with me, And He tells me I am His own, And the joy we share as we tarry there, Non other has ever known.

Often played and sang at funerals, this song has been a comfort to many. It reminds us of the constant presence of our Lord in our lives. In His Word, He promises to never leave us or forsake us (Hebrews 13:5, Deuteronomy 31:6). What a great comfort we have in knowing we are His!

This Easter season, take time to visit the "garden". Not just for an Easter-egg hunt, but to commune with our Lord. Thankfully, He's a lot easier to find than candy eggs and the time spent in His presence is so much sweeter!

Maybe you don't have a garden, that's perfectly fine. According to C. Austin Miles' great-granddaughter, the song was written "in a cold, dreary and leaky basement in Pitman, New Jersey that didn't even have a window in it, let alone a view of a garden."

He'll meet you right where you are!



What is your Happy Place? Where is your favorite place to be? Most people have a place they think of as special. Maybe it is not a place but a time. I would venture to guess your favorite day of the week is Saturday, unless you are in retail work. Close your eyes for a minute and imagine your perfect place. Honestly, my perfect place is at home, relaxing with my husband.

We all know this world is far from perfect. It is hard to believe that it once was without pain, death, or sin. Animals and man were both vegetarian, even the great dinosaur. The lambs played among the lions without any fear, until one day Adam changed everything. (Romans 5:12)

Man's sin did not catch God by surprise. Since He knows all, He knew Adam was going to mess up. Do you ever wonder why God would create us knowing we were going to sin, and knowing His Son would willingly die for us? God is so amazing. He loved us even before He created us. With His foreknowledge, He had to know all that was going to transpire in the future. Why would He have brought so much pain on Himself?

Now, our love doesn't compare to God's, but as parents, don't we often do the same thing. Many of us plan to have children. Some even go to great lengths and spend lots of money to have the privilege of being parents. We are much more

naïve. For some reason, we think our children are going to be these little angels walking around, and they are going to bring us lots of joy. Those of us that are realistic realize that our children are going to bring us great joy, but they will also mess up and cause us great pain. We will need to forgive them many times, as they will need to forgive us as well. Unfortunately, I know of parents who are not talking to children, children who are not talking to parents, siblings who are not speaking, and the list continues. Forgiveness is not given, nor is it sought. I am so glad my Heavenly Father is not that way. His forgiveness is premeditated. All we have to do is accept it.

Pretend for me that we could tell the future. Suppose you had a child that you dearly loved. He was a good child, and he brought you lots of joy. You have enjoyed this child so much that you want another one. But before the second child was conceived, you had a vision of the future. This second child was going to be rebellious. In fact, he hated your first child. He mocked him and made fun of him. He wanted nothing to do with your first son. Well, one day, your second son is in big trouble and needs someone to bail him out. Your oldest son volunteers, and in the process is murdered. It might be bearable if your second child repented and was sorrowful for causing his brother's death. But he wasn't. He didn't want anything to do with his brother. He wasn't even grateful for his sacrifice. Would you still want to have this second child? I would have to say, not me. But God did!

God not only created us, but He made a way for us to be redeemed. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life." John 3:16. cannot fathom having that much love and forgiveness. God knew how many times each human being would hurt Him and cause Him pain. He knew He would need to offer His Son for man's redemption, and His gift of salvation through Jesus Christ would be rejected by many, yet He created us anyway.

God's forgiveness is insurmountable. Have you heard the saying, "If the perfect can forgive the imperfect, why can't the imperfect forgive the



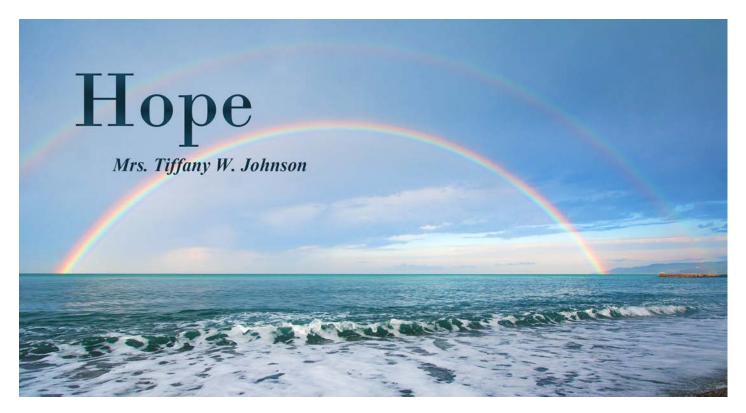
imperfect?" Why do we have so much trouble forgiving each other? So many people harbor anger and bitterness in their hearts toward one or more people in their lives. In Matthew 5:23-24, the Lord teaches that if there is a problem between you and someone else, you should get that straight before bringing sacrifices to the Lord. God doesn't want to talk to us until we do everything possible to mend our earthly relationships. In Ephesians 4:32, Paul states, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." We are supposed to forgive others the way God forgives us. The Scripture is very plain. When we have unforgiveness in our hearts, it damages our relationship with God and our relationships with others. Unforgiveness turns into bitterness which becomes a brick wall around our hearts. We must tear down that wall, or we cannot grow in our relationship with God.

