



Arthur Church of Christ

415 West 4th St., Arthur, IL 61911-1303



The "Sower"

August 30, 2009



Ron Bartanen, Minister

Times of Worship

Bible Classes-----9:30 am

Morning Worship-10:30 am

Evening Worship—6:00 pm

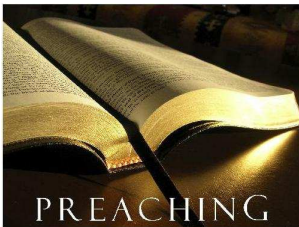
Wed. Bible Study---6:00 pm

PRAY FOR: Lyla's hip problem seems to be getting worse. *** Our daughter-in-law (Crystal) is recovering from shoulder surgery. *** Mary's mother is not doing well. *** Lester was doing better when we saw him Wednesday.. *** Continue to remember Paul, Woody, Rodger, Inez, Linda, Sammie's son-in-law, Inez's sister (Guinn), Charles Moore (Tex.), and Lewis & Mary Carter (Ind.).

WELCOME to today's Bible class and/or worship assembly. If you are a **VISITOR**, we especially appreciate your decision to meet with us. It is our hope that you will return at every opportunity.

Have you checked our web site lately?
(www.arthurchurchofchrist.com)

Be sure to visit the "Apologetics Press" link, now in both English and Spanish. Also newly added: Sermon Outlines and "Family Minutes" (Dale Smith).



"Attaining The Mind of Christ" will be this morning's message, Phil. 2:5 being the text.

WHY I LOVE CHILDREN—

(With schools across the country having just begun, I thought it would be good to share some light humor regarding them, which I have picked from the Internet Enjoy.)

- **HAPPY SEPTEMBER BIRTHDAYS** to: Woody (7th), and Ron (10th).
- **BIRTHDAY POTLUCK:** All are invited to remain following services for a potluck **A SONG SERVICE** will follow. None tonight.

- **OPINIONS:** On the first day of school, a first-grader handed his teacher a note from his mother. The note read: "The opinions expressed by this child are not necessarily those of his parents."
- **THE ELDERLY:** "While working for an organization that delivers lunches to elderly shut-ins, I used to take my 4-year-old daughter on my afternoon rounds. She was unfailingly intrigued by the various appliances of old age, particularly the canes, walkers and wheelchairs. One day I found her staring at a pair of false teeth soaking in a glass. As I braced myself for the inevitable barrage of questions, she merely turned and whispered, "The tooth fairy will never believe this!"

WINDS OF CHANGE

Winds of change are certainly blowing over denominations today—even denominations that have traditionally held to the authority of Scripture. While changes in the past have been subtle, as breezes that are often perceived as insignificant, recent changes are not something to be easily ignored. While not the only obvious change, the acceptance of homosexuality as a valid lifestyle certainly is a major concern as Scripture is set aside for political correctness.

The most recent example that I have become aware of is the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). Delegates in a national convention held in downtown Minneapolis voted, with a 2/3rd majority, to allow the ordination of those involved in same-sex relationships to the pastoral ministry. In their words, they would allow “publicly accountable, lifelong, monogamous, same-gender relationships to serve as rostered leaders of this church.” The decision was not without opposition, however. The Lutheran Coalition for Reform observed: “We mourn the decision by the Churchwide Assembly to reject the clear teaching of the Bible that God’s intention for marriage is the relationship of one man and one woman. It is tragic that such a large number of ELCA members were willing to overturn the clear teaching of the Bible as it has been believed and confessed by Christians for nearly 2,000 years.”

An interesting event occurred during the assembly, which met at the Minneapolis Convention Center—an event that baffled weather-experts, most of whom declared that they’d never seen anything like it. An eyewitness account described it: “This curious tornado touches down just south of downtown and follows 35W straight towards the city center. It crosses I94. It is now downtown. The time: 2 PM. The first buildings on the downtown side of I94 are the Minneapolis Convention Center and Central Lutheran. The tornado severely damages

the convention center roof, shreds the tents, breaks the steeple of Central Lutheran, splits what’s left of the steeple in two...and then lifts.” A sign from God? A coincidence? I guess everyone will have to make their own decision on that. However, we are not free to make our own decisions on what the Bible refers to as an abomination (Leviticus 18:22), and the apostle Paul spoke of as “vile affections” and “a reprobate mind.” (Romans 1:26-32).

