



# The Grovestead

*"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples; but the Lord will rise upon you and His glory will be seen upon you." —ISAIAH 60:1-2*

## To Everything a Season

Hello from our farm where we are enjoying a slower pace now that the pigs and broiler chickens were taken to the butcher! There was something about the addition of those two animal groups this spring that seemed to tip the scale for us. We were on overload for a while, but now life has calmed down to a more comfortable pace. Often I repeat to myself, "to everything there is a season." Seasons come and go and as we all know, no two days are ever the same. As always, we are grateful for your readership as we share what God is teaching us through our farm and family.



*First (successful) hay baling!*



*Campfire Communion hosted in June*

We have had two big happenings since our last newsletter. Our beloved lamb, Miracle, had to be put down after his muscles could not keep up with his body weight. Rory wrote about this loss beautifully in the pages that follow. A few weeks later I began milking our goat each morning. Interestingly I believe these two events are connected as all of the care and effort required for Miracle brought me to the barn multiple times each day. I experienced sort of a 'farm girl' transformation thanks to Miracle that got me from the house and into the stalls. So by the time Darcy was ready to begin milking, I was fully enthused and on board. And now I count that morning routine as one of my favorite parts of my day. I love the ritual of getting into the barn, starting my day with a walk across our farm, greeting and feeding all the animals and checking in on the garden on my way back.

Other than that, Rory and I spent much of our spring putting up fence posts, fencing and gates. For a month or two we asked ourselves daily, "what is one thing we can do today that will make our tomorrow easier?" The answer to that question often led to long-term infrastructure. From fencing a lane to the orchard for the sheep to hanging a hook by the front door for the chicken egg basket, we made a lot of helpful, organized improvements.

And yes, we did bale our field! We've had two cuttings this summer and they both moved us big steps forward in this adventure. The first round Rory learned how to drive the tractor, thread the baler, and break the PTO shaft... That piece is still in the shop. So this second round he borrowed a baler from our very generous neighbor and we now have our own baled



*Rory, Becca, Ivar, Elsie, Hattie, and Alden Groves. Sharing what we're loving and learning from our life in the country.*

hay in our barn.

Now we're into August, beginning to reap the harvest of the seeds we sowed this spring. I have made a whole lot of freezer jam already and will soon begin canning tomatoes. To everything there is a season and a time to every purpose under heaven.

—Becca

*"He has made everything beautiful in its time. He has also set eternity in the human heart; yet no one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end."*

—ECCLESIASTES 3:11

# To market, to market, to kill a fat pig

by Becca Groves

Last night I went to bed utterly exhausted but at 1 am I woke up wide awake. I had sipped a Diet Coke all day yesterday, and the caffeine was having its way with me. Immediately I began to worry about loading the pigs up in the morning to take to the butcher. How in the world were we going to convince two 250-to-300-pound pigs to step up into a dark trailer? It seemed so unlikely. Especially at 1 in the morning.

So I got up and began watching YouTube videos on "how to load pigs into a trailer." And all my fears were confirmed. Each video talked about how their first few times loading pigs were complete disasters. I watched story after story and the "lessons learned" were all things we couldn't reverse. They said, "don't ever introduce the trailer the morning of the big load." Whoops. They said, "begin feeding the pigs in the trailer a week before you take them away so they are used to being in there and hop up gladly to be fed." Trouble was, we just borrowed the trailer the night before. They said, "Don't feed them the day before so they are extra hungry to hop in the trailer." Too late. They said, "Load them up at night so you can sleep and don't have to worry about how it will go in the morning." No kidding!

I sat back at my computer and prayed, "Lord, what are we going to do?" And for some reason I felt I should make brownies. The thinking was that they would smell the brownies and want to go into the trailer to eat them. So I made brownies. At one point I saw the oven numbers. They said 350 and I realized I didn't know if that was the time or the oven temp. Because it was about 3:50am when the brownies came out.

