

The Good News

Newsletter - April 2015

A Publication of University Baptist Church, Hattiesburg, MS

The purpose of University Baptist Church is, through guidance of the Holy Spirit, to assemble and worship God, to love and encourage one another, to proclaim the gospel of Christ, to minister to all people, and to live in peace.

In a world where difficult issues remain, University Baptist Church continues its commitment to be a church where “there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male or female, for (we) are all one in Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 3:28)



What is Different?

While preparing to write this article, I spent some time reviewing old Sunday School study guides. I happened to come across one that posed the question, "What is different because Christ has risen?"

I paused for several minutes while I pondered that question. While it is a good question, it is also a very big and open ended question. Certainly, among all of the events of Christian history, the crucifixion of Christ is of singular importance. Yet, how many of us can say that we have spent time pondering this question as it relates to us individually. So I might reframe this question as, "What is different, for me, because Christ has risen?" Now let's not hold back. I recognize that many people might respond with a simple, "Not much." Even someone who regularly warms a church pew on Sunday morning might respond the same way, if they are honest. And if "not much" is your honest answer, then know that is okay. But I think that each of us should say to God, "Help me to understand what is different because Christ has risen." So I wondered how I would respond if someone asked me the same question. Would I have a ready response that shows I am a mature Christian, well-versed in theological matters and self-confident in my knowledge of the Bible? Well, honestly, no, I probably would not. What I first thought about are the struggles I have faced in life, the mistakes I have made, the hurts I have caused others, the times I have been so focused on what I wanted that I cast aside the needs of those I claimed were dear to me, the disappointments I have experienced, the self-doubt that dogs me, the guilt that oftentimes nags at my conscience. So what difference has the risen Christ made for me?

I also thought about Simon Peter and the other disciples. It seems to me, from reading the Bible, that Peter and the others were probably feeling like their lives had been shattered in the hours after the crucifixion of Jesus. Whatever confidence they had was now gone. They were afraid. I would have been afraid. Peter had just denied any knowledge of the person who he had followed and loved for three years. How could he have done that? Maybe if he had not been so afraid for his own well-being he could have somehow prevented Jesus' death. Could the future have looked any more hopeless for Peter?

Yet, it seems that Peter's countenance changed once he saw the empty tomb. How could this be? He did not know why the tomb was empty. Maybe someone had come and stolen the body. What was so different that all feelings of fear and despair seem to have immediately dissipated? I think the difference can be stated in one word: Hope. Among all of the possible emotions, Peter must have felt hope. His hope was in the prospect of a risen Christ. Peter knew that if Christ was alive, then love, the love that God has for all of his creation, will prevail over whatever tries to destroy that love.

So regardless of how you may feel at the moment—alone, afraid, despised, worthless, guilty, threatened and in danger—you can also feel hope, because the tomb was empty...because Christ was risen. Hope is the difference the risen Christ has made for me. And my hope is that each of you will feel the love that Christ has for you.

Dale Harris

Cheap Grace? No!

Almost everyone I've encountered, Christian and non-Christian alike, knows John 3:16 by heart. It is one of the most quoted scriptures, and as such, I believe people have stopped thinking about what it truly means or about the cost of our salvation. I admit to being one of those people.

1 John 4: 7-21 is a great piece on God's love as the basis of our salvation, but it wasn't until I read a story about the cost that I really began to think about God's grace. I haven't been able to get this story out of my mind and I have no idea who originally told it, but I read it as a daily devotional in "Besides the Still Waters" and so I retell it as it is.

The story is told of a man who was employed to operate a drawbridge years ago.

Whenever the signal came, he would lower the drawbridge for a train to cross. Then he would again raise the drawbridge to let boats pass along the river. This man's son often went with him and spent the day playing. The father loved his son dearly and enjoyed his company.

