

December 2008

Dear Friends,

*Hebrews 2:9*

*But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.*

Cynthia and I have always loved Christmas. She would start playing Christmas music in October if I let her, but I have always felt like it was against the 11th commandment to play Christmas music before the end of the Macy's parade. Now I have you thinking, "What in the world does any of that have to do with a missionary letter?" This past year, we were looking forward to spending Christmas there with friends and family, having completed more than half of our first furlough; but God made other plans.

This past month I cracked and let Cynthia start playing Christmas music. We especially enjoy many of the cantatas done by Majesty Music. Listening to one of them, I came across the above verse. Several times I have stopped to think about it. "But we see Jesus!" How often during our every day life do we get our eyes off of our Savior? How often during holiday times do we get our eyes off of our Savior? What happened to Peter when he took his eyes off of his Savior?

Jesus Christ "tasted" death for me, for my sins, to guarantee my eternal life. There is so much in that verse that several messages could not exhaust its content, but what has stuck in my mind and heart is that He did all that for us and for those to whom He has called us to minister. I firmly believe that, in recent weeks, God has blessed us with souls saved and increased attendance and interest because "we see Jesus!"

Many of you have faithfully supported us and prayed for us since we started deputation in 2002, and God is blessing your efforts as souls of Brazilians are being saved. A recent convert, Edivaldo, may not have come to Christ had we come home as planned. I look back now and see Jesus at work in so many things this past year. Please, in your ministry in your local church, don't ever take your eyes off of Jesus. When you see the program or cantata at church, look at that babe in the manger in admiration that He would leave His glory to come to this wicked earth for the purpose of "tasting death" for every man; and if He should call and touch your heart about a ministry in another country or area, don't think about your comfort or familiarity, but just "see Jesus!"

Of course, as the blessings of God abound, my parents decided to come and spend Christmas with us, here in Brazil. I would love to see the rest of my sisters, brother, their families and Cynthia's parents, but 18 people and all their plane tickets would be a little over the top - not to mention all their work, ministry, and other obligations! However, we are thankful for God blessing us in this way.

We are grateful for all of you and your faithfulness to our family and ministry this past year. Morgan finished second grade and will begin third in February; he enjoys being the oldest and most "experienced". Aydan likes the fact that he has mastered kindergarten; he wants more work next year. Daniella is the epitome of the frilly, little girl with the dolls, clothes, and all that. Abigail is everyone's boss - she's got a bit of her daddy in her, a real take charge kind of kid. Cynthia "discovered" digital scrapbooking, so all the memories can be recorded on the hard drive. Thank you for your love and prayers. Our ministry is not possible without you. God bless each of you during this Christmas season.

In Christ,

*Joel Dickens*