Indeed, winds of change are blowing—and they’re blowing hard!
--Ron

LITTLE THINGS

It’s not the great things in this world that make our lives worthwhile. It’s the little things like a tiny flower, or perhaps a baby’s smile. A little word, sincerely spoken, can lift our spirits high; like a tiny bird perched on a limb sends his message to the sky.. A little dewdrop on a rose and tiny blades of grass. All sparkle in the sunlight, to cheer us as we pass. The lovely Johnny jumpups, the smallest flower that grows,, delight the heart of youngsters, peeping up around their toes. A friendly gesture or a smile mean more to me than gold.. They help us feel that someone cares when we are growing old. Money cannot buy the things that mean so much to me. They are part of God’s creation, and all of them are free. –Laina Owen, via *Lantern*, Highway church, Sullivan

WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED...REALLY?

On September 13, 1808, Thomas Campbell’s ministerial duties with the Presbyterian Church were officially suspended. He had long been at odds with them over the adoption of man-made creeds and doctrines which he found contrary to the scriptures. Not having a formal place to preach, he continued to speak in the houses of friends in the state of Pennsylvania.

At the home of Abraham Altars, Campbell spoke on the divided condition of Christendom and its attendant evils. He urged that all Christians be united upon the scriptures and closed his speech with these words: "That rule, my highly respected hearers, is this, that where the Scriptures speak, we speak, and where the Scriptures are silent, we are silent." Those words became the unofficial motto of the Restoration Movement.

While those words are not in the Bible, they certainly reflect Biblical teachings and the proper attitude toward scripture, and nowhere is this principle more abused and ignored than on the subject of what a person must do to be saved. From the Unitarian position that humanity does nothing and yet God will save you to the sectarian position that you must first prove yourself worthy of salvation, the doctrine of salvation among the religious world resembles a buffet dinner—pick and choose your favorites and dismiss what you do not like or want.

Guy N. Woods once said that the things which pertain the most to our salvation are the easiest to understand. Mark Twain said that it was not the things in scripture he did not understand that bothered him, but those things which were clear that made him the most uncomfortable. Perhaps these sentiments help to explain why there is such a hodge-podge of teachings regarding salvation. On the one hand, people may not be able to accept that the Almighty would make it so easy, or on the other hand, they are not willing to accept what they can easily understand.

So, what must I do to be saved...really? Unless I am convinced of my sinfulness, I won't seek salvation (Romans 3:23). The Bible is clear that without faith it is impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:1, 6). Clear enough? But faith doesn't appear out of nowhere. For faith to develop, one must hear and accept the truth (Romans 10:17). Faith, based on scripture, tells me that Jesus saves (Luke 19:10). The saved are put into the church (Acts 2:47), the church is the body of Christ (Eph. 1:22-23), and Christ is the Savior of the body (Eph. 5:23). The saved, therefore, are in the body of Christ. How then do I get into Christ? Mmmm. Let's speak where

the scriptures speak—"For as many of you as were **baptized into Christ** have put on Christ" (Gal. 3:27). But you know, it is true that the things pertaining the most to our salvation are easiest to understand because Jesus put all this into a simple sentence—"He that believes and is baptized shall be saved" (Mark 16:16).

Let's quit arguing with God. Some say, "God said it. I believe it. That settles it." I say, "God said it,. That settles it whether I believe it or not." Do you want to be saved? Then allow the scriptures to teach you how you must be saved. It's that simple. –Robert N. Lambert, *The Main Street Harbinger*, Milan, Tenn.

WISDOM FROM THE PAST— "Were we directed from Washington when to sow and when to reap, we would soon want bread." –Thomas Jefferson.

The Nature of Worship. The text will be John 4:24.

BIRTHDAY POTLUCK AND SINGING: *Next Sunday* we will have a potluck following morning services recognizing those with September birthdays. The last-Sunday-of-the-month **SONG SERVICE** will follow. We will not meet that evening.

CONSIDER THIS

GOING TO CHURCH

For most of us, the idea of going to church is as much a part of our lives as eating lunch. Attending the worship services is something that is important to many people, and they feel as if something is missing if for some reason they miss attending worship. But there is an important question: Do you enjoy going to church?

There are many people who always look forward to Sunday. They genuinely enjoy taking advantage of the opportunity to worship God each Lord's Day.. They arrive ready to worship and leave feeling uplifted or at least challenged to use that week to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and labor in His vineyard. These people never complain about the weather, the preacher, the temperature in the auditorium, the crying babies, or their own ailments. They make it a point to arrange their schedules so that nothing will hinder them from being in attendance. They sing wholeheartedly, listen intently, give generously and commune thoroughly with their Lord and their brethren.

