



Vestry Voices

The Church Family Newsletter

First Congregational
Church of Clinton

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The Two Sides of the Day of the Lord

Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD!

Why would you have the day of the LORD? It is darkness, and not light *Amos 5:18 (RSV)*

He who rejects Me, and does not receive My sayings, has one who judges him;
the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day *John 12:48 (NAS)*



Rev. Gary Kiontke



Amos was a shepherd in Judah called by Yahweh to prophecy against the sins of the surrounding nations and the kingdoms of Judah, and especially Israel. At this time the people of Israel were unfaithful to Yahweh. Amos was called to give them strong messages so they might repent (Amos 1:1-5:17). Then, Amos spoke about "The Day of the LORD." They hoped this would be a day of joy for them when their God would destroy their enemies and give them His blessings in their land. Through Amos, God gave them a different and unexpected word about His Day. It would be as if they ran from a lion to be chased by a bear and then hid in their house to be bitten by a snake. God then told them He despised all their religious hypocrisy and would send them into exile (Amos 5:19-27).

Jesus made it clear that the Day of the Lord would be the day when He came again in all His glory and separated the nations as a shepherd separates the "sheep" from the "goats." The "sheep" will be blessed to enter into their kingdom inheritance because as they ministered to the least, they ministered to Him. But, the "goats" will be cursed and will depart from Him into the eternal fire prepared for the accuser and his demons because they did not minister to Him in caring for the least. (Matthew 25:31-45.) Jesus concludes, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal" (Matthew 25:46, KJV). With this, Jesus describes the two sides of the Day of the Lord.

We will begin with the negative side of the Day of the Lord, judgment for the majority of people on earth on that day.

It will be a cruel day with wrath and fierce anger, to make the land desolate; and,

sinners will be destroyed out of it and all the lights of heaven will be blotted out (Isaiah 13:9-10; Revelation 15:1; 16:19; 6:7-17; 8:7-12).

Zephaniah prophesied the people will be judged on the Day of the Lord. It will be a day of trouble, distress, devastation and darkness; and, because of their sins, blood will be poured out as dust in the Day of Yahweh's wrath; and, the land will be devoured by fire (Zephaniah 1:14-18).

The word of Yahweh to Ezekiel warned the people of Israel because they had not repaired the breaches in the wall, so that they could stand in the battle on the Day of the Lord (Ezekiel 13:5). Later, the word of Adonai Yahweh came to Ezekiel to warn the nations that the Day of the Lord would be a time they would fall by the sword (Ezekiel 30).

Joel also prophesied about nations being judged in the Day of the Lord. They would be judged in the valley of Jehoshaphat ("Yahweh has Judged"). There, the nations will be harvested with a sickle, and the sun and moon will be darkened and the stars removed from shining (Joel 3:12-15). There will be more on this passage later.

Finally, Yahweh's last word to Malachi is about His day being like a furnace and every evildoer like stubble. The ashes of the wicked will be under the feet of God's people, and He is sending His prophet Elijah before the great and fearful Day of the Lord (Malachi 4).

The rest of this article will describe those who will be blessed in the Day of the Lord.

The above Joel passage ends, "But the LORD is a refuge for His people, and a stronghold to the sons of Israel" (Joel 3:16). So who are Yahweh's (continued on page 2 ...)

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The Two Sides of the Day of the Lord (... continued from page #1)

people? Who are the sons of Israel?

First, they are from the remnant of Israel. Earlier in his prophecy Joel had said the Day of the Lord would be darkness, but “whoever calls on the name of the LORD will be delivered ... among the survivors whom [He] calls” (Joel 2:31-32, NAS). But, at Pentecost The Holy Spirit inspired Peter to expand this promise to: “to you and to your children and to all that are far off, every one whom the Lord our God calls to him” (Acts 2:16-39, NAS). So now, all who call on the Name of Jesus will be saved.

