

Choosing That Which is Better

Written on: May 31, 2021

Article by: Walter Hart

Jesus' ministry was a busy time for him. The crowds were often great. There were always people wanting to see him. And it seems that after a while that wherever he went, there were those present who wanted to trap him in some fault — to find some basis for criticizing and dishonouring Him. With such circumstances, it was difficult to relax and ever feel really “at home.”

There was one place, however, where Jesus seemed to be able to relax, to be at home and simply to enjoy the companionship of like minds. This was in the village of Bethany, on the eastern slope of the Mount of Olives, less than two miles from Jerusalem. Here was the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus -- a place of loving hospitality, calm waters in stormy seas, a haven in troubled times. It was here that Jesus spent the nights of the last week of His earthly life, walking back and forth to Jerusalem each day to teach.

But for our consideration today we are drawn to another time that Jesus visited Bethany, a time when there was a conflict between the two sisters, and to the resulting comment that Jesus made. This incident contains a lesson so needed in our day that we need to return and consider it periodically.

Luke 10:38-42a

Jesus visits Mary and Martha. “Martha welcomed him into her home” (38) — “opened her home to him (NIV). Martha seems to have been properly the mistress of the house. She was a hospitable woman and through this gift she was a blessing in Jesus' life. Her willingness to open her home, to have guests, to show love in this way, must have meant much not only to Jesus but also to others.

“Mary...sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying” (39). It was the posture of learners at the time to sit at the feet of their teacher. Mary seems to have been a thoughtful, reflective person, prone to take time away from the hustle and bustle to think, just to visit and enjoy the company. Martha, on the other hand, seems to have been one of those people who always tend to be busy with her hands, and on her feet.

These personality traits are still very much evident in our world. Neither is bad, but both need to be careful of extremes. People like Mary have a tendency sometimes to not be as zealous about looking after things physical as they should be, neglecting physical tasks in favour of a book, a walk, or some reflection. People like Martha can get so

wound up in activity that they fail to take the needed time to read, to think, to pray, and just to enjoy being with others. And, as this incident shows, these two types of people must take care to avoid unnecessary clashes!

In this case, “Martha was distracted by her many tasks...”(40). “Distracted” = “drawn in many directions” (Ash). “by her many tasks” — “by all the preparations that had to be made” (NIV). We all know what Martha was doing. She was preparing an elaborate meal. She was showing her love for Jesus by putting on a real spread.

So “she came to him and asked, ‘Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to help me’”(40). In Martha’s frenzy of preparation, and perhaps in her frustration at something not going right, she complains to Jesus about Mary, and brings Jesus into the conflict between the sisters. In her self-pity her words are sharp. She rebukes Jesus and Mary, and she destroys the very purpose of Jesus’ visit (relaxation and friendship).

Jesus replied (41,42). “Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things...(“You are fretting and fussing about so many things” NEB)...”there is need of only one thing” — or, in some manuscripts: “few things are necessary, or only one.” Jesus would have been pleased with a simpler meal and less conflict and complaining. I am sure Jesus enjoyed food and would appreciate what would be served, but the thing He really needed and appreciated was the quiet companionship of like minds. The meal was of lesser importance.

“Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her.” Some things are good, but others are better. Large meals are good, and some food is necessary, but it must always be remembered that the physical is less important than the spiritual. It would be better to have a simpler meal, with time for sharing and teaching, than an elaborate meal with no time for spiritual matters.

There are, of course, some lessons in this incident for today. For one thing, Martha’s problem is all too familiar to us. How many of us often seem to be “worried and distracted by many things”? How much “fretting and fussing” seem to be going on? Why is this? Is it necessary? Look at Martha. What led to her frustrations? Who told her that so much had to be done? Who set her work schedule? Who got her in this “wound up” state, anyway? You know the answer! Wasn’t it really her own fault and no one else’s? Isn’t that the way it usually is with us? When we get “up tight”, frustrated, overwhelmed, shouldn’t we first of all take a look at ourselves — our goals, priorities, our control of our lives — before we start blaming other people?