On the other hand there are those few who are never satisfied with going to church. They seem to

- **Blessed** is the man who, having nothing to say, abstains from giving us worthy evidence of the fact. (George Eliot)
- **Were we** directed from Washington when to sow and when to reap, we would soon want bread. (Thomas Jefferson)
- **Sign** in front of a service station: Taxes collected here-federal, state and local. We also sell gasoline.
- **A man** has deprived himself of the best there is in the world who has deprived himself of this, a knowledge of the Bible. (Woodrow Wilson)

--Trib-Bits, Decatur Tribune

find something wrong with everything and everybody. They seem bored with the services. They never sing, never give and never spend any time in fellowship with their brothers and sisters in Christ. One preacher commented that there was a brother who slept through every sermon. The preacher blamed himself until he realized that this brother was asleep before he had ever said a word. According to this preacher, he may not have received much spiritual uplift from the services, but he always left refreshed.

The question is: Why are some like the Psalmist who said, I was glad when they said to me, Let us go into the house of the Lord (Psalm 122:1), while others are like the people in Malachi's day who complained, behold what a weariness is it. (Malachi 1:13)? Is it the way in which the services are conducted? That is possible, but my experience has been that that is rarely the problem. The problem is almost always one of attitude. Preparation for Sunday worship should begin on Monday and continue until worship time begins. If we tune our hearts to prepare and provide the Lord with a proper spiritual sacrifice, then each Sunday will be seen as a blessing, yet one more opportunity to praise the God of our salvation. It is also true that our interest in and appreciation of worship is in direct proportion to how much we have invested in it. Think what God has invested in us. Let us, then,

worship gladly. Robert N. Lambert, *The Main Street Harbinger*, Milan, Tenn.

(IT IS SAD that Christians, without good reason, would begrudge the Lord even an hour or two of one day per week especially considering the fact that He designed it for our blessing. Hebrews 10:25 was written to remind lax Christians of the need for assembly as a body of believers: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together as the manner of some is, but exhorting one another, and so much the more as ye see the day approaching. This past week I printed out an article from the Internet on the practice of a Church of England congregation in Barbourne, Worcester, in order to entice more men to attend even on Fathers Day; handed bottles of beer by children during the service. The possibility of encouraging more in attending throughout the year, had led clergy to offer a range of incentives today, including free beer, bacon rolls, and chocolate bars. How the Lord must weep! --Ron)

TRUTH

There is no relationship with God that is not built on truth! (John 4:24) The Bible insists that truth exists, that it can be known and that it matters now and for all eternity! Why is spiritual truth so important?

- 1) **Truth precedes salvation.** Jesus insisted that it is knowing the truth which sets us free (John 8:32). In 2 Thessalonians 2:43, Paul insists that God has chosen us for salvation through *faith in the truth*.
- 2) **Truth provides stability to faith.** Paul says in Ephesians 4:13 that we are able to mature spiritually and arrive at the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ when we attain *the knowledge of the Son of God*. The result is that we are *no longer children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, but speaking the truth in love, we grow up into Him, who is the head, even Christ.* (Eph. 4:14-15).

- 3) **Truth permits spiritual survival.** Hosea 4:6 *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.* Man says, What you don't know can't hurt you. God says, What you don't know will destroy you.
- 4) **Truth produces freedom** (John 8:32). Truth sets us free from religious error and confusion. It also sets us free from superstition and ignorance. But above all, truth sets us free from the bondage to sin. Sin is slavery! (John 8:34) It ruins lives, breaks up homes, destroys nations, and causes untold suffering.

Flannery O'Connor wisely observed: *Truth does not change according to our ability to stomach it.* Truth is there. It can be known. It must be obeyed!

If we want to spend eternity with God, it is essential that we *learn* the truth, *love* the truth, and *live* the truth. *The Seeker*

HOW MUCH DO YOU OWN IN THAT DIRECTION?

George Washington Truett was a preacher in Dallas for 47 years. He once visited a wealthy West Texas rancher and had dinner in his huge ranch home. After dinner, the rancher took Dr. Truett up to a veranda on top of his house, and lit up a big cigar. The sun was setting, and if you've ever been to West Texas, you know you can see a long way out there. The man pointed to the south toward some oil rigs and said, I own everything in that direction as far as you can see. He pointed east toward some cotton fields and said, And I own everything in that direction, too. He pointed north toward a huge herd of cattle and bragged, and preacher, I own everything as far as you can see in that direction. He turned to the west,

and said, and I own everything you can see in that direction, except the sun, of course.

Dr.. Truett turned to the man and pointed straight up in the sky and said, and how much do you own in **that** direction.

