

PASTOR'S PENNINGS

How can I be happy if I think only of others?

“Blessed are the merciful.” Matthew 5:7

Mercy is certainly something of which we like to be on the receiving end. A police officer pulls you over. You know you rolled through that stop sign. Will he show mercy and not give you a ticket? You show up just a few minutes late for work. It doesn't matter that you think you have a good reason--you're late. Will your boss show you mercy? You forgot your anniversary! There is no good excuse. Will your spouse show you mercy?

If I like to be on the receiving end so much, why is it that I often struggle to be merciful to others? Why do I have a hard time forgiving my loved ones when I want them to be forgiving toward me? Why is it that I have such a hard time showing kindness to my coworkers or neighbors? Is it often because I feel that if I show kindness and mercy to others, it will be a sacrifice for me? Will showing mercy to others rob me of opportunities for myself and take away my happiness?

What is mercy really all about? For the answer we need to look no further than God. He shows us what real mercy is. God looked at sinful people--a people that could offer Him nothing, a people helpless to help themselves--and He showed mercy. In love and mercy that astounds us, He sent His Son Jesus to be our Savior. Jesus was perfect where we could never be. Jesus paid for the sins we could never pay for. Jesus lived, died, and rose again for us so we could live forever in heaven--a gift of mercy!

The opportunities that God places before us in our lives to show mercy and kindness to other people can serve as constant reminders of the mercy that God has shown to us, a mercy we certainly didn't deserve. It is God's mercy for us that empowers us to be merciful to others and to even find happiness in showing kindness and love to other people.

Jesus said, “Blessed (happy) are the merciful.” Then He goes on with a promise, “For they will be shown mercy” (Matthew 5:7). As we show mercy to others, we will also be on the receiving end of mercy!

PRAYER LIST

** This last month we prayed a lot for Doris Hahn. Praise the Lord for answering our prayers and giving her the best possible gift, eternal life with Jesus.

** Last Sunday in our worship service we had a special prayer for Adam Buczynskyj, thanking God for bringing him home safely from Iraq to Tinker.

** We also asked God for His continued protection over Chad Walker who is serving his country in Afghanistan.

** Charlie Quam and Bev were prayed for every Sunday and will need a lot more as God prepares to take him home.

** Doug Dinse received prayers for two dangerous surgeries. Please thank the Lord that he has been allowed to go home. Ask the Lord to give him patience and endurance to bear the pain and accept the long waiting period before he can be given a new knee.

** Please thank the Lord for sparing Cliff Gallarneau's life in the car accident he experienced.

** Please continue to pray for Elsie Bruer who is a good friend of Andrea Smith. Elsie has lung cancer and doesn't have long to live. Woodrow Williams is a baby belonging to the same family. Woodrow is in the hospital.

God wants us to pray to Him continually. Let us do so joyfully.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

Deuteronomy 11:18-21 - "Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land that the LORD swore to give your forefathers, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth.

1) The word "fix" in vs. 18 is the same as the word for "tattoo." (That conjures up some possibilities, doesn't it?) Before Moses instructed adults about teaching children, he instructed adults about teaching them-selves. Distinguish between "hearts" and "minds" and "hands" and "foreheads."

2) Moses wasn't satisfied to say, "teach them" and leave it at that. He outlined four instructional methodologies:

- a) talking about them when you sit at home
- b) talking about them when you walk along the road
- c) talking about them when you lie down
- d) talking about them when you get up.

Newspapers box God into a religious page. Christians don't. Moses brought "God-talk" into everyday life. Moses gave the people a vision of passing the faith on to children as they left the house. "Write them on the doorframes...and on your gates." Moses attached a blessing to teaching children. "...so that your days and the days of your children may be many in the land that the LORD swore to give your forefathers, as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth." In a land and culture with high infant mortality, childhood diseases, and accidents, that must have seemed absurd.

Moses had the advantage of divine inspiration when he wrote, "Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds." We have other advantages when we seek to set an example for children. We have, according to Paul, "...the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God" (1 Co. 6:19).

That's why Paul could write, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." It is entirely legitimate for us adults to say to children, "Listen to what I say. Do as I do."

From the time they're born, children are getting ready to leave their parents. Think of the last time you said, "I can't believe how quickly they grow." We have only a few years to be "stewards" of children and equip them for choices they will face: not just job, marriage, etc., ... but even bigger choices about following Christ and remaining in Him.

Keeping God's commands does make sense and does make life better. But that's as far as it goes for some--a better life. Then they die and the ground covers them up. They got their reward in this life. That's not why the Lord has revealed Himself to us. Moses talked about rewards that continue "as many as the days that the heavens are above the earth."