If we aren’t careful we may find ourselves doing what the chickens did after my mother wrung their necks — threshing and flailing, feathers and blood and dust flying, no head, no thought, no direction. We don’t want to find ourselves flailing about in a frenzy of activity that is no more meaningful or hopeful than that of a chicken with its head wrung off! So couples grow apart, marriages disintegrate, as husband and wife rush about in a frenzy of different directions and the children grow up without proper

parental attention, the parents too busy providing “many things” to spend time with them, or when they are together the parents are anxious and troubled about many things and certainly no joy to be with. | wonder how often it would be better that there be “a few things” or “one thing” and more togetherness with less “foam and fury”!

We need to continually remind ourselves that some things are more important than others. There were two things (two good things) at Bethany that day — physical food and the opportunity for spiritual and emotional develop and the cultivation of friendship. Mary chose -she made a deliberate choice—and Jesus affirmed that she had chosen “the better part.”

We need to take stock of our priorities, to take time to think, to study, to meditates, to ask ourselves questions about life, and to consider the relationships with those near to us. Where are we headed as an individual, as a family? Why are we doing what we are doing? What things, what activities, are involved in your life? In your family’s life? List them. Now rank them in importance. How do your priorities stack up? Are you being true to those values you know are the highest — the most important.

Beware — the immediate, the urgent, will tend to push out the important! Jesus warned of the danger of missing the really important matters of life — “What good will it do a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Matt. 16:26)

When our life seems overcrowded, or when we are confused as to which way to go — the one thing we want to grasp firmly, the one thing it is essential to hold onto, is our relationship with God, our relationship with God’s people, our devotion to worship and Bible study and Christian fellowship. Sadly, many people seem to drop these things first — yet these are the very things that will help us keep our priorities straight and make the right decisions as to the way to go. We must not make the mistake of considering the financial, the career, the material, and the physical, but neglecting “the better part” — the moral and spiritual and relational.

May the Lord help us, as we check our priorities and seek to put direction and purpose in our lives, to, like Mary, choose that which is better — that which is best!

Weyburn, Sask.

My Hope is Built On Nothing Less

Written on: May 31, 2021

Article by: Kevin Cleary

What is it that you are hoping for? Perhaps a promotion at work, a return to school, an upturn in business or something as simple as a date for a vaccine? It has been too long since we have seen our families and for too long I have been preaching in an empty room. We long to be together again to build each other up. For when emergency measures take on a feeling of permanence, they deprive us of what God intends for the church and the fellowship that we all long for.

Hope in an earthly sense is a positive expectation of coming circumstances or events. As human beings, we thrive on hope. We need hope and yet in this life we often find ourselves in situations that look and feel hopeless.

What then can we do to maintain our hope in Christ, when at the best of times, the world discourages it?

The Bible specifically says that certain things will strengthen our hope: things like:

- Studying Scripture,
- Facilitating the work of God in our lives
- Recognizing the presence of God in our lives
- And enduring trials.

Lets take a look at each of these to see what we can do to strengthen our hope in these troublesome times.

Studying Scripture:

Rom 15:4 For whatever was written in former days was written for our instruction, that through endurance and *through the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*

We don't have to look very into scripture to find God's people in desperate straits. They were at times completely hopeless , seemingly out of options and with no clear way of escape. In their senior years, the time was long past for Abraham and Sarah to hope for a child. The descendants of Jacob had no hope of freeing themselves from slavery in Egypt. Without God's help, Gideon



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had no hope of defeating the Midianites. And in Hezekiah's day when Jerusalem was besieged by the armies of Sennacherib, the people of that city lost hope. The unfaithful nation of Judah could not hope to escape Babylonian exile nor expect one day to return from captivity. In each of these cases, and left to their devices, God's people had no hope. Yet in each and every situation, it was God who provided hope. That was was impossible for men was possible for God and for those who trusted in Him.

