



Ballou FAMILY

REACHING THAI PEOPLE
WITH THE GOSPEL OF
JESUS CHRIST

PREACHING THROUGH THE PROPHETS

This year I hit an odd point in my life. I find preaching in Thai to our congregation here far more comfortable than preaching in English to an unknown audience. Spending the summer months visiting supporting churches in America, I found myself struggling at times for the vocabulary and structure to communicate well to American churches. When I look back on the blessings of living in Thailand, I have to remember the dear churches in Nongloam and Lampang who graciously listened to my first 2 years of preaching and teaching in Thai. In those years I often came to the end of a Sunday with my head pounding from the effort of using the Thai language. Now it seems that dynamic has flipped, and there is no setting in which I would rather preach than this local church in Lamphun, Thailand.

As a church we are progressing through a series introducing the prophets. Thai believers, most of whom are still fairly new believers, have experienced so many moments of first understanding. They are diligently putting together the big picture of the scriptures. I have personally experienced great blessings through studying and delivering messages on the prophets in the context of Israel's history. Depth of biblical understanding is definitely one of the most important long-term goals that we have for establishing a healthy church here. I feel blessed and grateful that God has given me the ability to do ministry comfortably in Thai.



Yet this realization stirs up even greater focus in seeking to train church leaders. I look at where our church is within this unique place in the world, and I pray for the day when former Buddhists are the leaders of this local church. We carefully walk the balance between 2 Timothy 2:2 calling us to reach, train, and empower the next generation of leaders, and 1 Timothy 3:6 warning us not to hand leadership over to new believers.

Next spring our church is excited to ordain Luke Chermue, who labored with us from the very beginning of starting this church, and now is starting his own. church. Toey, another young man who has been in training for years, is preparing for marriage and shows the faithfulness and readiness to be ordained fairly soon as well. Looking back on the spiritual growth of these men, it strikes me that we have invested in both since 2014 or before, and both have had many other significant mentors in serving Christ. I am certain that God is working in the lives of others, and I am encouraged to carry on in faithful ministry, hopeful that God will use our time to shape more leaders for Thailand in the future.

*Love in Christ,
the Ballou Family*



Left: Teaching at a local university gives me many new connections to pursue gospel conversations.

Below: Recently we gathered with a couple other churches for a great time of singing and preaching.



Family Update

Alisa is in her fourth year serving as a fifth grader teacher for a fantastic Christian International school. Her ministry there not only provides for our own kids to enjoy a high-quality education, but also blesses the lives of other missionary families. Each year Alisa's ministry to the ladies of our church grows as she discipled and teaches. This year has been especially heavy as some ladies of our church have gone through major trials. Thanks for praying for Alisa as she balances a full load of family and ministry.



Justin is in the 8th grade, and for this year he is doing homeschool curriculum at my office. This allows me ample time to disciple him through this important season in his life. In several areas he has demonstrated significant growth. I feel truly blessed to see him sprout into a good and godly young man.

Brody is in the 6th grade this year. As a student, he is the kind of kid who can make us forget about how challenging school work can be, because he typically just gets everything done at a high level without much oversight needed. Basketball has become a passion for Brody, and so this year I am coaching his U12 team. The experience has been pure joy for both of us.

Aralynn is now in the 4th grade. She is a social butterfly, connected to everyone and everything, and bringing so much joy to her classmates. After a few months where she seemed to struggle to adjust to her age, we are thankful she has broken through into a beautiful season of simple obedience that brings with it easy joy.

Ava has entered K5, and that was a little tough on me after having her spend most days at my office over the past few years. With my sister on our team here, it was always easy for me to do what I needed to do without much impact on my schedule from Ava's presence. She is a constant fountain of effervescent joy, and I have really missed her. I am consoled in that she was already reading well, and really needs the challenges of jumping into school. It has been great for her so far.

Our marriage is nearing 15 years, and we plan to spend some points and miles to celebrate and refresh this beautiful love that God has blessed us with. Personally, I feel tremendously blessed to live this life and serve God with such a beautiful and talented woman. Each year together we find ourselves marveling at how close our hearts are bound on the same path of serving Jesus, sharing the gospel, and building our family in the place where God has planted us.

Remembering my Grandpa

This week I said farewell to my grandfather. In June we had a picnic up at the Kiwanis Park in Harbor Springs, Michigan with my mom's family. Grandpa Thayer knew that would be our last hug. He looked Alisa and me in the eye and for several minutes told us how good God was to him in his 95 years of life. He thanked God for his wife Mary and told us what a blessing she has been to him the past 69 years. Grandpa talked about each of his three daughters and how proud he was of them, and how thankful for their good relationship. He laughed with us, prayed with us, and reminisced on a life that was lived with a grace beyond my ability to articulate.



Grandpa thanked God that after my mother prayed for him for 20 years, he went from someone who knew religion to someone who knew Jesus personally. He made the decision 50 years ago to end his reliance on his own goodness and trust Christ alone. It's funny - if there were anyone in the whole world that I might try to imagine deserving a pass simply based on how he lived, that would definitely be Bill Thayer. I have never known of any human more consistently good in every category, and he kept that high standard for 90 years. Yet he turned away from that sort of pride when he met Jesus nearly half-way through life. If you could present an amalgamation of all desirable traits of an American Christian man, it feels like that representation would fall short of the reality of who my grandfather was. His discipline, humility, and the standard of excellence he held for himself go beyond any expectations that could reasonably be asked of a man. I'm confident that his source of goodness was in fact supernatural. Fifty years of Holy Spirit sanctification built on a life that was already a near perfect representation of an American family man formed him into perhaps the most Christlike human I have ever encountered. I thank God for who he was, for how long we had him, and for the fact that he is with Jesus now. His shadow makes a great path to walk.