

The Good News

Newsletter - September 2018

A publication of University Baptist Church, Hattiesburg, MS

The purpose of University Baptist Church is, through guidance of 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, UBC is committed to its core values of being inclusive, inquisitive, and community minded.

“There is a God” – Romans 1:20

A story

Church was a constant in this young man's life and every Sunday he would enjoy putting on his best clothes and driving down the old country road to the big house with the long rows of people. It wouldn't hurt that after church he had the opportunity to run around with all the other kids and eat homemade ice cream some of the church members made.

One day though, tragedy struck and both of his parents were killed while he slept peacefully in his bed. He awoke to a gruesome murder and eventually ended up in a foster home as there were no other relatives who could claim him.

He grew up resentful of what had happened to his parents and at the abuse (verbal and physical) that happened from one foster home to another.

Finally at the age of eighteen, he enlisted in the army and headed a steady career. He met a young lady and fell in love with her. She tried many times to get him to go to church but he wanted no dealings with God. He eventually relented and went a few times but he lacked a saving faith.

They were married and expecting their first child when tragedy struck again and his wife passed away giving birth to a baby boy.

Many years later the old man lay ill in bed and his grown son came over to check on him. He had become a wicked old man who did not believe in God. Over his bed he had written, “God is nowhere,” and that was a result of the tragedy in his life. Along with his son was his little granddaughter who walked into the bedroom to see him. She was just learning to read so he asked her to read what was written over the bed. At the same time, his son had put on another record on the record player—it was a recording of war stories from General George Patton.

Slowly his granddaughter began and she read what was this: “God...is...now...here.”

“God is now here!” the old man trembled.

Suddenly the record on the player scratched and readily kept saying, “I have the victory—urrh—I have the victory.” (Psalm 98: 1-2)

For the first time he realized that there is a God. He cried and cried and shouted that he believed in God. (Deut. 30:2,6; Jer. 31:19)

The Lord does work in mysterious ways— (Rom 8:25;9:22-24)

-Justin U.

There is a God

*Revealed as the Creator and Designer
of all creation
Yet rejected and not responded to for
His divine revelation*

*The fool hath said in his heart, "There
is not God" - (Ps. 14:1)
The wise hath said, "Hear me when
I call, O God" - (Ps.4:1)*

*The King doth shine in His beauty
without a veil
Lord, show me Thy feet that
I may avail*

*There is nothing He does not know
and nothing He cannot do
Our wonderful God bring the many
miles apart into view*

*He gave to the blind their
sight
Walking or sleeping, Thy presence is
Thy guiding light*

*A living, bright, and heavenly
Reality
God ever-blest, we do humbly
bow before Thee*

--Justin U.--

What is the Good News?

Dear Friends,

I hope that this Good News Newsletter has found all of you well in all respects and growing in the love of God daily.

Grace to you and peace . . .

As some of you know I have spent some time back at the Forrest Co. Jail for another round of resentencing. It is my sincere hope that as you read this I will no longer be a Death Row prisoner and will be one step closer to Seminary School and another step closer to going home to my family and loved ones. God is great!

While I could certainly write volumes on the love and greatness of God, my point today is to reflect on the name of this newsletter and Jesus' command in Mark, His 'Great Commission', to, "Go into all the world and proclaim the gospel to the whole creation. Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned" (Mark 16:15-16) We are commanded to proclaim the gospel, the Good News, of Jesus Christ.

I have been ministering to a rotating group of seven men every day now for well over a month. With each new arrival I am saddened to discover that no one knows what the Gospel actually is. Since discovering this, I have been wondering how many Christians there are out there who can't tell another person what the Gospel actually is. How can a person fulfill the Great Commission if they have little or no idea what it is they are to proclaim? Paul sums this up perfectly in Romans 10:13-15, 17. "For everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved. How then will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in Him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone to proclaim? And are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news (gospel)!" So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ"

Jesus clearly sends us to proclaim the gospel so lets discover the simplicity of the Word that saves.