One day the signal came for the bridge to be lowered for a passenger train. Just before the man pulled the lever, he glanced around to see what his son was doing. But the boy was nowhere in sight. Hurriedly, looking down into the great mechanism of the bridge, the father was horrified to see his son climbing among the gears. To lower the drawbridge now would crush the lad! The father's first thought was to rescue his son. But he realized to do so would mean certain death to the passengers on the train that was rushing ever nearer to the breach.

The father considered for a moment and then he resolutely turned his back on his son and pulled the handle to lower the bridge. The train advanced swiftly and soon was thundering across the bridge. As the drawbridge operator stood alongside, tears running down his cheeks, he noticed that the people on the train were talking and laughing as they passed by.

"They have no idea how much it cost me to save them," he wept. "I sacrificed my son so that they would live and they don't even care"

God allowed his only begotten Son to be crucified so that we can be saved. We ride as passengers on the train of life. What is our response to God's great sacrifice? Do we live selfishly or sacrificially?

I told you it was quite a story. What I want to know is if God's great sacrifice is evident in your life and ministry. God's grace isn't cheap. I pray no one acts like it is.

May our Lord bless you all in all the ways He knows you need.

In Christ's love,
Roger Gillette

POWER OF PRAYER—PRAY WITH FAITH POWER THROUGH PRAYER—PRAY WHEN HAPPY AND SAD

James 5 has become my favorite part in the Bible the last four months, mainly the "Prayer of Faith" (James 5:13-20). We all have to remember no matter where we are today in this life, we have a Living God that can deliver us from anything. We just need to give it to Him wholeheartedly and have the Faith. He will ANSWER!!!

Daniel Hollimon, Forrest County Jail

I Do Not Know How To Stop Talking About You

I do not always do the right thing but, you love me.

Yes, you are mystery but, you are undeniable

I come to you with all my mistakes.

It's hard to describe you with words ...

It is more like a feeling ...

That lives in my soul ...

In my despair ...

your words free me.

You take my burdens on your shoulders

And carry them.

An unyielding love that brings change in me .

I will not forget how you love.

Instill in me your ways...

To give away.

-David Woullard

Why Do We Doubt?

Matthew 14:31. And immediately Jesus stretched out his hand and caught him and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

We, as believers, know what doubting can do to us. It can hurt us just like it did Peter, when he walked on the water towards Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. We know that doubting is one of Satan's tools to get our minds, hearts and souls off Jesus. As believers, we need to tell everyone that we see who is worried to have faith and believe that Jesus will deliver them out of their situation or problem. We need to watch out for the devil and his demons, for they will try to get us to doubt that our Heavenly Father and his Son Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior don't care for us or love us anymore, but we know and believe that they do. We should not doubt but believe that The things Jesus has told us in his words will come to pass in our lives. Doubting can take away all of our joy and leave us hopeless and in despair. And when we pray, believe that it is done for you and not doubt. We, as believers, need to keep doubt from our hearts, minds, and souls. We need to tell the devil and his demons, when they try to bring doubt to us, that we believe and have faith in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. So, let's be believers instead of doubters. In Jesus name we pray, amen and amen.

Brother in Christ,
Stephen Elliott Powers

(The following was written by Stephen Powers in 2001. He had two strokes and currently has an aneurysm on his brain. He continues to remain hopeful and faithful to His Word. God bless.)

Comments from a Reader:

I enjoy all the material in the newsletter. I read all of the thoughts that are written and I'm so taken with the emotions so to say that are related to the readers to use daily. I gave the poem "Keep Digging" to a young lady who does my taxes and she placed it on the bulletin board where she works. Her co-workers were really taken away by it.

I thank you for it and I keep copies to pass on to others when I feel someone is going through some things in their life. I thank everyone for their inspiration in their writings and I'm praying for you all. Take care and to you all; "Keep Diggin!"

