

Be Ambassadors for the Kingdom of Heaven

By Steven Bassett

Before leaving this earth, Jesus commissioned His disciples to go into the whole world sharing the good news of the kingdom of heaven. Many prophets went ahead of Jesus, as ambassadors to announce the coming of our Lord and His kingdom, which included John the Baptist who proclaimed, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near" (Matthew 3:2). During Jesus' ministry, the Pharisees asked when the kingdom would be coming, and our Lord said, "The kingdom of God will not come with observable signs. Nor will people say, 'Look, here it is,' or 'There it is.' For you see, the kingdom of God is in your midst." (Luke 17:20-21). Therefore, although we may not physically see this kingdom, it is all around us.

Consequently, Jesus' resurrection ushered in new hope for mankind, as was promised by the Father, opening a gate to kingdom of heaven. This is the Good News (Gospel) we are to share with the whole world. Specifically, whoever hears this good news, and chooses to turn away from their self-serving life in this world, and surrender everything to serve and follow Jesus, will receive eternal life. This act of repentance transforms the natural man through spiritual rebirth into an eternal citizen of the kingdom of heaven! Once baptized, (immersed) into the Body of Christ (the Church), we are no longer of this world. Henceforth, unlike those who remain spiritually dead in this world, we receive the Holy Spirit from above to live within us to teach, guide, and nurture us as we grow spiritually in Christ.

Therefore, as members of the kingdom of heaven, our future home, we become ambassadors in this world (once our home). An ambassador can be defined as "an accredited

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Sharing the Bounty of God's Blessings





“Be Ambassadors...” continued...

diplomat sent by a country as its official representative to a foreign country." Thus, we who are the elect are sent by the Father as representatives of heaven to a world that is foreign to us as citizens of heaven. This is a place ruled by the spirit of this world, Satan, and his followers. As ambassadors, we remain to be the light of this world, a place that by Satan's design, is in direct opposition to that of heaven.

Accordingly, as foreigners we must learn to put aside our former lives in this world and bring contrast, which includes setting aside human thinking to be replaced by spiritual thinking (coming from the Holy Spirit) and worldly practices to be replaced by spiritual practices. Hence, we need to live a life pleasing to God, and not mankind, as Jesus demonstrated. Only then will people see that we are not of this world. To illustrate, when a king would send an ambassador to a faraway place, he would expect the ambassador to represent His kingdom. The ambassador would be expected to live a life that illustrates the true essence of their kingdom and not the land they are visiting. Therefore, they would live life in a way foreign to the people of the land they are visiting. Thus, it is this difference that will make them attractive to those who may seek citizenship within the ambassador's kingdom.

Ultimately, this is how citizens of heaven must live among those of this world. Some might ask, "How can we know how to live as a citizen of heaven?" Our answer comes from Jesus, "But the Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have told you" (John 14:26). The Apostle John stressed this point adding, "The anointing that you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need that anyone should teach you. But, just as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things and is true and is no lie, and just as it has taught you, you shall abide in Him" (1 John 2:27). Thus, this is why Jesus has sent us His Spirit, to teach us all the things we need to know as His ambassadors in this foreign world.

As the Apostle Paul said, "Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making His appeal through us. We implore you on

behalf of Christ: Be reconciled to God. God made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God" (2 Corinthians 5:20-21). Today there are many who make the claim to be Christian and yet live their lives as mere citizens of this world. Jesus told us we will know them by their fruit, and the fruit of heaven can only come from above. He knows those who have made a full surrender of their hearts to ambassadors of heaven and those who choose to live compromised fruitless lives fashioned by this world and separated from God.

Hence, the true follower of Christ must take the narrow gate to heaven and leave behind the broad gate of this world that leads to destruction. Jesus said, "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. Yet, small is the gate and narrow the way that leads to life, and only a few find it" (Matthew 7:13-14). It is not too late for any of us to become an ambassador of the kingdom of heaven; it is a personal choice between each of us and the Lord.

For those who do choose Christ over this world, "You are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, to proclaim the virtues of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Beloved, I urge you, as foreigners and exiles, to abstain from the desires of the flesh, which war against your soul. Conduct yourselves with such honor among the Gentiles that, though they slander you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day He visits us" (1 Peter 2:9-12).

Financial Update

(Through October 31, 2019)

"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want..."

	Actual	Budget
Income	\$225,118	\$237,500
Expense	\$228,167	\$237,500

Windsor Chapel has sent \$32,738 to our missionary partners this year. That's 15% of your giving!

Perisseia Cookie Exchange!

Our women's growth group will enjoy a time of fellowship on Thursday evening, December 12, 7:00-8:30, in the Chapel House, with a cookie exchange. All women are welcome! Please come even if you haven't participated in Perisseia. You are welcome to come enjoy the fellowship even if you do not want to bake.



If you would like to participate in the cookie exchange, please bring your treats packaged in groups of six in labeled Ziploc bags. Bring as many bags as you would like to exchange, plus one extra for group refreshments. For more information, please contact Cindy Bills (cynthialbills@gmail.com; 609-275-8557).

