

## **Baptized in Grace**

### *Hagemeyer Generations - Chapter Ten*

by Stanley Hagemeyer © 2020

Sunday morning March 3, 1907 the Hagemeyer family was busy preparing for a special day. Siebe was outside completing the morning chores. He had insisted that they have fried eggs for breakfast, to celebrate. Bauwina wanted them to just have some bread with butter and cheese.

They had arisen earlier than usual for a Sunday, a few minutes before seven o'clock. "Are you going to go right out to do the chores, or do you want to eat first?" Bauwina was nursing Henry as Siebe was getting out of bed. "I want to get the boys cleaned up and ready before I put on my good dress for church."

"Oh, I'll put on the pot for coffee before I get dressed. Then I'll set a minute with Carlie while I wait for it. I just want a cup before I go out to the barn." Siebe continued, "I can eat breakfast after I milk the cows. All the stock needs a good feeding because we won't get home 'till after noon, I'm guessing. I hope the hens have put out a few eggs this morning!"

Bauwina still wanted more detail. "I don't want to fry any eggs this morning. By the time you're done with chores, I need you to watch the boys for a while so I can fix my hair, and put on my good Sunday dress. So you should just have some bread and cheese with Carl, and keep it simple."

"You know I always like to have eggs for breakfast on Sundays," he replied.

"Well, Easter is coming the end of March this year. You can eat all the eggs you want then. I remember last year. You ate a whole dozen on Easter."

"Ya, that's what my Dad taught me to do on Easter every year I can afford to do it. He said I should do that if I want to have a family with plenty of boys."

"Well, Siebe, you've got yourself two boys right now, so you don't need to eat eggs so much this year." She was getting a little irritated at this conversation. And she did not want to be irritated. This should be a great day. A holy day, because baby Henry would be baptized today at the Bethany Reformed Church in Clara City.

Siebe groaned a little bit, but headed into the kitchen to fire up the smoldering coals in the kitchen stove.

An hour later, Siebe sat at the kitchen table with Henry on his lap. His hunger satisfied for now, Henry was talking gurgle noises to his brother, Carl, who sat on a nearby chair eating a piece of bread his Dad had buttered for him. “Why are we in such a hurry? What is Mom doing?”

Siebe smiled at Carlie, who at four and a half years was now full of questions every day. “This is a special church day. We are going get Henry baptized at the church, and your Mom wants us all to look good. We’re going to stand up in front, and everybody will be lookin’ at us. Then after church, we’re going over to her cousin Frances’ house for dinner. You remember who Frances and Ralph are, don’t you?”

“I don’t know.”

“He’s the town policeman. He’s very important.”

Carl takes a moment to absorb this detail, but then goes on, “I don’t want to stand up in church. I want to stay home. What is that ‘baptize’ stuff anyway?”

“Okay, I guess you don’t know. Here’s what it is. This is what we do to give him his name, and ask God to bless him.”

“Why are you doing that for him? Is he somebody special?”

“Oh, ya, Carlie, this is all something strange for you. I tell you, this is how show we are Christians, and that we love God. We let the preacher say his name out good and loud, so everybody knows we want to raise him up to follow Jesus’ ways.”

“Why don’t you do that for me then?”

Now Siebe got a big smile, because he knew the right answer. “My boy, we already did that when you were real little. That was back in Iowa before we came to Minnesota. We got you baptized in the church in Spencer, where my Pa & Ma and everybody we know were there to watch and celebrate that day with us, too.” He was glad to share that little bit of memory with Carl. He wished his own father had lived to see this day, too. Time seemed to pass by so swiftly sometimes.

Riding home in the sunshine of a cool but bright spring day, Siebe and Bauwina felt a glow of satisfaction. The baptism was not complicated by any embarrassing fault or failure. Carl had stood still for the whole four or five minutes, although he began to fidget and stare at his shoes toward the end, as Siebe held onto his little hand, sometimes tighter to keep him from jerking away.