Today the promises of God still offer hope and his words are as secure as ever. Peter shed light on this in his second epistle when he wrote:

"For when he received honour and glory from God the Father, and the voice was borne to him by the Majestic Glory, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased," we ourselves

heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain. And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit". II Pet 1:17-21

True Biblical 'hope' is only found in things which are absolutely certain. Peter makes it clear that it is the lamp of God's word which gives us that certainty. It reminds us, especially in our darkest moments, that God is always with us and that his promises are secure. This is what the song writer had in mind when he wrote "Give me the Bible when my heart is broken, When sin and grief have filled my soul with fear; Give me the precious words by Jesus spoken, Hold up faiths lamp to show my Saviour near."



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The redemptive work of God in History especially through Christ:

"O you hope of Israel, its saviour in time of trouble. Jeremiah further writes in Lamentation 3:23-24 "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. "The Lord is my portion," says my soul, "therefore I will hope in him."” Jeremiah 14:8

Once again let me point out that hope is empty when it's placed in that which is uncertain. Hope in God is always sure because his Love never ceases.

Jeremiah wrote these words as Jerusalem lay in ruin, it's wisest and best were taken captive and those who remained were scattered. He witnessed the destruction of the city and suffered the loss of both family and friends. On the face of it, it might have seemed that God was not with him and was perhaps even against him. Yet God had revealed to him that this was not so. God's assurance enabled him to see through the pain and grief and allowed him to express with confidence that "the steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end"

As a *man* of God, Jeremiah *knew* God. He knew that God does not forsake his people. Even when God punishes his people, He is the also the one who keeps hope alive. He keeps the door open so that his people might return from the darkness of their sin to the light of God's ways.

As we consider God's great love and mercy we remember that Peter wrote in I Peter 1:3

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," and then in verse 21 "who through him are believers in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God."

If it was hard for Jeremiah to trust God while standing in the ruins of Jerusalem, imagine how hard it was for the followers of Jesus to hope in him whom they saw arrested, tried and crucified. Even Thomas who had previously demonstrated such great faith, saying "let us go and die with him", could not later believe that the cross was God's plan.

It is one thing to question our hope at those times when we fail God. The remedy is for us to return to God. But when it seems that God has failed, to whom can God turn for hope? When Jesus died on the cross, and it seemed that God had failed, he actually had not. Christ rose victorious over death having already conquered sin. Once Thomas understood this, his hope came alive again.

What we are saying then is that we ought always place our Hope in our Heavenly Father. We do this, knowing that Satan will tempt us to to place our hope in something or someone else. So it was with ancient Israel who from time to time put it's hope military force and political alliances.

Just like them, we are reminded not to make the things of this world, the things in which we hope. Things like our jobs, our economy, our political party or it's leaders. affiliation. Salvation is not available through the ballot box. There is no cause as great or outcome as noble as the salvation of the world. If we spend our time on the priorities of our society, we forfeit that time to the cause of Christ. Saving the whales, preserving ice bergs for polar bears and lowering our carbon footprint all pale by comparison.

We live in a fallen world which desperately needs salvation. Time is of the essence as our world turns, and each one of us has only so much of it. One day time will run out, and before it does, it will likely run out for us. What then will we have contributed to God's efforts to spread the gospel? God will never disappoint anyone who puts their hope and trust in Him...for "there is salvation in no one else" Acts 4:12.

The Presence of God in our lives

God lives within each of us in the person of his Holy Spirit . This brings us into fellowship with Christ.

...“and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.” Rom 5:5

Often we continue to see ourselves as weak, foolish and sinful, long after God has forgiven our sins and strengthened us in our inner man through His Spirit. We remember our former lives and live in their shadow. But Jesus wants us to understand who we have become once united with Him.