It's a sobering question for all of us. We are surrounded constantly by the things of this world, and it is so easy to think that these things are the things that matter most a nice car, a nice home, nice clothes (and don't forget all the necessary electronic gadgets!). And so, if we are not careful, we may seek to accumulate more and more, without regard to our relationship with God. As the rich fool discovered in **Luke 12**, we will all one day be forced to recognize that the material things we have accumulated have no eternal value..

Jesus said, Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also (Matthew 6:19-21).

How much do you own in **that** direction?

--Source forgotten

ONE OF GOD'S CHILDREN

Zelda Cornish of Dexter, Missouri tells the following story: I once witnessed an incident of charity that restored my faith in people. While working at a shoe store in downtown Truro, Nova Scotia, I noticed a little boy standing barefooted on the hot air register outside the bakery shop next door trying to keep warm.

I was unsure whether to invite the boy into the store, or just what to do with him, when a middle-aged lady came by. After a few words with the barefoot boy, she brought him into the shoe store. She bought him new shoes and heavy woolen socks, for which he tried awkwardly to thank her. "Are you God's wife?" he asked his benefactress.

Taken aback by the question, she took some time before replying. "No, son, I'm just one of His children." "Well, I knew you must be some kin to Him," he said as he thanked her again and ran out the door.

--*The Main Street Harbinger*, Milan, TN

THROUGH ANOTHER MAN'S EYES

Do you remember the Old Testament story of Eliam? OK, maybe not. Eliam is a rather obscure character in the Old Testament. In fact, he is only mentioned twice, but here's his story. Eliam was a father of a little girl. Like all fathers, he loved his daughter and watched her grow into a beautiful young lady. The day finally came that Eliam gave his daughter's hand to a young man to be his wife. Eliam's daughter and son-in-law were making a life together when tragedy befell them. One day, when Eliam's son-in-law was away at work, several men came to his home, took his wife away, and gave her to their leader, and he had sexual relations with her. Not only that, but this man of power also had Eliam's son-in-law murdered.

For the record, Eliam's son-in-law was Uriah. His daughter was Bathsheba. And the man of power was King David. Ah! now you know the story. It was just told from a different perspective through the eyes of Eliam. We know and love King David in spite of his murderous and adulterous actions. We "brush off" his mistakes and count him as one of our heroes.

But here's my question. Do you think Eliam viewed David as a hero? Through the eyes of Eliam, how do you suppose the man who murdered his son-in-law and stole away his daughter was viewed? Do you think it might have been harder for Eliam to forgive David than it has been for us? Surely, but that brings me to my point.

We can talk about forgiveness all day long and know all the right answers, but we may not appreciate how much work this spiritual discipline requires. Forgiveness is easy until you really need to forgive someone. Loving your enemies is easy until you really have an enemy of your own.

Friends, don't get overconfident in your ability and willingness to forgive. Continue to work at and mature in this spiritual discipline. And when you think you've arrived, go back and try looking through the eyes of Eliam....-Steve Higginbotham, *MercEmail*

GOD'S WILL

Joseph looked up from the deep pit into which he had been cast. His cries for mercy echoed off the jagged walls, muffled by the laughter of his older brothers taunting him. He was deeply wounded by the depth of their hatred. Turning to Heaven he pled for deliverance. Joseph longed for home and for the love of his father. Surely it was God's will. But God wanted Joseph to go to Egypt.

Success awaited young Joseph in this new land, so strange to him. But it soon turned to chains. Joseph looked up the bleak walls of an Egyptian prison-house. The darkest of the night brought groaning and pain. Even with the dawn of day the darkness of the prison remained. Joseph prayed for freedom, he longed for home. Surely it was God's will that Joseph escape Egypt, break free of this horrible fate. But God put a wiser Joseph near the throne of Pharaoh.

Joseph looked down on the prostrated brothers who had brought such misery into his life years before. All the emotions of the hatred endured, the hardships of trials faced, the pain of separation thrust upon him could now surface as sweet revenge against these sons of Israel. But Joseph looked up for guidance and God's will brought forth forgiveness.

Perhaps Joseph would tell us that it is not always easy to determine God's will. It is often easier to overlook it for our own, or to reject it as unpalatable. But there is one certain way of identifying God's will: get to know God who has revealed Himself to us through His inspired Word, the Bible. The more we come to understand God, the more natural it will be to recognize His will. And that is the secret of the life of Joseph. He was always looking up! **-David Bragg, Bulletin Gold**

(THE FOLLOWING ARTICLE, from a recent issue of *House to House/Heart to Heart*, has been slightly edited. Instead of the original title, "*Christianity, the Better Way*," I prefer the title, "*Christ, the Better Way*." Christianity is viewed so broadly anymore that it is not easily defined. Besides, Jesus

didn't say, "Christianity is the way, the truth and the life," but "I am the way,; the truth and the life. We are not following a system, but the person of Christ.)