Think about these words as you make plans to take your kids to Vacation Bible School this year. The theme will be "The State of Grace." It will highlight the symbols of our state here in Oklahoma and also the state of grace we live in under God. It is for all kids 3 to 18. It will be from July 25-29, 6:30-8:30PM. See you there!

MEN'S BREAKFAST

The men will be meeting for breakfast and Bible study on Saturday, July 10th at 8:00AM. Breakfast will be at Denny's on I-240 & Penn. Bible study will be at church at 9:00AM. All men and their friends are invited to attend.

STEWARDSHIP

When we stop to look at it, God has truly blessed us with countless resources. This is especially evident when you compare our lives with many others in the world. The Lord said, "To whom much is given, much will be required." This becomes more meaningful when we understand the blessing of Christ and the honor of living for Him.

Read Deuteronomy 8:1-18. God warned the Israelites that prosperity and riches could lead them to forsake the true God and if that happened they would suffer painful consequences. In our world today the power of prosperity and materialism can destroy our sense of our real calling. Finances can either be a fierce competitor against living for Christ, or become a very concrete demonstration of what living for Christ means. Our attitude toward money and resources is a valuable test of life's focus and priorities.

When John D. Rockefeller, Sr. was asked how much money it takes to make a man happy, he said "Just a little bit more." If the goal is mere money-making or what it can buy, it is always more needed with an endless pursuit. Even religion jumps on the bandwagon. Prosperity doctrines and "health and wealth gospel" are results of a corrupt calling.

When we live like the world, we often feel that life is just around the corner. Teens often feel it will come from freedom from the home...the graduate thinks it will be found in the choices ahead...the young worker thinks it is in the salaries, fashions, vacations...the midlife group longs for it in seeing beyond the routine to retirement. But life is NOW. Our calling is to what God has given us now.

Matthew 6:19-21 says: "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Where is your treasure? Our drive to satisfy our desires, to keep up with others, or to live in comfort may be the innocent acceptance of the world's influence which is a genuine rival to God. For followers of Christ, there exists a treasure in Jesus that compels us to make decisive moment-by-moment choices for value far above money and the market.

Our calling to follow Christ costs us every allegiance that competes with Jesus and every practice that contradicts His Lordship. That makes our use of money a spiritual issue. It provides us with a unique vehicle to show honor to God and carry out our callings.

EVANGELISM

Jesus told a story in which the kingdom of God was portrayed as a banquet held by a King. The King's persistent invitation is the key feature of the story. He invites and invites...and then invites again. Imagine. We could be made to plead and grovel, scratch and claw our entire lives, begging to be let into the presence of a celebrating God. But it's God who does that asking! "Come to the wedding banquet of My Son." Since we have been married (inseparable and eternally bonded) to God's Son by faith and now feast on the banquet of His grace, the invitation goes out through us. "The Spirit and the bride" - that's us - "say, 'come!' Be winsome and confident, not shy or apologetic. Joe, I'd just really like you to come to church with me." And remember, you are doing a very good thing.

I know. I know. Part of you wants to say that you don't know enough of the Bible yet to share your new faith or that your life isn't together enough to be Christ's representative. But while we are in this world, we will always have God's unfinished work, mere beginners, wounded healers, childlike teachers. Though God is not finished with us, we who are in Christ are in possession of the wisdom of the universe, and we do know what to say: "For God so loved the world. . . ."

They don't know if there is a heaven. They're a little fuzzy on the subject of God. They certainly do not want to be notches on some evangelist's belt. But all people hurt. All people worry. All people want to be loved.

Do you see a colleague sorrowing in a new world of grief? Do you see how the neighbor boy watches you...and how no dad is ever around? Do you see the outcast dying quietly at the edge of the party?

Do you see a place to start?

Article taken from More Prepared to Answer

by Market Paustian pp. 154 and 155

VOTERS' MEETING

The Holy Cross congregation Quarterly Voters' Body Meeting will be held on Sunday, July 17th. The Voters' meeting will be held following the pot luck dinner after the worship service. Each Board will be reporting on their activities of the past quarter of the year and their plans for the coming months. In addition, a discussion will be held about renovation and expansion of the restrooms. So make plans to spend an hour taking part in the Lord's work on Sunday, July 17th.

FREE CONCERT

Branches Band, a Milwaukee-based Christian band, will be presenting a concert on Monday, August 1, 2011 at 7:00PM in Oklahoma City. Invite a friend! To get a taste of their music, go to www.branchesband.com. More information next month.

FIRST BORN SON

By Delores Staats

Behold! A baby boy is born!
Our God, alone, can this perform;
From tiny cells no eye can see,
He floats in water gay and free;
In God's own special kind of nest
beneath a mother's loving breast.

For nine long months he grows and grows;

Each tiny part down to his toes;
He kicks and squirms as if to say,
"I would be free and fly away!"