For that reason, when writing to Christians who were afraid and facing persecution, the apostle Peter wanted them to know that “you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house to be a Holy priesthood to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. You who think you are nothing God dwells in you and in that you can find great hope”.

Paul echoed that thought when he wrote: “May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that by the power of the Holy Spirit you may abound in hope. Romans 15:13

And again in Col 1:27 “To them God chose to make known how great among the Gentiles are the riches of the glory of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

The presence of the Spirit of Christ in our lives is first proof that we have been made perfect as a result of God’s plan. We have been forgiven, we are sanctified and God dwells within. Our hope then is well placed. We trust that the fellowship into which God has brought us with Himself is one that He will cause to endure into eternity.

Endurance in Trials

Rom 5:3-4 “Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope.”

Like anything that we need to learn, we learn hope by practising our faith. Doing so in good times gets us ready for difficult ones. As the apostle Paul wrote in Rom 12:1-2 ...“Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.”

Our hope is strengthened when we read about the faithfulness of God toward his people Israel. It gives us reason to believe that God is also at work in our lives, though it is more easily seen in hindsight. In one such moment, the apostle Paul wrote that God was the one who had made

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him adequate to meet all of the ministry challenges in his life. He had learned to trust God in all circumstances as God had come through for him without fail. (Phil 4:11b-13)

When I am doing rope stuff I know the rope will hold and that my equipment will do what it's meant to do because I have done it before. In the same way we learn to trust God by taking those first steps of faith and learning that God can carry us through.

James 1:2-4 says a very similar thing "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."

Certain difficult and trying events in our lives are called trials for a reason. They put us to the test for the purpose of strengthening us and helping us to grow. One success leads to another, so that even when the trials get harder, overcoming them does not.

These are difficult times. They demand our time, our energy, our finances, and emotions. How tempting it is to look for help in all the wrong places. Our only hope is the hope that comes *from* God and is placed *in* God. If you have never done that, I urge you to repent and to be baptized for the forgiveness of sins and then you will learn what real hope is.

I pray that the world will come to a knowledge of God and put their hope in Him. And I pray for those of us who have already done so. That we might remain faithful to the end, persisting in hardship, enduring in hope, firm in our faith until faith becomes sight. This we can do with help of God's Spirit and the guidance of God's word. Our hope comes from above and it will endure.

Meaford

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Falling As a Result of Pride

Written on: May 31, 2021

Article by: Jamie Azzoparde

A story is told of a preacher who had resigned from his work with a certain congregation. After resigning, he was approached by an endearing older sister from that church who was saddened by his decision. This sister wept over the preacher's decision to leave and commented "Things will never be the same without you." The preacher tried to console her and responded, "Don't worry, I'm confident that God will provide a new preacher, one even better than me." Continuing to sob and wiping her tears she replied, "That's what the last three preachers said, but they just keep getting worse."

A story like this might remind us of an embarrassing memory of our own. These often arise as a result of pride. It is easy to overlook when our own pride surfaces and in particular through conversation. When someone disagrees with us or offers up an opinion other than the one we hold, our natural reaction is to defend ourselves and this often stems from pride. No one wants to appear wrong and some people will argue foolishly to defend their position – even when it's wrong. Presenting ourselves as right seems more important than looking to be weak, foolish, or poorly informed.

Pride may also appear in other more subtle ways. Rather than admitting when our decisions or actions were wrong, we might try to excuse ourselves by shifting blame. We have a few words for this, "Saving face". This kind of choice goes all the way back to the beginning. When called to account for eating the forbidden fruit, Adam claimed that it wasn't his fault. He pointed to Eve and in doing so he also implied that God himself was at fault – Genesis 3:12 "The man replied, "The woman *you* gave to be with me—*she* gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate."