Finally I went to sleep, only to wake up at 6:30am, nurse our youngest, go to the barn, milk our goat Darcy and then head to the pigs. We had neighbors come to help us and it went pretty well at first. The first pig, having smelled my brownies, got into the trailer no problem. He gobbled that brownie and I felt very satisfied and proud.

But the second pig saw his buddy up in the trailer and seemed wise and knowing. No brownie was going to coax him. He got close a few times. He got his front legs in the trailer many times. But never those last two legs. We tried many things but to no avail. Rory ended up taking the first pig to the butcher and came back home to try again with Biggie. That's what I started calling this pig. He was actually named *Abraham*, but today I called him Biggie... likely 300 pounds of big pig.

Biggie wasn't having it though. He had us figured out. And even though I had baked a chocolate cake while Rory



was taking the first pig to the butcher, he still wouldn't be seduced into the dark trailer.

Rory continued to wait him out, baiting him with his water and feed in the trailer but by noon he decided he had better call the butcher to tell them he wouldn't be making it in. He had been at it since 7am. But they offered to send a worker out for \$20 to help us. Brilliant. Best \$20 spent. Ever.

They guy came and was built for moving pigs around. In fact, he made the comment that living pigs aren't nearly as heavy as dead-weight pigs. After a good chase, he ended up putting a five-gallon bucket over Biggie's head and grabbed his tail while shoving him towards the trailer. Finally, he and Rory were able to push Biggie's hiney into the trailer. It was muscle against muscle. The sweaty, muddy, exhausted men might say it was their brute force and determination that got him in there. But I think Biggie could smell my delicious chocolate cake in the back of the trailer and just decided to give up the fight.

Either way, it ended well. And we are so glad. We have SO MANY experiences like this, learning on the fly, trial and error, failing, trying again, learning from mistakes, watching videos, reading books, asking questions. It's a humbling way to live! It would be great to know all things about all things from the start. But every experience is brand new and at the end of the day we can lay down and say exactly what we learned that day. It keeps you on your toes. It robs you of your sleep. But there will be a day come August that we will eat a BLT and the B the L and the T will all have come from our own farm. And that is the reward for the exhausting, exhilarating and memorable days like today. 🐷



# Growing our Groceries

by Becca Groves

Six years ago we moved from Minneapolis to our farm. It was a major life change we often attribute to a tiny balcony garden that began to change the way we looked at food. That balcony garden was later followed by a raised bed garden in our Minneapolis backyard, which grew into two raised beds the next year. Within a few years Rory had successfully filled our backyard with raised bed gardens and he began to look around for more room. He found it in the country and here we are on our farm.

For the past six years we have often been asked, "how much of your own food do you grow?" It is a question that always made me grimace because even though we were trying our best, for years I had to answer, "well, we enjoy our maple syrup and some raspberry jam..." Though it's not that we weren't trying. It's just that our learning curve was so steep. The first year we tried traditional gardening and came home after a week of Family Camp in July to find the garden had been taken over by weeds. Year after year we tried to find our footing. There were also pregnancies and new babies thrown in from time to time which meant the garden often took a backseat to other matters.

But the question kept coming and we still felt like we were falling short, often marveling at the homesteaders who had to grow their own food or starve. How in the world did they do it?!

Eggs were added to the mix our second year and later broiler chickens. That felt like a substantial addition. But the garden kept tripping us up from year to year. It seemed we had enough energy to plant the seeds and weed a bit. But by the time August hit, we lost steam, lost the battle against the weeds, and started making plans for the next year.

This is why we are so high on Back to Eden Gardening. Our Back to Eden garden was the first garden that we were able to keep up with. We kept up with the weeds, and didn't have to water because of the deep mulch. And our harvests were beginning to feel substantial.

Right about the time we finally figured out the gardening game we began adding more animals to the mix. And now it seems that all at once we are eating a



majority of our own food. Which has left us surprised and amazed.