If you have not accepted Jesus or if your relationship has been hindered by some sin in your life, realize that God's forgiveness is sitting on the table in a beautiful box. He has already forgiven you for all of your sins. That happened over 2000 years ago on that cruel Jesus' death sealed the cross. transaction. But please be advised. You cannot receive the gift until it is asked for. He is offering it to you today. The beautiful box with a blood-stained bow is ready for you to open and receive. Jesus died for you and offered His blood for your forgiveness. If you are lost, ask Jesus to forgive you for your sins and be your Savior. If you are a Christian and have unconfessed sin in your life, the gift is on the table for you, too.

This Easter season is the perfect time to accept the gift of forgiveness, and forgive others in your heart, too. Make now your perfect time in a perfect place! *Happy Easter!*



Mrs. Worthington has five children and twelve grandchildren. She serves as Principal of Pathway Christian Academy in Goldsboro.



Several years ago, I was taking a long walk on the beach by myself. I was on vacation with my family and enjoying some quiet moments alone praising the Lord in song. It was a bit of a dreary day, so there weren't many beachgoers out and about. My kind of day for a long walk! I remember listening to "Love Divine" by Shannon Wexelberg, somewhat of an Easter/Resurrection song.

As I looked out over the ocean and seemingly empty beach, there was a full double rainbow stretched out across the sky. It was beautiful. A reminder of God's promises. A symbol of hope. I couldn't help but think in that moment of praise that God placed it there just for me!

As I walked up to the house, others had taken notice of my rainbow and had come out on the deck to enjoy the view. My nieces and nephews were excitedly pointing and squealing as if they were looking at presents under a Christmas tree. Their parents were with them, reminding them of when and why God first made a rainbow. I thought of how blessed I was to be with a family of believers. The neighbors vacationing in the home beside us had also walked out to see the excitement. They were pointing and talking, though I couldn't hear what they were saying. Within thirty minutes or so, the rainbow faded, and we all went about our day as planned.

Later that night I couldn't help but think of the family next door. Did they see what we saw? Sure, I know they saw the double rainbow, but did they see a glimpse of God? Did they see the assurance of His promises? Did they see hope for better things to come? Did they see how much God loves them? I don't know anything about the other family I saw that day. Maybe they were Christians, but maybe they weren't. How sad if they weren't. All they were able to see was a prismatic effect of rain droplets with the sun's light. Sure, what they saw was pretty, but were they missing the big picture?

We all have people in our lives that are missing the big picture. We all see people on a daily basis that need to know just how much God loves them. He loves them so much He sent His Son to the cross for them!

Easter is on the way. It's the perfect time of year to share God's love with someone. Invite them to church. Offer to pray for them. Be the light they need to point them to the Saviour. Maybe next time they see a rainbow, they'll be reminded of God's goodness too!



Mrs. Tiffany W. Johnson is owner of The Bark Park Resort, LLC in Snow Hill, NC, and serves as Editor of PathPointe Magazine.





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Retirement...

My retirement hasn't exactly been relaxing, but I've sure enjoyed it more than checking in on a time clock every morning. I spend most days driving my grandchildren here and there, going to their ball games, running errands for my husband, volunteering for things needed at my church, and fixing things around the house. I think I've probably been busier than I was when I was working full time! I wouldn't trade it though. I'm enjoying this new phase of life with the new responsibilities it brings.

L. H.

I retired a few years ago and quickly realized a sedentary lifestyle just isn't for me. It only took a few months for me to get "stir-crazy" around the house and head back to work. I don't work quite as many hours as I used to, but I'm thankful I still have the ability and health to be able to get up and go every day. The Lord has been so good to me!

G. K.

I had to retire earlier than planned because of my health. Although a part of me misses my former work environment, I am certainly embracing this new direction my life has taken. I've been able to slow down a little bit. I have started gardening and playing in my flower beds, something I've always wanted to do. The days I have doctor appointments, I try to visit with friends or others that might need a cheerful face. I like to write several notes of encouragement throughout the week and randomly mail them to people the Lord places on my heart. **B. B.**

I retired at age 58 from a career as an electrical engineer. My days are filled with family and friends, yard work and pool upkeep, reading, hiking, and attending military air shows. My favorite part about retirement is having independence. I enjoy being in charge of how I spend my days. A challenge for me at the beginning of retirement was developing a schedule. Now that I have one, I still feel productive like I did when I was working.

M. M.

"Father's Day"

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