And then, paying it forward, Eve in turn blamed the serpent – Genesis 3:13 "And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

We need to be on guard and aware of the way that pride can take over. In his book "The Truth About Us", Brant Hansen makes the following assessment:

"93% of us genuinely believe we're above average drivers. Perhaps you've seen studies that show we also think we're smarter than average. And we're friendlier too. Plus we're more ambitious than average. You might think with all of this awesomeness, we might have an ego problem, but good news: we also rate ourselves as more modest than others! So, yes, we're better at everything than everybody, but at least we're humble about it!"

I can't emphasize enough how alert we must be in watching that pride does not take center stage in our lives. Not only do we need to be willing to admit when we are wrong, but we ought also to act with humility when we are proven to be right.

Excerpt from <https://gospelherald.org> June, 2021 issue

There are many sayings that warn, of the pitfalls of pride. Perhaps you're familiar with one that goes something like this: "Once you are at the top, the only way left to go is down".

Of course, the greatest warnings that we have come from God and are found in scripture. In Proverbs 6:16-17 pride appears at the top of a list of seven things that are detestable to God. The writer identifies them as – "arrogant eyes" or a "proud look". Both Peter and James quote Proverbs 3:34, that: "God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble." (1 Peter 5:5; James 4:6). And Jesus explicitly warned that the proud will be humbled – Matt 23:12 "Whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted."

We would do well to remember the humility of Christ as Paul reminds us in Phil 2:5-11. Jesus chose to be born in poverty, raised in obscurity, and to serve others in humility. His humility included death on the cross, because that was the only choice leading to the salvation of the world. As those who have been saved, He calls us to follow His example, promising that those who have chosen to be *last* in this life will be *first* in the life to come.

May God help us recognize when pride tries to take over and may He help us to live humbly instead. It was humility that empowered Jesus to save the world. May God's work in us and through us be perfected in a humility like His.

Waterloo ON

1 Brant Hansen "The Truth About US" (Grand Rapids: Baker Books 2020) pg.11

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A Promise of God's Protection

Written on: May 31, 2021

Article by: Harold Bruggen

Darkness can be frightening for it often hides dangers that we cannot see. Life itself is filled with dangers both seen and unseen, all of which gives rise to fear.

The author of Psalm 91 knew all about these dangers and how to face them with God's protection. He wrote: "Do not be afraid of the terrors of the night, nor the arrow that flies in the day. Do not dread the disease that stalks in darkness, nor the disaster that strikes at midday." (NLT)

There have always been "terrors of the night" that threaten our lives with unseen dangers that are still quite fatal. They were like the arrows that flew by day, and though nearly invisible, could kill you just as dead. From out of nowhere, disease and disaster may overtake and overcome, leaving no place to hide. Except of course, within the safety and protection of the Lord.

The New Testament borrowed the battle imagery of fiery arrows to warn us that Satan is waging spiritual warfare against us – with deadly intent. He is not just trying to weaken or discourage. He intends to kill our faith and destroy our hope. He attacks our faith with the fear of death. He entices us to sin with impure thoughts. With another of his arrows he stirs the fires of hate to destroy families and divide the church. He takes advantage of any weakness in our spiritual armour, relentlessly seeking to destroy.

The good news is that God promises to protect us *from* those arrows. We have "... the shield of faith to stop the fiery arrows of the devil." (Ephesians 6:16 NLT) . God is with us both day and night.

Psalm 91:7 goes on to say, "Though a thousand fall at your side, though ten thousand are dying around you, these evils will not touch you." (NLT)

While God promises protection, He does not spare us the difficulties and sorrows of life. Jesus promised that faith in Him and faithfulness to Him would bring it's own set of persecutions and hardships. Believers in Jesus do not become bulletproof to danger or immune to misfortune. God protects us, by seeing us safely through our trials. And it is perhaps in the very midst of those trials that we become most aware of his presence.

As David said "Even when I walk through the darkest valley, I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me." (Psalm 23:4 NLT)

When we respond to God in faith he will most certainly see us through.