At last the hour is at hand

When at death's door we really stand!

And after all the pain is o're
We have a joy not known before!
In awe and reverence we stand
To view creation at first hand;
And thank Almighty God above
For this, our son, His gift of love!
(At the birth of a grandson)

OFFERS BY MRS. STAATS FOR HER BOOK OF POEMS AND HYMNS OF PRAISE

Mrs. Staats, Barbara's mother, has provided Pastor with many copies of her book of "Poems and Hymns of Praise." She would like to give them to anyone who wants one. If you would like one, please consider donating something to Barbara's medical fund. Just write a check to Holy Cross and designate it for "Barbara's Medical Fund." You will find copies of the book in the Holy Cross church library.

SOUP CAN LABELS/CEREAL BOX TOPS

Please continue to bring your Campbell Soup labels and box top coupons and give them to Dina Shoumaker.

HC - JULY GREETERS

July 3 - Al & Carol Cardwell

July 10 - Tom & Janet Finney

July 17 - Marlon & Karen Henry

July 24 - Gene & Ada Hill

July 31 - Mike & Latischa Huller

HC - JULY CLEANING LIST

July 2 - Tiffany Loper

July 9 - Scott & Carole Peters & Family/Clint Trowe

July 16 - Byron & Dina Shoumaker/Monica Mendoza

July 23 - Christian & Leah Eisenbeis/Donna Ferguson

July 30 - Cliff & Janice Gallarneau/Jean Evans

HC - JULY MOWING LIST

July 2 - Tom Finney/Cliff Gallarneau

July 9 - Rick Poulin/Paul Barnett

July 16 - Robert Barnett/Butch Barnett

July 23 - Bill Shoumaker/Byron Shoumaker

July 30 - Scott Peters

BIBLE QUIZ

Directions: Read each of the following statements carefully. Each statement is either true or false. If the statement is true, draw a circle around the T. If the statement is partly or wholly false, draw a circle around the F.

- 1) T/F Saving faith is a matter of the heart rather than of the head.
- 2) T/F If I know Jesus as my Savior and trust in Him for forgiveness of sins, I have saving faith.
- 3) T/F True faith is possible only after man has learned about the true God.
- 4) T/F Our knowledge regarding the creation of the world is a matter of faith.
- 5) T/F Science has proved that man descended from animal ancestors.
- 6) T/F Modern science has thoroughly disproved the Bible account of creation.
- 7) T/F One who does not believe the Bible account of Creation may nevertheless accept the rest of what the Bible teaches.
- 8) T/F The devil is not an imaginary person, but a real being, who seeks to tempt us and destroy our souls to hell.
- 9) T/F It is a great comfort to the believer to know that God and His angels are near to protect him amid all danger.
- 10) T/F Belief in the existence of evil spirits is superstitious, since God created all things good.
- 11) T/F Through Adam's fall the image of God was lost and is partially restored in those who believe in Christ as their Savior.

- 12) T/F Adam was made in God's image; that is, he knew God as his Maker and Father and was without sin.
- 13) T/F If man still possessed the divine image, he would by nature live in blissful communion with God.
- 14) T/F According to the Bible, man differs only slightly from the animals because he will perish just as they do.
- 15) T/F The Bible shows that man was first perfect and later, through sin, degenerated.
- 16) T/F The teaching of evolution that man developed from lower forms of life is contrary to the Biblical account of Creation.
- 17) T/F The statement "Man was created holy" means he was created without the ability to sin.
- 18) T/F It is evident from the Bible that man has a soul and that the soul lives on forever after death.
- 19) T/F Scientific study of nature necessarily leads to a loss of faith in God.
- 20) T/F The child of God has reason to praise God even in times of severe affliction.

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Answers: 1) F - Saving faith is a matter of the heart and head if you are not a child. In other words it would be incorrect if someone says, "I am a Christian at heart but I don't believe Jesus is God." For a baby it is a matter of the heart not the head; 2) T; 3) T; Question 4 is true in the sense that what we have not seen is received by faith. Some may answer false because it is not only a matter of faith-it is God's truth and therefore fact whether you believe it or not; 5) F; 6) F; Question 7 is technically true. Someone might deny the Biblical account of Creation and accept the rest of the Bible, especially the part about Jesus. However, there is a huge and dangerous inconsistency that goes to the heart of the Gospel - Jesus saves from sin. Now ask, where does sin come from? - Adam and Eve - If these are two mythological characters (as evolution teaches) then there is no sin and therefore no need for a Savior. 8) T; 9) T; 10) F; 11) T; Question 12 is true - although the image of God includes other points as well. 13) T; 14) F; 15) T; 16) T; 17) F; 18) T - Many Christians are top scientists daily having their faith confirmed by science; 19) F; 20) T.

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