Chapel Christmas Celebration



We warmly invite our Chapel family and friends to our **Chapel Christmas Celebration** on Sunday, December 15, after our morning worship service. We will enjoy our Children's Christmas pageant followed by a light reception.

You are welcome to bring your favorite holiday treats or savory finger food. This will be a wonderful opportunity to step back from the hectic pace of the holiday season, focus on Christ and enjoy a time of fellowship!

Christmas Eve Service

Please come and bring your family, friends and neighbors at 7:00 pm, on Sunday, December 24, as we joyously celebrate the birth of Christ, with beautiful music, Scripture readings and meaningful reflections, highlighted by our traditional candle lighting service.



The Best Gift

By Tom Taylor

During the holiday season people are coming and going, observing old traditions and starting new ones. Christmas is a great occasion to share Him with family and friends. I find conversations about God and His goodness are received more often and may lead to deeper talks about the kingdom of God at this time.

In our mainstream culture, Christmas is the one time of year people pay attention to a Christian holiday. Looking for and seeing opportunities to share Jesus is one of our highest privileges and callings as children of the Most High God. Emmanuel, God with us is the sweetest and best gift we can give.

Thinking about gifts, let's make this year extra special and find new ways to share Jesus with family, friends, neighbors, strangers and enemies. Do something different, something creative (remember our Father is the Creator). Ask the Lord to show you. Be open to the Holy Spirit. Look for those you can be kind to, those you can love, those you can listen to, and those you can introduce to the Savior of the world.

One final thought: If we are going to add to our giving and sharing, we must consider what we can forego. Let's not get so busy that we are tired and have nothing left to give. God will lead us, refresh us, and empower us to share Him with the dying and lost world He placed us in.

Elder's Corner

By Ken Bills

The calendar caught me by surprise this year. It is one of those strange years when the Sunday of Thanksgiving weekend is the first Sunday of Advent. I would have expected that Advent and Thanksgiving together would fill me with thoughts of celebration, gratitude and anticipation. But this year I can't seem to get Psalm 137 out of my head. It is a lament coming from a time when the people of Israel had been conquered by the Babylonians and taken far from their homes into exile to Babylon. The Israelites longed to return home and mourned for what they had lost:

*By the waters of Babylon,
there we sat down and wept,
when we remembered Zion.
On the willows there
we hung up our lyres.
For there our captors
required of us songs,
and our tormentors, mirth, saying,
"Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"
How shall we sing the LORD's song
in a foreign land?
Psalm 137:1-4*

We in this country are tremendously blessed. We have tremendous freedoms, material blessings, and as believers, spiritual blessings as well. And, as the Scriptures declare, *"the joy of the Lord is your strength."* (Nehemiah 8:10) So why does it seem that our joy at holiday times can sometimes feel a bit forced or superficial? There are no doubt many reasons, but here are a few thoughts.

It is probably worth remembering that the celebration of the first Thanksgiving by the Pilgrims came in 1621 after their first successful harvest in the "New World" but only after a winter during which forty-five of the

Mayflower's one hundred and two passengers and crew had died. Two hundred and forty-two year later, President Lincoln declared the first national day of Thanksgiving in November of 1863 in the midst of a horrific and deadly civil war.

We can also remember that while Advent is an opportunity to prepare for the celebration of Christmas, it also commemorates the centuries-long wait of the Israelites for the Messiah to appear. *"O come, o come, Emmanuel, and ransom captive Israel."* The first Christmas, from the uncomfortable journey to Bethlehem, to the lack of room in the inn, to the subsequent need for Mary, Joseph and the infant Jesus to flee into exile in Egypt to avoid Herod's attempt to kill the newborn baby, occurred against a backdrop of the sin and suffering of a fallen world. And as Christians, we are reminded by Advent that we are also people who wait, looking for the day when Christ will come again.

So it probably should not be a surprise if even our holiday celebrations sometimes find us less than completely joyful. In this broken world, all holidays, even Thanksgiving and Advent (and eventually Christmas) are celebrated against a background marred by sin and suffering, pressures and problems. There is certainly benefit in finding and celebrating God's blessings with gratitude in a far less than perfect world, and God is good and remains worthy of our thanks and praise at all times. Yet, I think that Psalm 84:2 expresses the tension in which we still live, even during Thanksgiving and Advent. The Psalmist's *"heart and flesh sing for joy to the living God"* at the same time his *"soul longs, yes, faints for the courts of the Lord."* May God grant to all of us his joy in the journey as we seek to be instruments of his grace and peace in the midst of this fallen world during this holiday season.

Further Up and Further In

*Inviting dialogue to encourage growth in
and among us*



By Cindy Bills

Emmanuel: God with Us God Incarnate!

It is December, a time when we are reminded to focus on the Advent, or coming, of our Lord Jesus Christ. While traditional celebratory activities generally dominate the landscape of our days, believers understand that Christmas is all about Christ.