All the words, the scriptures read, the questions directed to them, their answers and promises, all in Hoech-Deutsche made it more solemn. And the preacher didn't smile until the very end. The promises of God were expressed, too, in response to their words of commitment and left them with unusual feelings of something very important, even though hard to express. So they rode in silence for a while. Both the boys were asleep, Carlie wrapped in a blanket on the floor of the buggy, and Henry in Bauwina's arms.

Finally, her mind turned to a different concern. "Siebe, I've been wondering how soon we can think of building a new house. You know, this winter was bad, and the house got so cold sometimes. Then last week, when it rained, I had to put out pots in three different places to catch the water dripping from the ceiling."

Siebe startled out of his quiet reverie stayed silent for a moment. He really didn't want to talk about this subject. "Ya, I will have to take a look in the attic to see where the rain comes through. I hate to do it, but I think we'll have to put on new shingles this summer."

"New shingles? What about a new house? Should we be spending money on this one?"

"Well, we aren't going to build a new house this year. I can tell you that. So we've got to fix what we're living in. I knew it was built cheap, but they must have used really poor cedar when those shingles were made. The house was supposed to have been built in 1892, and good shingles should last at least 15 years. These are coming apart way ahead of time."

"But how soon can we think of building a new house? You know we talked about that a long time ago, when we moved in. It's been four years, now, and we've had good crops."

Siebe took a deep breath and let out a sigh. He really didn't want to have this conversation on this special Sunday. "If this year goes well, we can pay off the old mortgage we took over from the Street family. If we can do that this fall, the McLarty Land Company will deed the farm over to us. We'll still have a small mortgage of our own on it, but the farm will be in our own name. Then we can start to think

of really investing in new buildings. It will be our own place, and the land company's name will be off the deed."

Bauwina was not completely satisfied with this complicated explanation. "So then a year from now we can maybe start building a new house?"

"No, I didn't mean that. We won't have enough savings to begin anything so soon. And I want you to know something. When we can build, we need to build a new barn first, not a new house." He waited in silence for her to absorb this disappointment.

"Why a barn first? We need a better house."

"Ya, I want a new house, too, but the barn is more important. We are raising one new foal right now. We are getting a couple calves this year again. More animals each year; they are going to help us make more money. They are really important." At the moment he used that word, he knew it would sound wrong, and he hoped she would not be provoked by what he said was "important." He heard only an uneasy silence, and decided to continue.

"I think maybe by two years from now I can see my way to building a new barn and grainary up at that nice spot where we will have our new farm yard. We've got to protect the animals in the winter, and we'll need a good hay mow full of hay for feeding them. It all adds up to a new barn, instead of a new house. The barn comes first."

Bauwina didn't say anything. She stared out off to the side of the road. This was a good day. And she was angry. She was angry with Siebe for being so sure of how to make their farm a success. And she was angry with herself for even bringing up the subject. But she couldn't help herself from saying one more thing.

"Sometimes I wonder if we made a mistake coming here. Maybe we could have been living somewhere in Iowa, in a place where things were better. Maybe. . . ."

Now Siebe bit his tongue. He wanted to argue his point more, to somehow show her it will all work out if they plan carefully, and trust God for a few good years and all that.

When he finally spoke, he said, "*Liebchen*, I don't want to disappoint you. I want a good house as soon as we can. We can make it, if we just hold on tight. I'll make sure the roof gets fixed sometime in May or June. We just need to be patient, and trust what the preacher said today in his sermon after Henry was baptized." He had preached on Psalm 139.

“Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be. How precious to me are your thoughts, O God! How vast is the sum of them!”

“I want to trust that God has us in his hands, the same way the preacher was holding Henry when he baptized him today.”

Siebe’s recounting that precious moment and remembering the words of the psalm surprised Bauwina. Her heart was conflicted between the spiritual nature of Siebe’s comment and her own frustrated hopes for a better house. But as she turned to look at his face, her conflict resolved itself when she saw a small tear in his eye. Maybe it was just the cool breeze that had forced it out. Or maybe it was his own yearning to trust that God was not going to let them down, and that they could go on yearning for the future together.

## **END OF CHAPTER TEN**