CHRIST, THE BETTER WAY

In life, you can choose to serve Satan as a sinner or serve Christ as a Christian. You can live either way, but Christ is the better way.

- Christ is the better way because it means salvation.** Jesus said, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved" (John 10:9).
- Christ is the better way because He rids us of our old sinful life.** "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).
- Christ is the better way because God can work through the life of a Christian.** "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us" (Ephesians 3:20).
- Christ is the better way because Christians enjoy the peace of God.** Jesus said, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth,, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

You will not be sorry for becoming a Christian or for living the Christian life. It is better for now and for eternity. A Christian is a believer in Christ who has repented and been baptized for the remission of sins: "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins: and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). You must obey the gospel to be saved (Mark 16:15-16). The Lord adds the saved to the church (Acts 2:47). The saved person must remain faithful till death (Revelation 2:10; 2 Timothy 4:6-8). Obey the gospel and live for Christ now, so that you may live eternally with Him. --Charles Box, Greenville, Ala.

IN OUR PRAYERS: Paul continues to have both good days and not-so-good days. They hope to be returning home from their daughter's in Michigan in either April or May. *** Continue to remember Rodger, Dean, Inez, Lyla, Lester, Mary's mother, Doris's niece (Kellie), Charles Moore (Tex.), Lewis and Mary Carter (Fla.), our service men and women, and our nation's and world's leaders as a way for peace is sought, and a solution to the nation's financial problems.

“Praise ye the LORD, for it is good to sing praises unto our God: for it is pleasant; and praise is comely” (Psalms 147:1)

“BEHOLD THE MAN” will be this morning's message, another in our series on the theme, ***“We Would See Jesus.”*** The text will be John 19:5. The evening lesson will be another on this theme: ***“Jesus—His Words and Works,”*** with Hebrews 2:1-4 as the text.

BITS AND PIECES—

One learns more of what is really happening in the world from the Internet than from the regular news media. Here is a sampling from this past week or so. I'm calling this column *“Bits and Pieces”* because the items are very brief summaries of much longer articles. Here they are:

THE “FAIRNESS DOCTRINE” AGAIN: What has been called “the fairness doctrine” is again being suggested by some in government as a solution to the political “imbalance” on radio—not of the

more liberal networks, but of the more conservative radio stations, especially those airing conservative talk shows. This is now seen to be a threat to Christian radio as well. Would the preaching of Christ and the gospel require stations to provide balance with speakers presenting the Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, etc. faiths? Akin to this threat to freedom and religion, is the threat of "hate crimes" being charged against any who might be considered offensive to others? (Source: worldnetdaily.com)

DOMESTIC JIHADISTS! World News Daily reports: "A jihadist group responsible for nearly 50 attacks on American soil is operating 35 training camps across the nation, but its name cannot be found on the State Dept.'s list of foreign terrorist organizations." FBI Special Agent Jody Weis noted: "These home-grown terrorists can prove to be as dangerous as any known group, if not more so."

THE CENTER OF IT ALL

While there is a growing attitude that says that all religions are basically the same, and therefore all offer a gateway to heaven, there is only one that stands out as unique from all others. All possess certain endearing qualities that recognize some moral and ethical values upon which we can all agree, but only one provides a solution to the fact that man always falls short of doing all that he recognizes as right and good. It is the sin problem. Who would disagree with Paul's assertion, "All have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23)? The missing ingredient in the world's many religions is a solution to man's estrangement from his Creator through sin. Only the Christian faith provides that solution, and it is not in man, but in God. Man devises systems that he hopes will win the favor of the god he serves, but is blinded to the pathway the true God has already provided in Jesus Christ

No event in the Bible, nor in history, is of greater significance than the crucifixion of Jesus. Where man could not save himself, God provided One who was without sin to "be made sin (a sin-offering) for us,,that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21). The Old Testament looked forward to the cross, the gospels tell of Jesus going to the cross, the epistles relate the Christian life to the cross, and the book of Revelation tells us that the same Jesus who went to the cross will one day return in glory.

The apostle Paul wrote, "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Galatians 6:14a). He declared "the preaching of the cross" to be the "power of God" (1 Cor. 1:18). It is not morality, law or rituals, but the cross that makes Christianity unique. It was the preaching of the cross in Acts 2 that caused those present to be "pricked in their heart," and to cry out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" Their repentance and baptism that followed was related to the cross through faith in the crucified and risen Savior—"for the remission of sins" (verse 38).