Port Colborne, ON

Trials, Temptations and God

Written on: June 8, 2021

Article by: Dave Knutson

Writing to people in troublesome times, the Lord's brother James called on his readers to:

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have *its* perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

It seems odd at first to suggest that for each and every trial there is a corresponding reason for joy. This would imply that as trials increase, so do occasions for joy. Our first instinct is certainly not to choose the more difficult path or voluntarily place ourselves in harm's way. James is of course writing from a distinctly Christian point of view. He had counted the cost of faith in Jesus and obedience to God. He had experienced the consequences of such in his own life. He knew that there was no way around them. Yet he also knew that the Lord would see him safely through.

He was using the word 'joy' in the same way that the book of Hebrews does in 12:2 where the writer says of Jesus: ...who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Jesus did not enjoy persecution during his ministry or his death upon the cross. The 'joy set before him' was the salvation of the world. He took the long view. Joy has reference to the long term beneficial results of his actions. Were it possible to save the world without going to the cross, Jesus would have avoided it. Were it possible for us to follow Jesus without facing trials, we would surely choose to do that.

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Christians who remain faithful to their Lord are granted spiritual safety in this life and spiritual passage to the next. Difficult times and trials related to our faith, are inevitable. Let us face them knowing that God will make us equal to the task when we ask for his help. Let us take the long view. This is spiritual 'resistance training' which is able to make us stronger. Trials are there not just to be endured but to be overcome. We do this through the victory that God has already granted us in Christ Jesus. And while God permits us to face trials he is never the source of temptation (Jas 1:13-15).

Enticement to sin has its origins in Satan. He arouses our most base desires and wants us to believe that these are fundamental 'human rights'. Temptation is the antithesis of joy, for it hides the long term destructive results of sinful behaviour. It lives 'in the moment' and 'for the moment', as if tomorrow will never come.

When God allows us to face trials, Satan adds temptation to the mix. It is hard to face one without the other. But God is never the source of temptation and will always provide a way for us to resist it and escape. (1 Cor 10:13)

God is with us in good times and hard times. He is the 'good giver' of 'good gifts', chief of which is salvation in his Son Christ Jesus. (Jas 1:16-18)

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Make Your Light Shine

Written on: June 14, 2021

Article by: Harold Bruggen

There is a direct connection between a Christian's worship and a Christian's testimony or lifestyle. Jesus said "Let your good deeds shine out for all to see so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father." (Matthew 5:16 NLT)

Christians live and worship before a watching world. When the church began in Jerusalem, they met and worshipped daily at the Temple. They also met in homes, where they shared their food with each other and partook of the Lord's Supper. They were joyful and generous, praising God in public and private while enjoying the goodwill of all the people. And each day the Lord added to their fellowship those who were being saved." (Acts 2:46-47 NLT)

When things are going your way: when God blesses you with healthy children, marital harmony, an excellent job, and good health, people will think – well no wonder they 'go to church'. But when tragedy strikes: when your job fails, your marriage founders, your health declines and friends are nowhere to be found, what then? What will they think when you seek God more earnestly, pray without ceasing, thank Him for his steadfast love and worship from the heart? Perhaps that God really is good and that you are serious about your faith.

When we meet for worship, the things that we do and say tell people a lot about who we are as the Lord's church. When nonbelievers attend, they are checking things out and taking it all in. What kind of person are you to the people sitting nearby? Are you a Christian or not? It may be their first time, and hopefully not their last. Will they find us worshipping from the heart? Will they read in their bibles what they observe in our assembly? Will they learn about God and his plan of salvation? Will they find God at work among us and through us? One way or another, the conclusions that they draw will depend on what they hear and see.

All of that may seem like a lot of pressure! That's not my intent. This is just a reminder that the world is watching. Some do not believe in Jesus and others who do are not yet Christians. What they see in us and hear from us is so very important.