Amos was inspired to write about the Day of the Lord: “let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream” (Amos 5:24, RSV – note: this could be translated as a promise, “justice will roll down”). This verse was the rallying verse of the Civil Rights Movement, used by both Martin Luther King, Jr. and John M. Perkins. The latter used it as the title of his autobiography. It can be applied by Bible believers to any cause for social justice anywhere on the earth at any time.

The apostle Paul wrote to believers in Jesus, in Thessalonica, about “That Day” to say they are not in darkness and it

should not overtake them like a thief. They should not sleep, but be watching and sober. God has not destined them for wrath but salvation through their Lord Jesus Christ who died for them. Finally, they should comfort and build up one another with what they have come to know of the Savior. (1 Thessalonians 5:4-11).

The author of Hebrews sums up the Second Coming of Jesus on the Day of the Lord as follows, “And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him” (Hebrews 9:27-28, RSV). So, all who are eagerly and expectantly awaiting (Louw-Nida Lexicon) for Jesus’ return will have their salvation completed when He comes again.

Summing up the Day of the Lord, because it will be such a dreadful day for those who have never surrendered to the Savior in humble, dependent faith, all who have fully trusted Jesus as their Lord and Savior should do everything they believe the Holy Spirit is calling them to do in their local church to work with God to make disciples of Jesus (Matthew 28:18-20). ~~~~~

Summer Preaching Plans and Sundays in July

I have planned three short preaching series based on suggestions for summer preaching found on the Narrative Lectionary website.

In June we did two types of Psalms. First we looked at the beginning of Psalm 69, a psalm of dis-orientation, with the theme: *When floods rise*. Then we looked at Psalm 113, a psalm of orientation, with the theme: *God stoops down*.

The remaining two series will be three messages from 2 Corinthians, on the first three weeks of July. Then there will be four messages on God’s Ten Words to Moses from Exodus, on the last two weeks of July and the first two weeks of August. I will take two weeks of vacation on the last two Sundays of August. I am excited to announce that Walter Mutti has agreed to bring messages from God’s Word on August 20 and August 27. (Look for more details next month.)

We will have Communion on July 2 and 16.

Here are the details on the sermon texts and themes for each of the worship services on the Lord’s Day:

Sunday	Readings	Theme
July 2	2 Corinthians 1:1-11; John 14:25-27	God comforts His people that they might comfort others
July 9	2 Corinthians 4:1-15; Matthew 5:13	God puts His light in jars of clay
July 16	2 Corinthians 5:11-21; Luke 15:25-32	New creations in Christ are given the ministry of reconciliation
July 23	Exodus 19:1-6; 20:1-2; Matthew 22:34-40	Only those delivered by God to be priests can obey His Words
July 30	Exodus 20:3-11; Matthew 22:34-40	God requires people to seek Him alone, especially one day in seven



Missions Report

by Sally Camara

First Concern has been a trusted pregnancy resource center (PRC) right here in Clinton for over 31 years now. They provide free services such as pregnancy testing, prenatal support, postpartum support and parenting education for teenagers and women who find themselves with an unplanned pregnancy. They also have a program called BrightCourse, where clients take online courses covering numerous topics such as infant care, hygiene, nutrition, finances, car seat safety, breastfeeding and many more. When a course is completed they have a discussion and review time with a staff member and earn “baby bucks” they can use to purchase items in the baby boutique. The boutique offers baby clothing, diapers, formula, wipes and several other necessities.

An example of First Concern’s personal care for their clients was extended to a young woman who had made an appointment for an abortion. She called First Concern on the day of her scheduled abortion, since she had no peace about it. She already had a young child and could see no way of managing her life with another. She was very torn. After talking with a First Concern advocate, they were able to identify her greatest needs – one being housing. First Concern was able to help her secure the housing that she needed. They came alongside her during her pregnancy and after. Now she has a three year old boy that she can’t imagine life without. She is so grateful to First Concern, and the fact that she chose life.