Because it really did happen that suddenly after years and years of trying. This summer I am eating eggs, roasted beets and goats milk for breakfast. For lunch I have a kale salad with blueberries and walnuts. And our dinners come from our freezer: lamb, goat, chicken or pork with a side of root vegetables, usually. In this past year we have gone from eating less than 10% of our own food to as much as 50%, sometimes more! It's really wild. And it's showing in our grocery bill and waistlines. (Now if only I could figure out how to grow goldfish crackers, Cheerios and mac-and-cheese...)

The greatest lesson in this huge shift is that it took time. That's probably obvious, but for years we were trying. Really hard. For years we were learning from our mistakes and making plans for the next time around. I used to say that you know you're a gardener when every sentence about your garden begins with, "next year I'm going to try..." And now I would just add in farmer with gardener. It's our constant conversation. "Next year let's..." Year over year we are learning and dreaming and planning and trying again.

And my final thought is that somehow every thing we do is contagious and gets us excited to try something else. Those potted tomatoes grew into a raised bed, which grew into more raised beds, and then the need for more land, which grew into a huge garden, chickens, a fruit orchard, maple tree tapping, a barn, goats, sheep, a tractor for hay, and pigs. Just like that. 🐔

# Rabbit Update

by Ivar Groves

My first rabbit that I got was 2 months old. She had a black body, white chest, and gold paws! We kept her in the shower because we did not have the hutch built.

We bought a waterer for her. We gave her hay, apples, and carrots. I changed her food every day. I named her: Hershey! I named her Hershey because I kept calling it a him and a he, so then I started saying "her her her", "she she she", "Her-She... Oh, I like the name Her-She!", so then I named it Hershey.

It was getting too smelly in the shower, so we finished one side of the hutch. We moved her out of the shower and into that side of the hutch.

## Hershey's First Magic Trick!

One day my sister Elsie went outside and she found the rabbit on the wrong side of the hutch (with no door)! Elsie came inside and told mom and dad. They didn't believe it! Finally dad came out just in time, before



Hershey was about to jump out of the hutch, and he put her back in the right side of the hutch.

Then dad screwed in boards where Hershey might have crawled over the wall that blocked the two sides.

Someday, I'm planning to put another rabbit in the other side of the hutch that we just finished. 🐰

## GARDEN WEEDS!

**Can you spot the midsummer weeds we (and you) are pulling from our gardens?**

Words are arranged forwards, backwards, diagonally, and in multiple directions.

Words to not overlap. The first word is circled for you.



DANDELION

CANADA THISTLE

CRABGRASS

BINDWEED

PIGWEEED

LAMBSQUARTERS

PURSLANE

CHICKWEED

NUTSEDGE

COUCH GRASS

# Interesting History:

## The True Story of the Dunce Cap

*Often history has a way of shaping our present. When Becca returned from a homeschooling convention she told this amazing story shared by one of the speakers, Eric Ludy. We have often thought about it since and wanted to share it with you. —Rory*

**From “The Bold Return of the Dunces”, by Eric Ludy:**

The tall pointy dunce cap has been a symbol of shame for centuries. To be the schoolboy stuck in the proverbial corner with the idiot’s hat pressed down on his head is second in shame only to the idea of being paraded through the school hallways in one’s underwear. As a result, the word dunce and the concept of “abject humiliation” have always been closely associated. And for those of us that are walking thesauruses, we are well aware that the word dunce has been conjoined to words like fool, stupid, idiot, dullard, and dolt for time immemorial.

Ironically, this very unattractive and shame-laden word was derived from an intriguing Scotsman who lived back in the late thirteenth, early fourteenth century. His name was Jon Duns Scotus. And if you pronounce his surname, Duns, properly, you would find that it sounds just like our word dunce. That’s because it is the same word. Jon Duns Scotus has been inextricably tied to the idea of recalcitrant, shame-faced idiocy for hundreds of years.