Indeed, Jesus on the cross is the center of it all. A crossless religion cannot save. Paul declared God's purpose for all, Jews and Gentiles: "that he might reconcile both unto God in one body **by the cross**, having slain the enmity thereby: and came and preached peace to you...for through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father" (Ephesians 2:16-18).

Have you come to the center of it all? Have you come to the Christ of the cross?
--Ron

BRINGING GRACE AND PEACE

In looking at Jesus' triumphant entry into Jerusalem, we can learn specifics about God that are very relevant to us in our day as well. One of these is that God fulfills everything that His word declares, even down to the tiniest minutia. As the mobs filled the famous tourist trap of the city of Jerusalem there was a prophecy on the horizon ready to be fulfilled. "*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, your King comes unto you: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.*" (Zechariah 9:9 [RSV]) God's word is truth.

Jesus Christ is truth, and no one comes to the Father except through Him (John 14:6). Everything that is in God's word will be fulfilled. You can count on it. If God says it, it will come to pass. In this scene we see Jesus fulfilling God's word even down to the minutest of details. He rides the donkey into Jerusalem because God's word declared that He would do so. In doing so, Jesus declares what kind of King He is. He will be one that brings grace and peace to a lost and dying world.

We should all lean upon God's word. Everything around you is subject to change and will change at some point. However, this is not so with God's Word, for it is eternal and it will never change. Everything around you will fail you, but God's word will never fail you. Be a person of the word. Read it, study it, memorize it, believe it, and most importantly, live it. As you do, you will come to be blessed greatly!

So, other than the fulfillment of prophecy, just what was so important about Jesus coming into Jerusalem on the back of a colt? Why not any other animal? In the Old Testament days a colt was considered a noble animal. It was used for service and to carry the burdens of men, but even more significantly and importantly, it was used to carry kings. When they entered a city in peace, they rode on the back of a colt to symbolize their peaceful intentions. When a king entered a city as a conqueror, he rode in on the back of a stallion. So by choosing to enter His city on the back of a colt, Jesus was proclaiming to the people that their King had arrived. Yes, their King had arrived, the Promised Messiah was within their midst, but He was to be a King of peace. Jerusalem, the ancient city whose very name itself meant "city of peace," was to have a reigning and ruling King Who would bring peace to the holy city. *1. For this Melchizedek, King of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the Kings and blessed him; 2. and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, King of righteousness, and then he is also King of Salem, that is, King of peace.* (Hebrews 7:1-2 [RSV]) Salem of old in which Melchizedek was both High Priest and King during the time of Abraham was none other than Jerusalem during the time of Christ, and once again it was going to have both a King and a High Priest at the same time and in the same Person, none other than Jesus Christ.

—David Ferguson, Mattoon

NURSING HOME: This Tuesday is the evening we are to have a service at the Arthur Nursing Home. We meet at 6:45. We hope you can join us.

PRAYER LIST: Continue to remember Paul & Nadine, Inez, Dean, Lyla, Lester, Rodger, Woody, Mary's mother, Doris's niece (Kellie), Charles Moore (Tex.), Lewis & Mary Carter (Fla.), our service men and women, and our nation's and world's leaders as a way for peace is sought, and a solution to the nation's financial problems..



GIVING BACK TO GOD WHAT IS HIS

There was a church that had a parking problem. It was right next door to a store that was closed on Sunday. They asked the owner if they could use his parking lot. He said that they could use it for 51 Sundays out of the year that it would be chained off one week each year. They were happy with the deal, but curious why it would be chained off that one Sunday. He explained that he just wanted them to remember that it wasn't *their* parking lot!

You know, there's a lot of wisdom there. Because if you use something long enough, you tend to assume that it's yours. But everything we have belongs to God. God wants us to remember that. He told Israel that one day they would be richly blessed. But He warned them: "Otherwise, remember the Lord your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day." (Deuteronomy 8:17-18)

Think about it. Is it harder to give up something of your own or give someone back what is already his? If I need to haul some stuff around, I might need to borrow a friend's pickup truck for a while. Suppose I kept it for a day or two. Then I give it back to him. Is that hard to do? No. Here's a truck that's worth thousands of dollars and I'm just giving it to him? Sure, it's easy to give it to him because it's not mine; it belongs to my friend.

What we have belongs to God: it's His stuff to begin with! He blesses us by letting us use it, but it's still His. And when we understand that, giving to God becomes a lot easier.