First Concern was able to open a new center in Marlborough four years ago. They now do ultrasounds there with their trained nurses. It has been a huge blessing in providing accurate information to their clients and allowing them to make pro-life choices for their unborn babies.

Since the Supreme Court ruling last summer to knock down Roe, several PRCs in Massachusetts have been targeted with vandalism, graffiti and protests. Thankfully, the Clinton office has been spared while the Marlborough office has experienced protesters. One million dollars of tax payers money, with the purpose of smearing PRCs, has been included in the state budget and approved by Governor Maura Healey. It should be noted that former Governor Charlie Baker specifically vetoed it. While Governor Healey has been invited to view and be informed of the work that PRCs have been doing on behalf of women and their unborn babies, she has not responded. This could be a prayer request – that the Lord would change her heart or at least make her open enough to gain knowledge on the benefits of PRCs in her state.

First Concern offers many other services not mentioned above. Most of all, they are mentors and friends to women before, during and after their babies are born. If you feel the Lord tugging at your heart to get involved, they could use volunteers to help with cleaning, organizing the baby boutique and also a bi-lingual interpreter. There is also a need to be an extra person at the center, on the occasion only one staff member is present (no client interaction), just a friendly presence. If you are interested, their phone number is 978-365-9817. Above all, keep this ministry in your prayers. ~V~

*Thou it was who didst fashion my inward parts;
thou didst knit me together in my mothers womb.
I will praise thee, for thou dost fill me with awe;
wonderful thou art, and wonderful thy works.*

Psalms 139:13-14a (NEB)

It Just Happens*... “Reaching Out to Jesus ...”

by Petros

It Just Happens*... the other day I found myself singing “Reach Out to Jesus” and trying to remember the words and how well they would minister God’s provision. Recently I encountered two situations where someone in great despair could be comforted by reaching out to Jesus. The adversity and pain they were enduring was heart wrenching to watch and bear. A sense of hopelessness and despair was the common theme. The party, deceived by the powers of darkness under the fallen angel, was caught up in a downward spiral to a pit where a comeback would be a miracle in itself. And my feelings, similar to enlightened followers of Jesus, were that their pain and feeling of being lost was not necessary if they reached out to Jesus.

To be fair to the reader who questions how reaching out to Jesus is going to make everything all right; he or she is closer to the truth as the world knows it. However, the Word of God explains that the love of God, through the sacrifice of **Jesus, is in place reaching out to everyone** before we even thought we would need help. So, reaching out to Jesus only works when we understand and believe that the love of God is only possible by His master plan. That master plan is well known – simply stated in John 3:16. More importantly, the verses that follow cause my heart “to be pushy.” John 3:17-18, “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge ... He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of ... (Jesus). Not only do I feel saddened and help-

(continued on page 4 ...)

It Just Happens*... “Reaching Out to Jesus ...” (... continued from page #3)

less in the Kingdom of Heaven (on earth) to see unnecessary pain, but to realize the destiny of the sufferer is pain to no end – literally! Yes, I live the Kingdom of Heaven life, which Jesus brought to earth. It is like living in a Teflon coated world where my personal suffering and trials don't stick to me. I'm able to let go and let God's grace and blessed reassurance separate me from the deceptions and pain.

It Just Happens*... that I spoke without total conviction in my pursuit to relieve the pains of one of the fellows mentioned above. It was my hope that I was right in saying, ***Jesus has given everyone His Holy Spirit to guide and counsel us.*** My thoughts were that Jesus said He would not abandon us when He would leave by His sacrifice on the cross, and He would send His Holy Spirit to be with us as our comforter and to counsel us. Since God loved *all* (the people He created in the world), His Holy Spirit is with all to find the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Being part of God's Kingdom of Heaven opens doors for “anything is possible.” But only by faith in God, “who wants to be our God,” is it possible. The work of the Holy Spirit helps everyone to reach out to Jesus or just look to Him *because* Jesus has already been waiting for us to reach out to Him.