Fred Singleton
Flora, Ms

"The Ant And The Contact Lens"

Brenda was a young woman who was invited to go rock climbing. Although she was very scared, she went with her group to a tremendous granite cliff. In spite of her fear, she put on the gear, took hold of the rope, and started up the face of that rock. Well, she got to the ledge where she could take a breather. As she was hanging on there, the safety rope snapped against Brenda's eye and knocked out her contact lens. Here she is on a rock ledge, with hundreds of feet below her and hundreds of feet above her. Of course she looked and looked and looked, hoping it landed on the ledge, but it just wasn't there.

Far from home, her sight now blurry, she was desperate and began to get upset, so she prayed to the Lord to help her find the lens. When she got to the top, a friend examined her eye and her clothing for the lens, but it was not to be found. She sat down, despondent, with the rest of the party waiting for the rest of the team to make it up the face of the cliff. She looked out across range after range of mountains, thinking of that verse that says, "The eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth." She thought, "Lord, you can see all these mountains. You know every stone and leaf, and you know exactly where my contact lens is. Please help me." Finally, they walked down the trail to the bottom. At the bottom there was a new party of climbers just starting up the face of the cliff. One of them shouted out, "Hey, you guys! Anybody lose a contact lens?" Well, that would be startling enough, but you know why the climber saw it? An ant was moving slowly across the face of the rock, carrying it on its back.

Brenda told me that her father is a cartoonist. When she told him the incredible story of the ant, the prayer, and the contact lens, he drew a picture of an ant lugging that contact lens with the words "Lord, I don't know why you want me to carry this thing. I can't eat it, and it's awful heavy. But if it's what you want me to do, I'll carry it for you." I think it would probably do some of us good to occasionally say, "God, I don't know why you want me to carry this load. I can see no good in it and it's awful heavy. But, if you want me to carry it, I will." *God doesn't call the qualified, he qualifies the called.*

Yes, I do love God. He is the source of existence and my savior. He keeps me functioning each and every day. Without Him, I am nothing, but with Him . . . I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me. (Phil. 4:13)

Dedicated to Dick and Jane. We love you and are praying for you.

With love in Christ,
"The Good News"

Free-Stylin'

I am . . .
without a doubt 80 kilograms

Carefully weighed,
Brought into this world with a rush;
never delayed.

Notwithstanding . . .
with a purpose, I keep on demanding.

Whose side are you leaning on?
Handcuffed, you're under arrest son.

Dear Father,
Knowing you're too busy still I bother.

Save me again . . .
My soul's been restless ever since I
went in.

I'm leaning on the Lord's side,
They look everything from me but
Returned my pride.

Feeling worthless . . .
I climb into a pool of water fully dressed.

Baptized . . .
My sleeping spirit has opened its eyes.

I was . . .
Revivified with His tough love.

Carefully made,
Brought into this world a sinner
now saved.

Notwithstanding . . .
I survived a crash landing.

Whose side are you leaning on?
With Him, you can't go wrong - Amen!

Free-Stylin' by: Justin H. Underwood

ACHIEVING SPIRITUAL GROWTH

The first thing we need to know about becoming a disciple is that discipleship is more than a religious activity. It is a process of spiritual development and each individual believer bears a responsibility. Our spiritual growth takes place through a process called discipleship, which Jesus commissioned us to do while on earth. Each of us must learn how to function within this new kingdom as disciples of Jesus Christ and the learning process is called discipleship. When we have grown spiritually and we are consistent with his character, conduct and attitude and love in our lives, then we are on the right track. Jesus describes in Matthew 10:24-25 that a disciple is a learner, student, and apprentice. In order to become a disciple we must acquire and master a body of knowledge. But knowledge alone does not make us disciples. We also have to know how to take that information and do something with it, in order to achieve our own spiritual growth. In Matthew 11:28-30, Jesus points that out.

For example: The farmer told his boy, "Son, I want you to plow a straight furrow from one end of this field to the other." The son asked, "But how will I know when I am plowing it straight?" "Do you see that cow lying down over in the next field?" the father replied. "Just keep your eye on that cow and plow straight toward her and you will be fine!"

