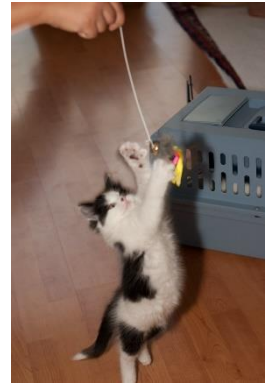


Pastor's Letter, March 27, 2020

The KITTY Did It !! ?????



Who Me ?

I remember it well...as if it happened yesterday. Long ago when all of my siblings lived at home, my mother, as she was known to do, baked a batch of phenomenal chocolate chip cookies. When we were all home, those cookies would steadily disappear...but one day, none of us were home except for my 2 year old brother Bryce...and that was the day that all the cookies disappeared...all at once.

In all other cases, it was impossible to ascertain who gobbled up most of the cookies because there were always multiple suspects in the house and we learned to cover our tracks and cookie crumbs very well (if I must say so). But for whatever reason, my two sisters and other brother and I were gone all day which meant that there could only be one suspect, my 2 year old brother.

That afternoon, my mom was shocked to see an empty cookie jar on the kitchen counter so she went into interrogation mode and cross-examined the alleged culprit as he had to stand up against the wall all by himself and answer the hard questions. First she systematically asked him if I (being the eldest) ate the cookies. He said 'no'. The next question was did Craig commit this dastardly deed? His answer was 'no'. Then did my sisters do it? Again, he answered 'no' Did our parents eat them? 'No'. Any neighbors? Again it was 'no'. But at 2 years of age this prime suspect was not sophisticated enough to articulate a plausible defense. It was checkmate city. This little guy was as guilty as sin.

So when Mom established our innocence (since we were all out of the house that whole day) she finally asked, "Then who did it???" And he somberly looked down, hoping for a convenient scapegoat to walk by (which suddenly happened), and then abruptly blurted out, "The kitty did it". WHAT? Are you kidding me? The Kitty did it ??????



From This



...to This

Incredible! Our savvy kitty apparently jumped up on the kitchen counter, lifted the heavy glass lid with extraordinary kitty paw dexterity and ate his way to the bottom of the cookie jar without going into diabetic shock. After that he must have become the ultimate shape shifter to twist and turn inside the jar to finally be able to claw and climb his way out of it. . . and still be raving hungry for his Purina Cat Chow that afternoon.

Amazing. And as you can see, he left no crumbs. Awesome accomplishment, except for one thing...the kitty didn't do it. He was too busy doing other crimes.

Remember the Garden of Eden when Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit? They told God that the kitty made them do it. Certainly not literally but figuratively speaking. You might as well know that the kitty made the Israelites construct a golden calf. The kitty made David murder Uriah. The kitty got Solomon to chase after other gods, and the kitty induced Diotrophes to go off the deep end.

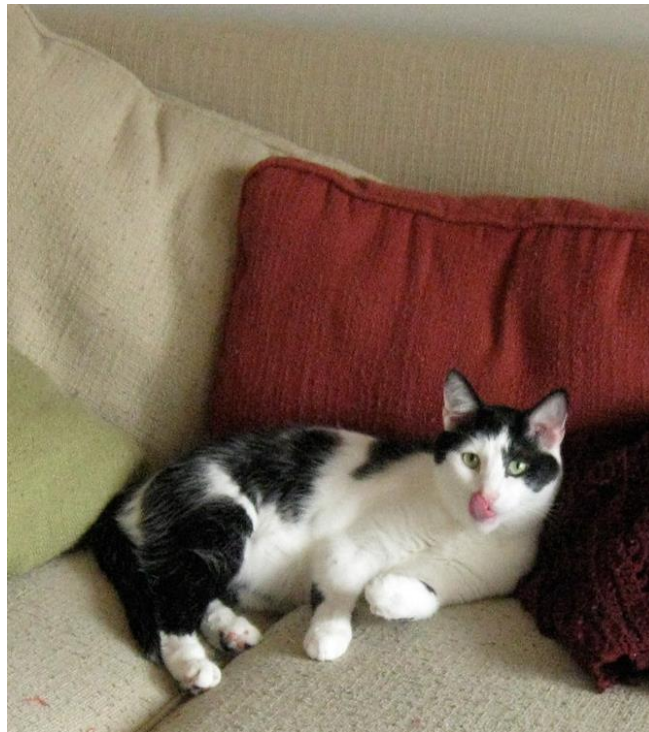
So WHO is this kitty anyway? This kitty is us. We are the ones who have sinned (Romans 3:23). We are the ones that have had to repent (Acts 2:38). We are the ones who in hundreds of more ways have caused Christ to die for our sins. We may not be the cause of every problem but surely we know that we are the cause of enough sin that we have earned eternal death... and without Christ's sacrifice to pass over us we are incomplete before God.

