

Luke 2: 41-52

Now every year his parents went to Jerusalem for the festival of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up as usual for the festival. When the festival was ended and they started to return, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem, but his parents did not know it. Assuming that he was in the group of travelers, they went a day's journey. Then they started to look for him among their relatives and friends. When they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem to search for him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. And all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. When his parents saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, 'Child, why have you treated us like this? Look, your father and I have been searching for you in great anxiety.' He said to them, 'Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?' But they did not understand what he said to them. Then he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them. His mother treasured all these things in her heart.

And Jesus increased in wisdom and in years, and in divine and human favor.

THIS I BELIEVE (in three sections)**Youth Sunday****May 2, 2010****Tess Stackhouse (Junior)**

Good morning. My name is Tess Stackhouse and I'm a junior at Poudre High School.

Webster's defines a hero as a man of distinguished courage or ability, admired for his brave deeds and noble qualities. As a kid, the people that seems to be our heroes are those that we're around the most, our moms, dads, older siblings, teachers, aunts and uncles, they're all big ones. I remember thinking to myself once when I was probably six or seven, that my mom was the most beautiful woman on earth, and I think if any of you know her, you'd agree. She's got a quality about her that makes her beautiful in every way.

But as I grew up, my priorities changed, and I wanted to be the girl who had the perfect hair, perfect skin, perfect clothes, perfect grades, perfect friends, perfect body, all that stuff. Sometimes I confused my beliefs with my friends', and my hopes with theirs. My mom stopped being so beautiful, and she started getting really annoying. As I grew up and started to understand more about who I am, my heroes started to change. I no longer was looking up to my parents and clinging to their every word. I turned to my friends, my peers, for support. I learned pretty slowly and painfully, though, that my friends aren't always going to be the best influence for me. That, as Webster's defines it, they won't always be people of distinguished courage or ability, but rather helpful in shaping me for who I don't want to be.

My dad's a biker, and he's hard-core. I mean, he's really hard-core. Therefore, it's probably no surprise that Lance Armstrong is a hero of his. I never really got it, the whole

he had cancer and then went on to win the Tour seven times, I never really understood the importance until I was about fifteen and my dad was diagnosed with hypothyroidism and then thyroid cancer. He's always been an active guy, always able to eat a bowl of ice cream every night and never gain an ounce. But something went seriously wrong in the first couple months of his being sick. Before we knew it, the cancer had spread to his lymph nodes and he had developed something I thought only happened to other people: cancer.

The word is big and scary, and I felt like I had been thrown into something unfamiliar, unknown, and definitely not something I wanted to deal with as a fifteen-year-old. My friends started to drift away as I realized that my family was the most important thing to me. My brother and I started to get closer, and suddenly the outspoken social butterfly that I was started to become more shy and introverted. I guess I didn't ever realize how important it was that he was in my life until I realized that some day he might not be in it. My dad had been part of a bike team for a couple years, and every month they made a ride up to Estes Park. 2008 was no different. He had some days when his energy was really low, and he'd gotten really skinny from his hypothyroidism, but he still made those rides. My dad was battling with cancer and he got on his bike and conquered a mountain.

I'm a runner, and I've had plenty of days when I just don't want to go for a run, literally the last thing I'd want to do. I'm sure my dad felt that way lots of times, but he did it, and that's what makes him a hero in my life. He rides because he loves it, and he doesn't need another reason. Yeah, Lance Armstrong is great. He has set and broken his share of records, but he can't hold a candle to my dad, because my dad conquers when there seems to be no strength, a noble quality that I admire.

The day of my dad's surgery to get his thyroid removed, was also the day of a school dance. My freshman year, I was student council president, therefore I needed to be there to help out and make sure things ran smoothly. As you can understand, I wasn't really doing too well, and the second I could, I had my mom pick me up and take me to the hospital to see my dad wake up. Sitting in the room, silent with my mom, I started to remember why she was so beautiful in the first place. It wasn't because she made my lunches or taught me how to tie my shoes or picked up my dresses. It was because she had courage, in anything and everything she does. She sat in the room with her husband, thin and hollow in the face, with IVs running through his arms, and held my hand, because she knew everything was okay. She loved me and she loved my brother, and she loved my dad. She was strong for all of us. Yeah, Lance Armstrong is great, but he can't hold a candle to my mom. My mom is beautiful, and she has courage, a noble quality that I admire.

I'm a little bit older now, and my mom has gone back to being that beautiful woman of my childhood, and my dad is healthier than ever. I've grown to understand how important they are to my life. And yeah, it might be a little cliché to say that my parents are my heroes, but it's as simple as that. The story of David and Goliath is something we all learned in Sunday school, something that seemed like knowledge I've always had. David was a hero. He took only a simple slingshot and stone to kill Goliath. David saved the

Israelites from the Philistines. In the Bible story, King Saul wanted David to wear his armor, to protect him from the great giant. However, David felt the armor was too bulky and unfamiliar, and therefore refused. David used what was familiar to him to kill Goliath. He didn't use anything special, or any strategic war tactics, just the simple talent God had given him, yet he was a hero to millions. I don't think that David planned on becoming a legend when he learned how to use a slingshot, just as I don't think my dad thought riding a bike could be so impactful to me. Yet David did become a legend, and my dad's a hero.