One of the best places to see the gospel simply preached, and the saving results of doing it, can be found in Acts 10. In verses 34-48 Peter preaches the gospel and the Holy Spirit fills the hearers. (34 So Peter opened his mouth and said: "Truly I understand that God shows no partiality, 35 but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him. 36 As for the word that he sent to Israel, preaching good news of peace through Jesus Christ (he is Lord of all), 37 you yourselves know what happened throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee after the baptism that John proclaimed: 38 how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and with power. He went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him. 39 And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, 40 but God raised him on the third day and made him to appear, 41 not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. 42 And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. 43 To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name." 44 While Peter was still saying

these things, the Holy Spirit fell on all who heard the word. 45 And the believers from among the circumcised who had come with Peter were amazed, because the gift of the Holy Spirit was poured out even on the Gentiles. 46 For they were hearing them speaking in tongues and extolling God. Then Peter declared, 47 “Can anyone withhold water for baptizing these people, who have received the Holy Spirit just as we have?” 48 And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Then they asked him to remain for some days.)

Paul lays out his gospel message in 1st Corinthians 15:1-8. It is just like Peters and just like ours should be. (Now I would remind you, brothers, of the gospel I preached to you, which you received, in which you stand, 2 and by which you are being saved, if you hold fast to the word I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.

3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brothers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 8 Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me.)

Now we should have a good understanding of the scriptures that point to, and back up our message. We should proclaim salvation in Jesus alone and be prepared to give a defense from scripture of what we believe and proclaim (1st Peter 3:15) And lets never forget Peter's Holy Spirit inspired words in Acts 4:12. “And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other Name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

Jesus saves and it is our job to tell the world. Are you doing your job?

Have a great month and remember to pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest, to send out laborers into His harvest, because the harvest of souls is plentiful, but the laborers are few. (Luke 10:2)

Peace is only in Jesus,

R.Gillett

Serenity (written in May 2018)

“You keep track of all my sorrows. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have collected all my tears in Your bottle. You have recorded each one in your book” (Psalm 56:8).

Suffering is by all means unpleasant. And if you, or a loved one, are currently enduring some form of suffering, whether physical, psychological, financial or otherwise, my heart goes out to you. Unexpected cancer, severe depression, natural disasters, or bankruptcy, are very real problems and only you know how you feel about them. Never allow anyone to chump off your problems as irrelevant or “no big deal,” but understand that you do not have to perpetuate the pain throughout your suffering. You can allow that which you cannot control to control you, or you can resignedly accept what you cannot change and control the things which you can.

The terminal cancer patient cannot control the fact of their diagnosis or that they have just so long to live - but they can control how they live out the rest of their time. The condemned man on Death Row cannot alter the fact of his incarceration or the impending execution - but it is his choice to bitterly complain until his death or use his time as productively as possible. (We have been on lockdown for over six weeks for something we did not do - the result is no canteen, no going outside, and showers reduced to three times a week, in the Mississippi Delta, in May with heat indexes in the upper 90s and no air conditioning. As well, we have no lights in our cells for the past three days making reading and writing all the more difficult. But the work must go on, To quote Nehemiah 6:3, “Why should this good work stop?” Because of a power outage? Because of a lockdown? Because of my feelings? No, the work of the Lord takes precedence over my feelings. It must! Or else I haven’t truly put Him first.

So often I see people simply waiting for the suffering to end - but rarely does it just “end.” Their thumbs get sore from excessive twiddling, and their hearts grow bitter as time moves on and, in their minds, “the universe forgets about them.” Incarcerated individuals with, say a two year sentence, repeat incessantly, “Once I get out, I’ll do XYZ,” But they won’t. They will not do XYZ, because they refuse to do what is in their power right now. There is always an excuse. Picture someone who wants to be a writer “when they get out,” but won’t write until they get out. Or the most common, “When I get out, I will exercise and stay in shape.” The rationale is that they will have access to equipment not available in prison. Here is the problem: The equipment may change, but the heart has not.

Friend there is much in the world that we cannot change. And there will never be a more perfect time for you to be who you want to be - or more importantly, who God made you to be - than right now. Remember: you cannot build a reputation on what you are “going to do.” Let us focus on what we can control, and remember that we are not alone. Our Lord is with us “to the end of the age,” (Matthew 28:20). And keep in mind that “the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).