But just what does it mean to focus on Christ during this season of Advent? Some Christians admonish us to keep Christmas in perspective, that Easter is the really important Christian holy day. Others would remind us that we need to be looking for Christ's second Advent, when He comes to initiate His kingdom. Both of these perspectives have merit: Christ's coming is in fact culminated by His death on the cross on our behalf. And even while Christ was on earth as God incarnate, He admonished His followers to be prepared and watchful for His return.

Any consideration of Christ's birth would benefit from the inclusion of Easter and His return. But the more I consider Christ as God incarnate, the more I believe that there is plenty to ponder in the incarnation. Beyond the mystery of the event itself is the reality that Jesus Christ, our Creator, walked among us as God and man. Can we imagine His joy at experiencing His glorious earth, or the agony of seeing what His creatures have done to it and to one another? His mission was to proclaim the kingdom of God and to call men unto Himself for eternal relationship and glory. In doing so, He demonstrated the love, grace,

mercy, and power of our God. It seems to me that He must have felt both incredible sorrow and enormous satisfaction in straightening one of His creatures who had been twisted by sin. His abhorrence of death was highlighted by His raising to life a few who had died. But even as He wielded His redemptive power, He knew His miracles were only temporal.

Without minimizing the horror of the cross, I would like to suggest that Jesus' time on earth as God incarnate before the crucifixion also consisted of enormous suffering. As He walked among us, He could not escape seeing the destructive wages of sin. His creatures bloodied and broken, sick and dying. All creation groaning. And any relief that He would provide, while satisfying, was only a down payment for the future. As we deal with our own sin and suffering during the celebratory Christmas season, it might be constructive to resist jumping ahead to Easter and/or the second coming of Christ. We would do well to consider that Jesus hates our suffering more than we do—He knows what we've lost; we can only imagine a life without sin and the fall. And then we get to what scholars sometimes describe as the "now and not yet." Jesus has come; He has made us His own; He has promised to complete the work He began in us and to bring us to heaven as heirs of the Father. But the trumpet has not yet sounded. We remain fallen people in a fallen world. As we wait for the culmination of the kingdom of Christ, may we take comfort and joy that our Lord and Redeemer is waiting alongside us.

***Please feel free to contact Cindy (609-275-8557 or
clbills@verizon.net) to continue the dialogue....***

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. John 1:14

Born to Set Us Free

By Janet Berrill

This September marked thirty years that Larry and I have been married. To celebrate we returned to St. Thomas in the US Virgin Islands where we went on our honeymoon. Much has remained the same since we were there last, but some things are different. Although I remember quite a bit of wildlife in the islands, like iguanas, lizards, sea turtles, colorful fish, etc, one animal that I saw lots of during this trip, that I do not remember seeing on our last visit, is chickens. We saw wild chickens near the condo where we were staying and even in a park in the capital city. There were roosters, hens, and baby chicks just wandering around in the grass seemingly undisturbed by people walking by.

One afternoon as I was walking around the condo complex, I saw a chicken on the other side of a bush and noticed something yellow on its side. I moved around to get a better look and I could see that a piece of yellow CAUTION tape was caught under its wing preventing it from flying. My immediate thought was to go over to the chicken and remove the tape, but as I walked toward it, the chicken circled around, keeping the bush between us. We went back and forth a few times, but the chicken would not let me get near it. Unfortunately, the chicken did not know that my intentions were good, and all I wanted to do was set it free from the tape in which it was entangled. Deciding to be more aggressive, I walked quickly toward the chicken at which point, feeling that the lone bush could no longer keep me from it, the chicken headed toward an uncleared area thick with bushes, trees, and other plants. It lingered at the edge for a short time, keeping a watchful eye on me. It was only when I tried to approach it one more time that the chicken scurried into the bushes with the yellow tape still trapped beneath its wing; if the tape was not removed, the chicken would be bound to the ground forever.



I could not help but think about the parallels of our lives with those of the chicken. How many of us

have things in our lives that bind us? Past experiences and hurts can give rise to false beliefs that entangle us and rob us from the joy of living. For example, someone close to you, whom you trusted, betrayed you. Now you feel you cannot trust anyone, and you live your life keeping everyone at a distance. That is a sad and lonely way to live life, and it is certainly not the life that God intends for you to lead.

Some of my favorite verses are John 8:31-32, "*Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.'*" Jesus wants to set us free! He does not want there to be anything that will keep us from enjoying the full life He came to bring us (John 10:10: "*I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full*"). But letting God deal with our "stuff" can be scary and like the chicken, we might run away from the very Person who is trying to help us. The chicken ran from me because it could not understand that I had good intentions and wanted to help it, not hurt it.

We are smarter than chickens! I could not communicate my intentions to the chicken, but God communicated His intentions to us. When He sent His precious Son to be born as a baby among us sinful people and ultimately to die on the cross, He was showing us the depth of His love and the lengths He would go to for our benefit. So, is He trustworthy? Has He proven His love? Does He have good intentions toward us? Absolutely YES! So let Him near, let Him deal with your "stuff," let Him untangle you and set you free so you can fly. It may be scary, it may be hard, but when you are soaring you will see that the end result was worth it!

Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles.

Isaiah 40:31

If you have any items or information you would like to share in the newsletter, please e-mail:

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