

## BAILEYS JESUS

God recently allowed me to see Jesus through the eyes of someone seeing Him for the first time. Having the advantage of knowing how the story ends, we can easily forget the cost of our redemption and the love of our Savior.

Every year we attend a local church pageant at Christmas time, which tells the story of Jesus from His birth through His resurrection. It is a spectacular event, with live animals and hundreds of cast members in realistic costumes. The magi enter the huge auditorium on llamas from the rear, descending the steps in pomp and majesty. Roman soldiers look huge and menacing in their costumes and makeup.

Of all the years we have attended, one stands out indelibly in my heart. It was the year we took our then three-year-old granddaughter, Bailey, who loves Jesus. She was mesmerized throughout the entire play, not just watching, but involved as if she were a player. She watches as Joseph and Mary travel to the Inn and is thrilled when she sees the baby Jesus in His mother's arms.

When Jesus, on a young donkey, descends the steps from the back of the auditorium, depicting His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, Bailey was ecstatic. As he neared our aisle, Bailey began jumping up and down, screaming, "Jesus, Jesus! There's Jesus!" Not just saying the words but exclaiming them with every fiber of her being. She alternated between screaming his name and hugging us. "It's Jesus. Look!" I thought she might actually pass out. Tears filled my eyes as I looked at Jesus through the eyes of a child in love with Him, seeing Him for the first time. How like the blind beggar screaming out in reckless abandon, "Jesus, Jesus!", afraid he might miss Him, not caring what others thought. (Mark 10:46-52)

This was so much fun. Then came the arrest scene. On stage, the soldiers shoved and slapped Jesus as they moved Him from the Garden of Gethemane to Pilate. Bailey responded as if she were in the crowd of women, with terror and anger. "Stop it!" she screamed. "Bad soldiers, stop it!" As I watched her reaction, I wished we had talked to her before the play. "Bailey it's OK. They are just pretending." "They are hurting Jesus! Stop it!" She stood in her seat reacting to each and every move. People around us at first smiled at her reaction, thinking "How cute!". Then they quit smiling and began watching her watch Him.

In a most powerful scene, the soldiers lead Jesus carrying the cross down the steps of the auditorium from the back. They were yelling, whipping, and cursing at Jesus, who was bloodied and beaten. Bailey was now hysterical. "Stop it! Soldiers! Stop it," she screamed. She must have been wondering why all these people did nothing.

She then began to cry instead of scream. "Jesus, Oh, Jesus!" People all around us began to weep as we all watch this devoted little disciple see her Jesus beaten and killed as those first century disciples had.

Going back and forth between her mother's lap and mine for comfort, she was distraught. I kept saying, "Bailey, it's OK. Jesus is going to be OK. These are just people pretending to be soldiers. She looked at me like I was

crazy. In my lap, we talked through the cross and burial. "Watch, Bailey, watch for Jesus!"

The tomb began to tremble and lightning flashed as the stone rolled away. A Super Bowl touchdown cheer couldn't come close to matching this little one's reaction to the resurrection. "Jesus! He's OK. Mommy, it's Jesus!" I prayed that she wasn't going to be traumatized by this event, but that she would remember it. I shall never forget it. I shall never forget seeing Jesus's suffering, crucifixion, and resurrection through the eyes of an innocent child.

Following the pageant the actors all assembled in the foyer to be greeted by the audience. As we passed by some of the soldiers Bailey screamed out, "Bad soldier, don't you hurt Jesus." The actor who portrayed Jesus was some distance away surrounded by well-wishers and friends. Bailey broke away from us and ran toward him, wrapping herself around his legs, holding on for dear life. He hugged her and said, "Jesus loves you." He patted her to go away.

She wouldn't let go. She kept clinging to Him, laughing and calling His name She wasn't about to let go of her Jesus.

I think God in heaven stopped what ever was going on that day and made all the angels watch Bailey. "Now, look there! You see what I meant when I said, 'Of such is the kingdom of heaven?'"

Bailey's reaction should be our reaction every day. When we think of Him, who He is, what He did for us, and what He offers us, we have to say how can we do anything less than worship Him?