Though Duns’s name is forever tied to the idea of the thickskulled dolt, history attests to the fact that Jon Duns was actually a brilliant man. In fact, the word brilliant would be a vast understatement. Many in his generation considered him the world’s most intelligent man while he was alive, and many scholars throughout history would attest to the fact that he was likely one of the most astute and developed minds throughout the entire thousand year epoch known to us as the Middle Ages.

This begs an important and obvious question. How did a man noted for such brilliance go down in history as such an imbecile?

The recasting of Jon Duns as an “imbecilic dolt” didn’t happen overnight. It happened over centuries. In fact, it was well over two hundred years after Duns’s death that his followers, The Dunces, came under critical scrutiny.

Duns, a Franciscan Theologian, though brilliant, held to a rather simple view of the universe. He believed that all things centered upon the Person of Jesus Christ. He believed that since the entire universe was built by Christ, one could only properly understand it through the interpretive hermeneutic tool of the Person of Jesus Christ and by means of His Divine Revelation, the Holy Scriptures.

Duns Scotus actually did wear a pointy hat. And so did his followers, the Dunces. But the pointed hat—or dunce cap—



meant something very different then than it does today. The hat pointed like a decided finger towards Heaven, declaring the One through whom all true knowledge and understanding is gained and approved. It was a symbol of the centrality of Jesus Christ in everything.

For two hundred and fifty years after the passing of Duns Scotus, history and western culture had moved forward with only deep appreciation for the contributions of Duns Scotus. But, in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries something happened that changed everything.

The Renaissance brought a frontal assault on Duns’s reasonings, and therefore on all his followers.

What was most shocking is that the leaders of the Renaissance brought serious allegations not just against the Dunces, but against God. They accused God of withholding knowledge from His Creation and refusing humankind access to the true potential of science and reasoning. They declared Him an oppressor of the masses—an obstacle to knowledge that must be rejected and moved out of the way.

And so, in light of these shocking charges against God, Humanism snubbed its nose at Duns’s teachings on the “primacy of Christ,” impeaching Jesus and officially removing Him from the Chancellor office over human education and reason—a position which He had held for over a thousand years in the Western world. This unthinkable step was greeted with hearty support all throughout the scholarly corridors in Western Europe, causing the new slogan of education to be (and I paraphrase for the sake of making a point): “Don’t be a Dunce! Believe in the innate power of Man!” 🐦

*And so, after centuries of high regard, the teachings of Duns and subsequently his followers fell into disrepute and eventual ridicule for stubbornly refusing to accept a Man-centered understanding of knowledge.*

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*“Among all the scholastic doctors, I must regard John Duns Scotus as a splendid sun, obscuring all the stars of heaven, by the piercing acuteness of his genius; by the subtlety and the depth of the most wide, the most hidden, the most wonderful learning; this most subtle doctor surpasses all others, and, in my opinion, yields to no writer of any age.” —Published in the Annals of Wading, 1639 AD*



# Saying Goodbye

by Rory Groves

After a long struggle, we sadly put our lamb Miracle to rest on May 25th. We buried him under the Black Walnut tree near our house where he used to lie down, waiting for one of us to come out the front door.

Over his short ten weeks of life, Miracle became our loyal farm dog, following us around the farm whenever one of us made an appearance. He was family. We were still bottle feeding him three times a day, right up to the end. Many days I watched him muster all his remaining strength to stand, stumble over to where I was working, then collapse again. His only will, it seemed, was to be near me.

After being born lame in his hind legs, our vet told us bring him into the house and watch him. If he didn't improve after two days, we should euthanize. His name then was "Little Love". We wrapped him in towels and brought him inside, put him in a diaper and bottle-fed him six times a day. But the second day, after no improvement, we reluctantly decided to bring him to the vet.