Someone has said that "As long as a man thinks that he owns what he has, then the church will always appear to him as a beggar appealing to him to part with what he has to meet her needs. But once a man realizes that he owns nothing, but owes everything, and even his life is given him in trust, then a proper proportion of his blessings will be given back to God."

(God says): "If I were hungry, I would not tell you. For the world is Mine, and all it contains" (Psalms 50:2).

--A. Smith

(I failed to note who sent me the above via e-mail, but to whoever sent it: Thank you. While we usually think of this principle in contributing of our financial means, we should not limit it to that. Some find it difficult to share even an hour or two out of 168 hours per week in assembling with God's people in study of His word and worship. Others have abilities, all of which are received from God, but use them exclusively for their personal benefit. Truly, life itself is God's gift, but too few are those who have dedicated their lives to God, and to God's Son who gave His all for them. Are you withholding from God that which is His? --Ron)

WHATEVER IT TAKES

A motivational speaker once said there are two kinds of people in this world: those who say, "whatever" and those who say, "whatever it takes." "Whatever" is the response of the shrug. It's "a who cares?" attitude, one of indifference and apathy. "Whatever it takes" is the response of the committed. It's a "can do" attitude that refuses to give up or give in.

Think about those two responses when it comes to the church's mission.. Jesus said to love your neighbor as yourself. "Whatever." Jesus said to go into all the world and preach the gospel. "Whatever." Jesus said to seek His kingdom first. "Whatever."

Now let's change that response to "Whatever it takes." Jesus said to love your neighbor as yourself. "Whatever it takes." Jesus said to go into all the world and preach the gospel. "Whatever it takes." Jesus said to seek His kingdom first. "Whatever it takes."

Are you and I like Paul, willing to do whatever it takes (within the boundaries of God's law) to win the world to Christ? "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 15:58).

--Tom Moore, Temple, Tex.

DEFINITION: “**Taxpayer:** One who does not have to pass a civil service examination to work for the government.”



LINCOLN

“We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven. We have been preserved the many years, in peace and prosperity. We have grown in numbers, wealth and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us, and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success, we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to God that made us. It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our national sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness.” (April 11, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln’s Proclamation for a **National day of fasting, humiliation and Prayer**)

Remember the words of Solomon? “Righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people” (Prov. 14:34).

While we’re giving quotes, here’s another for you to contemplate:

“Life cannot be divided into compartments in some of which God is involved and in others of which He is not involved; there cannot be one kind of language in the church and another kind of language in the shipyard or the factory or the office; there cannot be one kind of conduct in the church and another kind of conduct in the business world. The fact is that God does not need to be invited into certain departments of life, and kept out of others. He is everywhere, all through life and in every activity of life. He hears not only the words which are spoken in His name: He hears all words; and there cannot be any such thing as a form of words which evades bringing God into any transaction. We will regard all promises as sacred if we remember that all promises are made in the presence of God.” (William Barclay)

“ A nation that is morally dead will soon be financially dead” (Calvin Coolidge)



Being An Angel

One day, when I was a freshman in high school, I saw a kid from my class was walking home from school. His name was Kyle . It looked like he was carrying all of his books. I thought to myself, 'Why would anyone bring home all his books on a Friday? He must really be a nerd.' I had quite a weekend planned (parties and a football game with my friends tomorrow afternoon), so I shrugged my shoulders and went on.

As I was walking, I saw a bunch of kids running toward him.. They ran at him, knocking all his books out of his arms and tripping him so he landed in the dirt. His glasses went flying, and I saw them land in the grass about ten feet from him.. He looked up and I saw this terrible sadness in his eyes. My heart went out to him. So, I jogged over to him as he crawled around looking for his glasses, and I saw a tear in his eye.

As I handed him his glasses, I said, 'Those guys are jerks..' They really should get lives. ' He looked at me and said, 'Hey thanks!' There was a big smile on his face. It was one of those smiles that showed real gratitude. I helped him pick up his books, and asked him where he lived.. As it turned out, he lived near me, so I asked him why I had never seen him before. He said he had gone to private school before now. I would have never hung out with a private school kid before. We talked all the way home, and I carried some of his books. He turned out to be a pretty cool kid.

I asked him if he wanted to play a little football with my friends He said yes. We hung out all weekend and the more I got to know Kyle , the more I liked him, and my friends thought the same of him.

Monday morning came, and there was Kyle with the huge stack of books again. I stopped him and said, 'Boy, you're gonna really build some serious muscles with this pile of books everyday!' He just laughed and handed me half the books.

Over the next four years, Kyle and I became best friends... When we were seniors we began to think about college. Kyle decided on Georgetown and I was going to Duke. I knew that we would always be friends, that the miles would never be a problem. He was going to be a doctor and I was going for business on a football scholarship ...