The farmer came back about an hour later and saw furrows going every which way. He couldn't believe it. "Son, what in the world happened? I told you to keep your eye on the cow so you could plow a straight furrow." "Dad, I did keep my eye the cow, but the cow kept moving!" the son replied.

Actually, I don't know any farmer who would advise his son to plow using a moving object, but the point is worth making: If you focus on the wrong object, your life is going to wander all over the place, and you won't have a consistent spiritual victory. But if you follow Jesus, you will plow a straight line, because he is not going anywhere. He is the same everyday and in the same place everyday. (Hebrews 13:8).

-Sherwood B.
Death Row
Parchman, MS

The Rich Man's Lesson

Text Luke 16:19-23

The parable of The Rich Man and Lazarus has generated a great deal of controversy. There remains some division about the interpretation of Luke 16:19-23. What is the lesson of this story? Should we understand the parable in a literal sense or is it figurative? Many of the attempts to comprehend this story use it as an example of life and death. Others see this story as "works" being more crucial than "faith" in Jesus. While others use this story to defend the position they hold. The controversy in this passage overshadows the true message of the parable.

When we come to the conclusion of the story, we find Abraham talking to the rich man, "If they hear not Moses and The Prophets, neither will they be persuaded by someone who rose from the dead"(v31). We see the parable of The Rich Man and Lazarus as more about those who reject the message of Jesus. The Parable reminds us of the situation Jesus was presented with in Luke's Gospel. While Jesus' message was well received by the poor and sinners, his message was rejected by the rich and powerful. Jesus came to save the helpless, in the process, the mighty were condemned by their rejection. The Poor, however, received the good things in life (Luke 16:25). The Rich were haughty in spirit in contrast to the humility of Lazarus. "Those who are humble will be exalted by God" (Matthew 23:12).

The Resurrection of Jesus serves as the final scene of The Gospels. The Resurrection of Jesus is the conclusion of the parable of The Rich Man and Lazarus. Before we condemn the rich man in the story, we should recognize that we are often like him. We ignore the needs around us. We are told in the beginning of story that Lazarus longed to eat at the rich man's table. The poor man Lazarus was at the rich man's door every day. I believe this story is telling us to not only hear the Gospel, but to put it into practice. We are not told, why the rich man did not help Lazarus, he certainly had every opportunity to do so. The story reminds us that we must show the love and compassion of Jesus within us. "We should let the light of God shine in us showing all people the work of God." (Matthew 5:16).

-Christopher Lee

EXAMINE YOURSELF!

I Samuel 15:22 says, "Has the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice." Even though we may read the Bible, go to church, or pray, do we really obey God's commandments? Do we examine ourselves and put forth effort to work on our attitude? Or do we actually deceive ourselves thinking we are on the right path, when really we're not? I've come to the conclusion through Jesus' word that going to church, reading the Bible, or praying is not enough. Even though prayer is absolutely powerful, we can unwittingly hinder our prayers that we commit to everyday faithfully! In this brutal society that we live in that consists of needs and wants, we can easily commit idolatry and simply forget where our power comes from as believers in Christ Jesus!

What am I doing that is hindering my prayers? That is the question I need to ask myself. Do I use profane language? Do I engage in worldly conversations or activities that give glory or praise to the flesh and not to God? Or do I really have more faith in my lawyer instead of asking Jesus to be my chief lawyer and to work through my lawyer? 1 Timothy 6:20-21 says, "Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babbling and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge. By professing it some have strayed concerning the faith" We need to keep examining ourselves and show the Lord that we are not going to allow the wall of hindrance to get in the way of the blessings for which we faithfully pray...

Faith without works is Dead!