On the way there, a sequence of events occurred which changed our minds about euthanizing. Becca drove to the wrong clinic and met the wrong vet who herself was there by accident having missed a turn on her way home from work. At the same time I was scouring the Internet for possible treatments and found a very similar situation to ours with a happy ending. We decided at the last minute not to euthanize. As Becca said to me at the time, "We love life!" We owed it to Little Love to at least give him a chance.

The vet gave us some medicine and vitamin supplements to try. We kept feeding, changing diapers, and trying to work with Little Love to get him to stand on his own feet. But nothing changed for two more days. If anything, he appeared to be getting weaker. But the kids kept on praying for him at mealtimes and before bed. Both Ivar and my niece Svea told me at different times, "If Little Love starts walking we should name him Miracle!"

Then, late in the evening on the third day, I went in to check on Little Love in his makeshift pen in our bathroom and found him up on his feet! I remember



sending my sister-in-law, Svea's mom, a picture of the lamb on its feet with the text "Introducing... Miracle!" Within a few days he was not only standing, but leaping out of his pen. We actually had to build the walls higher to keep him from escaping overnight!

We moved Miracle out to the barn a few days later with high hopes that he would reunite with his mom and start nursing. That didn't go as planned, so the bottle feeding continued. But Miracle continued to improve and gain weight for several weeks. News of his story reached far and wide. A large congregation Becca's dad used to pastor used Miracle's story and a video of him walking in their Easter Sunday children's sermon. We heard from dozens of people about it. So many people wanted to know how Miracle was doing that the church did another Children's sermon about him a few weeks later.

At about four weeks of age we noticed Miracle was growing lethargic. It was taking him a lot longer to stand up and come to his bottle at feeding times. We decided to call the vet again who thought it was pneumonia, which had been common this spring due to the wet and cold weather. Another round of meds, and another recovery. Miracle was his usual self again.

When I over-seeded our pasture with red clover using a walk-behind spreader, Miracle wouldn't leave my side. He walked the rows with me, back and forth, for almost the whole 3 acres. We started dropping his feedings, getting him to graze more on the grass with the other sheep. He was always reluctant to leave us, but would usually find his way over to the herd after we went inside the house.

But at eight weeks Miracle became lethargic again, and none of the previous medicines or mineral supplements were working this time. He just continued to decline, taking longer to stand up, and spending less time on his feet. Until one afternoon, he could not get up at all. We tried everything. Enhanced formula, different vitamins, antibiotics, separate barn pens. Nothing worked. Struggle as he might, Miracle simply could not get his feet under him.

A heaviness settled in over our home. My 7-year old son Ivar asked, "Should we call him Little Love again?"

\* \* \*

I remember driving home from one of my errands to pick up another dose of medicine and realizing that Miracle wasn't going to pull through. A deep sorrow filled me. I was not only going to lose a friend, my trust in God had been shaken. All I could think was, "Why, God?"

"Why would you answer our prayer only to take it away again?" I had openly given God credit for answering our prayers, but now we were all just dealt a serious blow.

"God, what am I supposed to tell my children?" I am responsible for my kids' faith formation, and they won't quickly forget this.

"God, what do I tell my nieces?" They were present for Miracle's birth and sat with us as we prayed for a miracle that first morning.

"God, what do I say to the pastors who shared this testimony with their entire church?" And what about the congregants and their children?

There are many times in the walk of faith where God's hand is evident, where His providence is clearly seen and felt. There are also times like these, where none of it makes sense.

I reached out to my pastor with these same questions, hoping for answers. He said that he learned a long time ago that it was not his job to make excuses for God. God is big enough to defend himself. All we can do in times like these is choose whether to continue in faith, trusting that God has a reason, or fall back into natural reasoning at which point we cease operating in faith and experiencing the blessings that come with it.

Of course the Bible is replete with examples just like this, of faith being tested in the midst of tragedy.



Abraham being asked to sacrifice his only son. Joseph sold into slavery and imprisoned. Job enduring the loss of every earthly possession, including his family. John the Baptist martyred while Christ was on earth, in the same town.