Kyle was valedictorian of our class. I teased him all the time about being a nerd. He had to prepare a speech for graduation. I was so glad it wasn't me having to get up there and speak Graduation day, I saw Kyle . He looked great. He was one of those guys that really found himself during high school. He filled out and actually looked good in glasses.. He had more dates than I had. Boy, sometimes I was jealous! Today was one of those days, but I could see that he was nervous about his speech so I smacked him on the back and said, 'Hey, big guy, you'll be great!' He looked at me with one of those looks (the really grateful one) and smiled. ' Thanks,' he said.

As he started his speech, he cleared his throat, and began 'Graduation is a time to thank those who helped you make it through those tough years. Your parents, your teachers, your siblings, maybe a coach but mostly your friends I am here to tell all of you that being a friend to someone is the best gift you can give them. I am going to tell you a story..' I just looked at my friend with disbelief as he told the first day we met. He had planned to kill himself over the weekend. He told of how he had cleaned out his locker so his Mom wouldn't have to do it later and was carrying his stuff home. He looked hard at me and gave me a little smile. 'Thankfully, I was saved. My friend saved me from doing the unspeakable..'

I heard the gasp go through the crowd as this handsome, popular boy told us all about his weakest moment. I saw his Mom and dad looking at me and smiling that same grateful smile. Not until that moment did I realize it's depth. Never underestimate the power of your actions. With one small gesture you can change a person's life. For better or for worse. God puts us all in each others' lives to impact one another in some way. Look for God in others.

'Friends are angels who lift us to our feet when our wings have trouble remembering how to fly.' --**Shelbyville bulletin, 3-8-'09**



JESUS' BAPTISM—AND OURS

As John the baptizer was preaching a message of repentance and the kingdom of God, and baptizing in the Jordan River, many came to him to be baptized, “**confessing their sins**” (Matt. 3:6). We are then informed, “**Then cometh Jesus...to be baptized**” (Matt. 3:13). Jesus had lined up with the “**publicans and harlots**” (Matt. 21:31-32), though in no need of repentance and baptism “**for the remission of sins**” (Mark 1:4), being the sinless Son of God. We can learn much about the significance of baptism from the example of Jesus.

THE BAPTISM OF JESUS WAS A DECISIVE ACT. He was not brought as an infant, but came in a personal response to the will of the Father, or, as He explained to John, “**to fulfill all righteousness**” (Matt. 3:15). Righteousness is defined in Psa. 119:172: “**All thy commandments are righteousness.**” Baptism continues to be a command of God (Acts 10:48). Jesus made this commitment, knowing the path He was choosing would lead to the cross, His burial and resurrection, as prefigured in baptism. He was trading a life of personal security and privacy in Nazareth for a baptism of suffering. Baptism for us as well must be a personal decision of commitment to do the Father’s will regardless of inconvenience or sacrifice.

JESUS' BAPTISM WAS AN ACT OF HUMILITY. John recognized that Jesus had no need for baptism because He had no need for repentance. Standing with sinners, “**He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross**” (Philippians 2:8). Yet there are those who refuse baptism on the grounds of their morality. Baptism is a humbling act for the believer who, in baptism, is “**buried with Christ...into death**” and is raised to “**walk in newness of life**” (Romans 6:3-4).

Jesus' baptism was an act of separation. His private life behind Him and His public ministry before Him. To those baptized, “**Ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness**” (Romans 3:17-18).

JESUS' BAPTISM WAS A PRAYERFUL ACT, as declared in Luke 3:21: “**Jesus also being baptized and praying....**” In baptism, prayerful hearts commit themselves to God. The “*sinner’s prayer*” is not independent of baptism. It was in baptism that Saul (Paul) was told, “**Arise and be baptized, calling on the name of the Lord**” (Acts 22:16). While such a prayer need not be vocal, in baptism one is to seek from God the “**remission of sins**” and “**the gift of the Holy Ghost**” (Acts 2:38-39).

JESUS' BAPTISM WAS A DIVINELY APPROVED ACT. As Jesus arose from the watery grave, the Spirit of God descended upon Him, and the voice of the Father acknowledged Him: **"This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased"** (Matt. 3:16-17). We are acknowledged as children of God in Christ, as Paul wrote, **"Ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, for as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ"** (Galatians 3:26-27).

Those who refused the baptism of John **"rejected the council of God against themselves, being not baptized of him"** (Lk. 7:30). Men would do well to heed the principle set forth in Hebrews 12:24: **"If they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven."**

--Ron