I know it’s hard. Actually, it’s impossible without the power of Jesus. So keep your focus on God and you will get through this. Let Him carry your burdens. Let Him collect your tears. And then allow Him to carry you on eagles’ wings.
Amen!

-Matt Wilbanks

Remembering Chris

I've been sitting here thinking, and thinking, and I'm still not coming up with something. I think I might have writers block. I bet you're thinking, hmm, how in the world did she get that? Well, let me tell you! It was a dark and stormy night (not really, but don't all the best stories start that way?) Well, let's get to it. It's a hot, humid, sunny day in Louisville, Ky. There, that's better. I finished work early, and was going to see my sister in the hospital. When I got there, she was wanting something to drink, and the drs wouldn't let her have anything yet. (she had just gotten out of surgery) Sitting there and talking to her, telling her all the tall tales of the day, watching the sun shining in on her hair and just spending time with her, I've gotta say was pretty nice. See, my sister, Chris and I have been pretty much the dynamic duo since sometime in the 70's. Growing up together, being mad at each other, getting in trouble and blaming it on the other, that's just what sisters do. I know the things that make her laugh, and I know how to get her going when she just doesn't want to. She has been battling stage 4 colon cancer for four years now. Let me tell you, there were days when that woman didn't want to move an inch. I think it actually got to the point where I had to threaten to kick her dog if she didn't get it in gear and do what she was supposed to. (I wouldn't kick her dog, so calm down.) Every day, a little harder and a little more pushing. The Lord leading her and me pushing from behind, she got to her appointments on time. (Philippians 4:13) We would pray together and talk together, and she would always ask me if I was worried. For some reason, she knew that if I were worried, then things were really bad, but if I wasn't, it was okay. So I slapped on that straight face and acted like nothing was going on. Day after day. Every day she would check, are you worried? I would just blow it off, and say no woman leave me alone. I'll let you know if I ever get worried. With that, she would get dressed and go about her day.

My sister came to the Lord about three years ago. She was scared, and honestly didn't know where to turn. She did the right thing. She called out to the Lord to save her, to wash away those horrible sins, and to help her. He did just that. Isaiah 41:10. She knew she wasn't alone. She did. Even at the darkest times, we would pray together. The Lord watching over the two of us. Slowly, she started getting worse. New meds here, surgery there, shots here, scans there. It seemed like something new every day. She didn't know it, but she is so much stronger than she ever even knew.

Chris passed away on August 11th, and I wasn't there with her. I wasn't there. The last thing she asked me before they took her to surgery was if I was worried, and I said no. Not a bit. She asked me if I would be there when she woke up, and I said of course. She didn't wake up from her surgery. I never got to say goodbye to my sister. I feel like a piece of me died with her. She taught me so many things and helped to mold me into the person that I am today. With all that said, you know what? Chris is with the Lord right now, and she is in a way better place than I am. So I'm not going to be sad, I'm not going to cry anymore, or blame myself for not being there. Chris loves me, and the Lord loves us both. Why would I ever want her to be back here? Wouldn't that be like really selfish of me? She's not in pain anymore. She's resting at the feet of Jesus, and for that I say Thank You Lord. Thank You Lord for taking her home and getting her out of this cold hard world. I love you Lord with all my heart, and all my soul, and I lift my eyes

to you and I say thank You. You know exactly what I need and when I need it. Please give Chris a kiss for me and let her know that I'll be there with you both soon. 2 Peter 3:8-9.

Dear Heavenly Father,

Please come into my heart and help to ease the pain. I know that it's your will be done, and I place this hurt fully in your hands. Lord, I miss my sister, and I love her so much, but I know that You have plans for each of us, and I know that she is with you. I know the cancer is gone, and there is no more pain. Help me God, please, because I can't do it without you. Lift my heart and my eyes only to you Lord. Help me to see the joy that she left here on this earth and help me to see Your Light and Your love all around us. Take my tears Lord, and help me to cast aside this selfish heart. Please watch over her children and grandchildren, and help them to see her love for You. You are the Way, You are the Truth, and You are the Light (John 14:6) and I will follow you Lord. Now and always. In the name of Jesus, I pray. - Amen!

I love you Chris now and always.

Christine Clark

October 17th, 1967 – August 11th, 2018

May she rest in peace.