Pedro Alvarez Jr.
Forrest County Jail

Easter Eggs

The Legend goes...There once was an old couple who lived on a farm just outside of the city of Jerusalem and had so many eggs from all their happy hens, they would go into the city to sell them. One day, they went into the city with a basket full of eggs covered only by a white cloth. As he walked through the streets of the city, he saw a great crowd gathering. They were strangely quiet. The old man pushed his way through the crowd to see what was happening. The Roman soldiers were leading three people out of the city walls to be crucified. They were carrying the crosses they would later hang from, when one of them stumbled. The old man stepped out from the crowd and caught the cross before the man fell, and together they carried the heavy wood. The old man stayed there all day, until the men were taken down off their crosses to be buried. As he went back towards the city gate, he remembered his eggs. He was sure they would be gone, but traced his steps back to where he'd sat his basket down. When he saw the basket, it hadn't been touched, and when he removed the white cloth, the basket was full of eggs covered in beautiful colors and designs. When the old man told this story, people began to color eggs at Easter time, and still do today.

BEARING ONE ANOTHER'S BURDENS

In the years that I have been writing columns for the Hattiesburg American, I have tried hard not to be too "preachy". It's not that I object to preaching. I love to preach and I did that for 50 years Sunday after Sunday in five churches in KY, TN, and MS. Very occasionally I still get to do that. But I never felt like the opinion page in the paper was the proper place to do much preaching. Maybe, however, this column is an exception to that general rule. Anyway, here goes!

One of many "favorite verses" for me is Paul's word in Galatians 6:4: "Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." What a loaded verse that is! In my understanding, it is not about you picking up my burden so I don't have to carry it anymore, or about me picking up your burden so you don't have to carry it anymore. Rather it is about sharing each other's burdens, so we don't have to bear them alone.

As I was writing the above paragraph, a memory of a specific event came to mind that I think demonstrates beautifully the point the apostle is making. On November 9, 1998, I got a call from my brother in Louisville, KY, telling me that my twin sister and her husband had just been in a terrible wreck while on vacation in Missouri. She was pronounced dead at the scene of the accident and her husband lived a few hours, dying later that day. My brother, who was still in deep grief from the loss of his daughter less than two months earlier, could hardly talk as he gave me the news. We shared one another's grief that day.

As soon as I hung up the phone, I ran across the hall to the office of our Associate Minister, Tom Porter, and blurted out what had happened. I knew that Tom would be there for me. Years earlier, he had lost his twin brother and his mother and dad in a tragic accident, and nobody on earth could understand better the shock I had just experienced. (Some of you know both Tom and me. He's a big guy; I'm a little guy.) And here's what I remember about what Tom did: I don't believe he said a word; he just grabbed me and held me and cried with me. He knew that he could not take away my grief, but that I needed somebody to bear it with me.

Years ago I heard a friend call this "one-anothering". My spell checker says that is not a real word, but it is for me. Scripture teaches us to love one another, pray for one another, and bear one another's burdens.

-Dick Allison
University Baptist Church

GOSPEL GAMES

"puzzle of parables"



Instructions

To uncover the hidden image you have to look up the parables below. Each parable and location is represented by a dot. Each dot is a letter or a number and each parable and location belongs to a dot. Not every dot will connect to another dot but every dot has a parable, a location, and or both. I encourage you to find 3 parables a day and in two weeks you will have learned all of Jesus' parables and solved the puzzle. Take your Time and Good Luck!