Hebrews 11 tells us that "faith is the assurance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen." And we see in each of the examples mentioned an almost impossible level of faith. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Moses.

"All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were foreigners and strangers on earth." (Heb 11:13)

And of course God sacrificed his own son Jesus to free us from our sins. Even his own disciples did not understand God's plan to resurrect Jesus until after he appeared to them.

\* \* \*

Elsie, our 5-year old daughter, did not want to say goodbye to Miracle that last morning. Deep down she knew this vet visit was different and she was avoiding us. She finally broke down and sobbed when I loaded Miracle into the back of our minivan, and she didn't stop crying and full-blown wailing for days. After a few days of this Becca told me I had to do something, I had to talk to her. The problem was, I was still reeling myself, and I certainly didn't have any answers.

I sat down with Elsie and told her what I saw in the waiting room of the vet's office. It was just a picture in my mind, but it recurred several times while I was there. I saw a beautiful garden in early morning. The sky was

yellow with the sunrise, and the grass and trees were a brilliant green. It was a picture of Heaven. Then I saw Ocho, the ram who was Miracle's father coming toward me, as if to greet me. Ocho was a huge East Friesian ram, and very strong, but also gentle. We sold him about a year ago to a different farm. Each time the picture came to me I recognized Ocho, but wondered why I was seeing him.

I told Elsie that I finally realized it wasn't Ocho I was seeing, it was Miracle. He was alive and well and and full-grown, welcoming me to his new home, where there was no more sickness and no more death.

\* \* \*

After returning from the appointment, as I carried Miracle's body to the gravesite, I walked through a literal shower of maple tree seeds falling from the trees. For days afterward the propeller-shaped seeds filled the sky and covered our whole yard. While burying Miracle, I had the idea of marking the gravesite by planting red clover seeds over it. It was one of my fondest memories of Miracle, walking that field and spreading seed with him at my side.

When I was scattering the seed I kept hearing the phrase "Unless a seed falls to the ground and dies..." in my head. I knew it was part of a Scripture verse, but I couldn't remember the rest of it.

We said a prayer and our final goodbyes to Miracle and the kids placed a headstone they had worked on next to the grave. We got on with our day, as best we could. Later on, I thought of that verse again, "Unless a seed falls to the ground and dies..." and I remembered all at once how I had carried Miracle to his grave under a shower of seeds falling to the ground—and dying, how I had spread clover seed on the ground as a memorial, and how I had placed Miracle into the ground. When I got home I looked up the full verse.

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a seed falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds." (John 12:23)*

Reading this, I felt answered. Miracle's miracle, his life and death, were not in vain. There is a God in the Heavens and He has a reason, to produce many seeds.

So here is that seed. I am sharing it with you. May God bless you and keep you in all His wisdom and providence, and may He produce a harvest in you. 🐔

## Reader Comments

*Just got your newsletter and read it. It's my favorite! Thanks for sending it! Rory's article on caregiving was so spot on, it was just what I needed to hear today, and that last paragraph brought be to tears, in a good way.*

**Lacy (Minnesota)**

*Thanks much for your letter. We loved it! We especially liked Ivar's report!*

**George (Minnesota)**

*Thanks for "The Grovestead"! Your Dad gave us a copy of the Winter 2018 publication, Becca. We really enjoyed it, commend and encourage you in all you are doing.*

**Bill (Minnesota)**

## Drop Us a Note!

We appreciate hearing from you and what you think of this newsletter!

**Email:** [family@thegrovestead.com](mailto:family@thegrovestead.com)

**Fun Mail:** P.O. Box 326  
Northfield, MN 55057

## Please Share!

Our aim is to encourage Christian families in the Lord (1 Thes 5:11). If you know anyone who would appreciate this newsletter, please share it with them or send them to our website ([thegrovestead.com](http://thegrovestead.com)) to sign up on our mailing list. —Rory

**Thanks for reading!**

Rory & Becca Groves

**The Grovestead**

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