God has given you the talents already to be a legend. It doesn't take the king's armor to make a miracle happen.

Alec Parson (Senior)

Good morning. Now, you have to bear with me, I am really tired. I had a prom last night, and it was a very late night.

Faith. A simple, in saying it. It's only one syllable, but oftentimes we ask ourselves what it means to have faith. Faith is often said to have trust in something, whether it's big or small. I have faith in the fact that there is a country called China, on the other side of the world, even though I've never seen it. I have faith that, wherever I go in college, CSU will still always be better than CU. I have faith in the fact that if Chuck and Joel ever meet on the street some day, in the future, the conversation will inevitably lead to them bickering about whose diploma is bigger.

But that just scratches the surface of it. With that definition, it almost seems like everybody should have the same faith, right? But then, how is my faith different than your faith, and different than the guy down the street? I believe that faith stems from a personal connection with the people around you, and the people you can't define. I believe that having faith starts with putting yourself out there and letting go. At the beginning of this school year, I struggled with coming to terms about what I was going to do next year. College. Where would I go? Would I be able to adapt and change to my surroundings? What would I even do for a living? Would I be able to support myself? Could I actually learn how to do my own laundry? How much Top Ramen is too much Top Ramen? Would I even make it that far?

All these worries were swirling around in my head, keeping me from sleeping, keeping me from my family, keeping me from being happy. This was the biggest Catch-22 in my life, and I didn't even know what the choices were. I talked to friends, I talked to family. I even talked to God. They all gave me good advice, and arguments for and against, about everything, but I was still jumbled. And when it came time to choose, I didn't even know what left from right was. So I let go. I let go of what was worrying me. I let go of my fears. I just let go. I had faith in the fact that whichever way the pieces fell, I'd be okay. I had faith that my friends would still be beside me. I had faith in the fact that my family would still love me. And I had faith that God would guide me wherever the tides of nature took me. And it worked. Next year, I'll be attending UNC as a theater education

and tech design major. My roommate next year is my best friend from high school, a man who I can trust with anything. I no longer have to worry about what's going to happen next, because I've reached a breaking point in my faith. I can trust that it is meant to be the way it is, and give myself over to the things around me, and things I can't even explain, and that's made all the difference.

Robin Nicolai (Senior)

Good morning. On the first of March, I was admitted to the Children's Hospital in Denver with jaundice, and I was feeling terrible. Neither I nor the doctors knew exactly what was wrong with me, but we basically knew that my liver wasn't working properly. I remember the day I was admitted, and I know I had a biopsy the next day, but that's all I remember for the next several weeks. The next several events were described to me after the fact. On the fourth or fifth day I was in the hospital, I started to experience encephalopathy due to acute liver failure. I started slipping into a coma within a few hours, and was immediately placed on the top of the transplant list.

Within a couple days, there was a young, healthy liver available for me, but it's A blood type wasn't an exact match for my B blood type. Unfortunately, I needed to be transplanted with this liver if I was to live. The procedure was very difficult and there were many complications. My lung was accidentally nicked. After the first surgery, I started to internally bleed into my abdominal cavity. I went into cardiac arrest while on the operating table. I developed a severe case of pancreatitis. I coded soon after the surgery, and I lost so much weight that my intestines were unable to absorb nutrition, leaving me extremely malnourished.

When I woke up about two and a half weeks later, I had no idea what happened to me. All I knew was that I was very confused, intubated and in a lot of pain. I felt like I was left completely alone to face this ordeal. I use to think that everything happens for a reason, but now I shudder to think that the trauma I went through could have any purpose, or any disaster for that matter, such as earthquakes and hurricanes. I thought about it long and hard while I was lying in the hospital, wondering how such a loving God would let something like this happen to me. But then I thought of all the people who had helped keep me alive, and the amazing support system I have. The surgeon had performed a miracle. The nursing staff kept me as comfortable as possible. An amazing boyfriend who never gave up on me, parents and sister who were with me every step of the way, and hundreds of other people who I don't have time to mention, but many of whom are sitting in this congregation.

Now my preferred school of thought is that good can come out of every situation, no matter how tragic. Like learning patience, telling your friends and family every day that you love them, and learning to believe in the impossible. Sometimes I feel like God has still abandoned me. Hey, I'm only human. But then someone will do something nice for me, like give me a hug, tell me everything will be all right, or give me a shoulder to cry on, and I think that even though I can't see any huge miracles happening here, these small acts are still the works of God. When you're surrounded by people who love you, and

they're there to support you no matter what the situation, those are the true miracles you can see every day, and the miracles that let you know God is with you always.