May we truly worship both inside the church building and outside too. Let us let our light shine in a way that attracts others to our Lord, for the light within us is actually Him?

Port Colborn

Technology and the Gospel

Written on: June 21, 2021

Article by: Harold Bruggen

Technology interests me, especially as it relates to preaching the gospel. We have been given the task of taking the gospel into all the world (Matthew 28:19, 20; Mark 16:15, 16). How we do that has been left up to us. Starting in the local pulpit and extending across the ocean, advancements in technology help us to do that. The first century Christians spoke the word and put it down into writing. In my lifetime, the pen has given way to the typewriter, the word processor, the personal computer and even voice to text conversion. Charts, chalk boards, white boards and overhead projectors have been replaced by data projectors and computer generated audio video and graphics. Recording has gone from analog to digital while radio and TV are giving way to online and wireless technology. While I have used some of these, I am always interested in harnessing the latest technology in the service of the gospel.

Having said that, there is still something that will never change: *the pure, unadulterated gospel of Jesus Christ*. Delivered once for all, the gospel like Jesus himself does not change.

“Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday, today, and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8 NKJV)

“Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away.” (Matthew 24:35 NKJV)

Our means and methods of sharing the gospel will continue to change, but the Word of God will not. Take note of what Jeremiah wrote:

“Thus says the LORD: “Stand in the ways and see, And ask for the old paths, where the good way is, And walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls. But they said, ‘We will not walk in it.’” (Jeremiah 6:16 NKJV)

In 1964, Marshall McLuhan coined the phrase “the medium is the message”, to emphasise the potential for the means of delivery to overtake and reshape the content of what was being said. But no matter what the medium, the gospel of Jesus Christ is not dependent upon the means by which it is transmitted and should never become secondary to it.

As the apostle Paul wrote in Romans 1:16:

“For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.” (NKJV)

The message of Jesus Christ must always be our focus. Technology can help us deliver God’s soul saving message. But should it ever stop being a tool and begin to become an obstacle... it must be left behind. God has already added all of the value and power that is needed for the gospel of Christ to do it’s work. Our job is to proclaim it without addition or subtraction so that those who hear it might be saved.

Port Colborne

“Behold I Thought” – “Now I Know”

Written on: June 28, 2021

Article by: Harold Bruggen

Despite being a leper, Naaman the Syrian army commander retained his pride. Didn't his status merit a dramatic healing ceremony from Elijah? “But Naaman went away angry and said, “I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy.” (2 Kings 5:11 NIV) Instead, Elijah had sent a servant to tell Naaman to dip seven times within the Jordan River. How undignified! But when he put aside his prideful anger and obeyed, the cleansed leper's “I thought” became “Now I know.” “Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, “Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. Please accept now a gift from your servant.” (2 Kings 5:15 NIV)

This wasn't the first time someone's think-so turned out to be wrong.

When Abraham and Sarah travelled to the Philistine city of Gerar, Abraham told King Abimelech that Sarah was his sister (just as he had done in Egypt a few years earlier). Abimelech promptly took Sarah into his harem, but the Lord just as promptly ordered him to return her to her husband. The outraged king demanded an answer from Abraham: “What have you done to us?” Abraham's excuse was, “I said to myself, ‘There is surely no fear of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife.’” (Genesis 20:1-11 NIV). He thought, “I said to myself,” but was fearfully wrong.

Looking back at the time Paul had been a Jesus-hating abuser of Christians, he said, “I too was convinced that I ought to do all that was possible to oppose the name of Jesus of Nazareth.” (Acts 26:9 NIV) Paul had to come to grips with how absolutely wrong he had been.

What a difference between “I thought” or “I said to myself” or “I was convinced” and “Now I know!” The dividing line: Learning and obeying God's will. “We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands.” “Those who obey his commands live in him, and he in them. . . .” “This is love for God: to obey his commands. And his commands are not burdensome,” (1John 2:3; 3:24; 5:3 NIV)

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