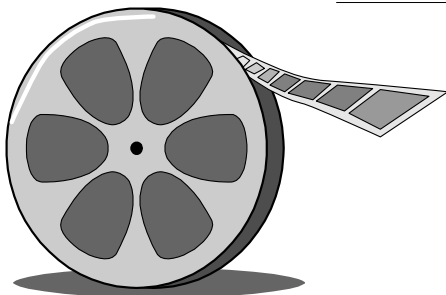
It Just Happens* ... I had wondered about when a person would receive the Holy Spirit, years ago. I remembered asking people I considered knowledgeable in the Word. I don't remember what I was left to believe, but during a “Discipleship Training Course” led by Pastor Gary, I got “ears to hear” (and understand in depth). I had developed a

hunger to discover the Truths from God's Word. That was a leading of the Holy Spirit within my heart as a believer. After a discussion with other believers, it became apparent that the Holy Spirit is near as Jesus proclaims. With the Holy Spirit's leading for all we realize the love nature of God. When we profess our faith in Jesus as our Savior and the sacrifice made for our sins, the Holy Spirit of God comes into us. Do a word study on “Holy Spirit” in the Bible, using either a Bible concordance or Bible software. The best place to start is in the book of John, by studying chapters 14-16. One of the key verses is John 14:15-17. Hopefully, you will develop a hunger for what God is saying. As you “discover” His loving nature and seeking His Ways you will be given ears to hear the Truth that sets us free. Acknowledging God and rejoicing in His Goodness will become second nature and will keep us on the narrow path in the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Amen and Amen.

“Unless the LORD builds the house, its builders labor uselessly.” Psalm 127:1

Author's note: This article's title “It Just Happens*...” counters the cliché ... things just don't happen. “It” will stand for the world view one chooses to abide in. “Just” is the character of the God who wants to be our God. He has made us in His image – righteous; by faith in God. “Happens” will be the events and experiences God uses to grow our faith. All things work for the glory of God. When we turn from our ways and we look to God and live His Word – His plan for us unfolds. ~V~

Movie Night **Friday, July 28 at 7:00 PM**



We show a movie once each month, in Fellowship Hall, usually on the fourth Friday. The movies shown in the past have covered a range of genres, and were usually thought provoking.

We are able to show these movies based on the church's CVLI® license. However, this license does not allow us to advertise or publicize the names of these movies to the general public, and they are always free of charge.

We usually have free snacks available, and you are also welcome to bring your own meal, if you wish. So, please join us for a night out at the movies!





JULY 2023

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1
2 Communion Sunday (Note #1)	3	4 Independence Day	5 (††)	6 (**)	7	8
9 FCC Worship; Coffee Hour after Worship (Note #2)	10	11	12 (††)	13 (**)	14	15
16 Communion Sunday (Note #3)	17	18	19 (††)	20 (**)	21	22
23 FCC Worship; Coffee Hour after Worship (Note #4)	24	25	26 (††)	27 (**)	28 Movie Night (Note #5)	29
30 FCC Worship (Note #6)	31					

Calendar Notes:

- #1) 7/2 — Communion Sunday: **10:27 AM.**
- #2) 7/9 — FCC Worship: **10:27 AM. ALSO:** Coffee Hour after Worship.
- #3) 7/16 — Communion Sunday: **10:27 AM.**
- #4) 7/23 — FCC Worship: **10:27 AM. ALSO:** Coffee Hour after Worship.
- #5) 7/28 — Movie Night — in Fellowship Hall: **7:00 PM.**
- #6) 7/30 — FCC Worship: **10:27 AM.**

(††) Wednesday Bible Study: **3:00 PM** (in Fellowship Hall)

(**) Thursday Prayer: **3:00 PM** (in FCC Parlor).