Parables and Location

A. The Seed/LK. 13:19	W. MK 4:20/ the lamp
B. The Sower/The lost coin/Matt. 25:14-30	X. The good shepherd/Matt. 13:52
C. Matt. 24:32/the lost sheep/three leaves	Y. Mustard Seed/Jn. 10:1-16
D. Matt. 25:1-12/ the marriage/ LK 12:36-38	Z. Matt. 24:45-51/Matt. 21:28
E. The wicked wine growers/Matt. 18:23-35	1. The protocol son/LK 15:8-9/LK 5:37
F. The two debtors/MK. 13:34/man on journey	2. Good Samaritan/ LK 10:30-37
G. The leaven/the wine bottles	3. Character of two slaves/ Matt. 21:33-43
H. The Pharisee and tax gather/ the two masters	4. LK 16:1-9/ the unjust steward
I. The two sons/MK. 4:21/Matt. 9:16	5. LK 14:31/ King going to war
J. The hidden treasure/LK 5:36/Matt. 5:25	6. Unclean Spirit/LK 11:24-26
K. The fig tree/LK 14:28-30/the vine and branches	7. The patched garment
L. LK 15:4-7/narrow gate/slave duty	8. LK 17:7-10/the 10 virgins
M. Matt. 7:24-27	9. LK 6:47-49
N. The pearl of great value/Matt. 13:45-46	10. LK 18:10-14
O. Two insolvent debtors/LK 7:41	11. LK 13:6-9/the barren fig tree
P. Matt. 9:17/Matt. 5:15	12. Jn. 15:1-6/ speak in neighbors eye/MK 4:3-8
Q. The tower/Matt. 7:14/the watching slave	13. Matt. 11:16-19/ children at the marketplace
R. householder/labors in vineyard/Matt. 20:1-16	14. the rich man's meditation/LK 12:16-21
S. the net/Matt. 7:1-6/LK 11:5-8	15. The opponent/Matt. 13:44
T. LK 8:16/LK 15:11-32	16. LK 10:2
U. the talents/ Matt. 13: 47-48	17. The importunate window/LK 18:2-5
V. LK 5:34-35/MK 12:1-9	18. The tares/Matt. 13:24-30

Continue on back

Hidden Verse

Now that you have uncovered the hidden image you are now ready to uncover the hidden verse that goes along with the hidden image. To find the hidden verse you have to count all the dots in the image that are not connected to another dot, which serves "no symbolic purpose in the image". Take that number and put it in the blanks below and this will lead you to the hidden verse.

_____ x 1 = _____ (Book in NT)
_____ - 6 = _____ (Chapter)
_____ + 11 = _____ (Verse)

Faith Facts

Now that you have uncovered the hidden verse you are now ready to fill in the blanks below. From what book in the bible does the hidden verse come from? The answer goes in the blanks below.

_____ means "Yahweh Saves". _____ was an eighth-century prophet who ministered primarily to the Southern Kingdom of Judah, although he was interested in the affairs of the Northern Kingdom of Israel during its demise and fall around 722 B.C. _____ the prophet ministered under the Judahite Kings of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah. The beginning nor the end of _____ prophesy can be discerned with certainty. The book of _____ stands at the head of prophetic books both in order of the English canon and the Hebrew canon. The book of _____ illustrates the need for faith in God. Through his faithfulness in God _____ was empowered by Gods spirit. _____ is one of the most prolific announcers of the coming Messiah in the bible. For this reason _____ has sometimes been called "the fifth Evangelist", along with Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. It is possible to organize the elaborate description of the coming Messiah Jesus Christ given by _____ in three Sections "as King" "as Servant" and "as Anointed one". My favorite has to be _____ 53:1-12 which illustrates the magnificent Servant of the Lord and the gracious gift of atonement for our sins, I hope you all have a Happy Easter filled with faith, family and fun. God Bless.

Song of the month:

With Love in Christ

Path of Revelation, "Vain"

Kingdom Kid

Some suggested topics for the Newsletter

Thank you for the continued letters, thoughts, and poems you send to us each month. We want to know more about who you all are. Story seems to be one of the best ways to get to know who someone really is and so we encourage you all to look at some of these suggested topics to see if any inspiration comes as we seek community with one another. Please know that these are not to restrict your writing; you are certainly welcome to choose to write on another topic or in another form. They are simply some ideas as all writers need somewhere to start. Thank you for your continued contributions to this piece and happy writing!

- Choose a story or a character from the Bible and tell us how it speaks to your life or how you connect to it.
- Make up a short story
- Tell us about a character you've read in a book or watched in a movie that inspires you and why.
- Tell us your favorite song. What is it about this song that draws you to it?
- Write a song or send in a piece of original artwork.