Fortunately Jesus Christ and God the Father love us and offer us an eternal future that is predicated on us surrendering to God by living His way – with His help, of course. Now is obviously an opportune time for us to examine ourselves and reflect on how we should have better managed ourselves so as to improve in the future. Have we tried to do too much on our own, without God? Have we been spiritually negligent? Have we been spiritually blind to mistakes that we have not

seen before? King David asked God to reveal to him his “secret faults” which were mistakes that he was oblivious to (Psalms 19:12). All good and all bad activity is possible with human beings. It is up to us to take this time to spiritually grow. Then we can fulfill Paul’s encouragement in Romans 8:16 where the Bible says, “The spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God”.

And so let us examine ourselves and ask Christ’s shed blood to cover our sins so that we can grow and spiritually prosper. And finally, what happened to my little brother? Well...let’s just put it this way. It wasn’t pretty.

Yum-yum Good



Don’t let anyone fool you; those cookies were really, really, yum-yum good.

Coming Soon to a Congregation Near You

The coronavirus can be exasperating for us at times. It is for me when I think of the limitations of travel when it otherwise would be great to see brethren in person. Hopefully that will change in the future. However, this period of time gives me the unique opportunity to speak to all 4 congregations simultaneously via cybercasting. I will give a sermon tomorrow at 11 AM from the cybercast location of St. Petersburg. I am enclosing Randy Bell's instructions for how to access the message:

Members can log onto the St Petersburg website by clicking this link:

<https://www.ucg.org/congregations/st-petersburg-fl>

When the page opens, **in the white part** of the box (under the red "Special Announcement" section), there is a menu bar on the right hand that says:

Welcome Posts Calendar Sermons Webcast Community

Click on WEBCAST. You will be asked for a password. THE PASSWORD is:

DO NOT click in the brown box at the top of the website or you will be connecting to the home office in Cincinnati.

I will begin live streaming at 10:30 a.m. SO YOU HAVE PLENTY OF TIME IN CASE YOU MAKE AN ERROR. During the 30-minute period before webcasting begins, you will see the stage area with a message that says SERMON WILL BEGIN AT 11:00 a.m. and music will probably be playing so that you can make sure you have the sound set on your computer.

If you have problems, my phone number is 727-310-4836. Five minutes before services start, I will no longer be answering my phone so check in early and make sure you are all set as soon as you can.

If you want to call Randy tonight he is available to help. Just remember not to wait too long tomorrow to make sure you are set up to listen to the webcast.

Updates

Please continue to pray for Jerry Paciorek who remains in the hospital with cardiovascular issues. His wife Lee had had her moments with pneumonia and has been forced to stay at home.

In talking with a number of our brethren, everyone seems to be doing fine in the midst of these bizarre conditions in which we find ourselves. When we do our 3rd

round of public presentations I will want to touch on these news items just as I have on WKDW.

It is my sincere hope and intent that we as a group can bond more together and be there for each other as various circumstances arise.

May God bless you all,

Most Sincerely,

Braden Veller



Public Enemy # 1 Cookie Thief – the Next Generation

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