



Cover Her with Love

(Planting Seeds of Faith)

The message concerning Faith that we proclaim: If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your Faith and are saved. As Scripture says, “Anyone who believes in Him will never be put to shame.”

For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on Him, for “everyone who calls on the Name of the Lord will be saved.”

(Romans 10: 8-13)

Good morning, guys!! Yes, another cold Saturday morning; but it’s warm in **Eli’s Golden Apple** and the fellowship is true. Come join in on the conversation as we surround ourselves with guys who strengthen and encourage one another; building a strong bond that encourages each other and honors Christ. The coffee is hot and the topic is timeless as we seek out the Upper Narrative, peering thru the lens of Scripture.

Feels good to be here; but as we leave and enter the real world – all is not necessarily pleasant. We are a discipleship group and the Wisdom we find in the Word and the power we sense in the God-sightings, prepares us for our walk in a broken world. The absence of fear is not normal and simple contentment is not natural. Indeed, the Apostle Paul says that contentment is *learned*. (**Philippians 4: 11**)

But what of the poor gal who doesn't know the Lord?? What do you do when that which you fear the most suddenly devastates your life? Where do you turn? On her own, will she desperately pursue whatever she thinks will satisfy, moving on to the next prop, the moment she realizes it won't?

Cast your burden upon the LORD, and He will sustain you; He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.
(Psalm 55:22)

As disciples who minister to one another and learn together and share God's miracles in our lives, we are learning to *count it all Joy* (James 1: 2). We have learned that often it requires experiencing what we have feared the most, in order to acquire true Joy. We don't try to secure happiness without Christ. We have learned that suffering produces endurance and character (Romans 5: 3, 4) and leads to Hope in a life fulfilled in Christ. As we pursue God and lift up to Him our longing for wholeness, we experience surpassing Peace (Phil. 4: 6,7).

*Therefore, since we have been justified by Faith, we have Peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.
2 Through Him we have also obtained access by Faith into this Grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in Hope of the Glory of God. 3 Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance,
4 and endurance produces character, and character produces Hope, 5 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.*
(James 5: 1-5)

Meanwhile, our hearts ache for our friends who mourn without the benefit of the Holy Spirit. Saturday morning, I presented to the group a situation where I am about to attend a funeral where the young husband of a dear friend has died. Neither (we are pretty sure) know the Lord. I am quickly annoyed by the well-meaning but groundless platitudes of unbelieving friends; or the oft used phrase (to the point that it sounds like a cliché to me) that, 'he is in a better place.' Chances are that he is burning in hell. But, I certainly don't want to use that approach! I *do* want to comfort her, bolster her spirits and strength for tomorrow and, hopefully, lead her to the Lord.

So, in the spirit of discipleship, we did some 'role-playing.' We mostly focused on bringing the Love of God to her. Cover her with Love and compassion. We can all relate to grief. We all agreed that we could only speak Truth. And the Truth is: 'even tho it may be hard to believe under the circumstances, my friend, God loves you and pursues you and wants to save and empower you.'
'I join you in your pain, this is not pleasant, but the Lord allows trials and we are not insulated from pain. And in your grief, pain, anger and frustration – He loves you and has purpose for you.'

For I know the plans I have for you, says the LORD. "They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a Hope. (Jeremiah 29: 11)

'It's OK to wrestle with God (at least she would be acknowledging Him) and unleash your feelings on Him; and remember, He lost a Son at a very young age, and He grieved as well. In your lowest moment, He will send His best people.' Mostly, just 'love-on' her and be there for her.

Some other points were made that we understand; but we are seasoned Christians who are devoted to the Scriptures and believe every 'syllable' of the Word. I think these points would be better served a little farther down the road when she has had a chance to calm down and breath a little. These would be talking points over a cup of coffee: 'You are angry at God right now and wondering why this happened to you; but, what does God want you to learn from this?'

'God is God and He gives and takes away (Job 1: 21); but anyone who has a saving Faith in God, anyone who calls on the Name of Jesus – will be saved.' (Acts 2: 21)

God is not here to always make us happy, not a genie to grant every wish; He is not here to always change our circumstances, but to change us in our circumstances.'

All of these points seem to focus on a Father who wants to sanctify, to mold her into a person who is ready to represent Him to a failing world. On a Father who wants her to find Joy in the journey now; and find richness in relationship and (someday) eternal bliss in Heaven forever.

*Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, surely I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.
(Isaiah 41:10)*

My approach, after prayer and listening to you Brothers and Pastor Tony (the last lesson I will ever hear from him) will be this: 'You have a large empty place in your heart right now. Linda and I can only fill a tiny, tiny little part of it. All these many friends surrounding you can only do the same. But later, we will talk about how God can fill that empty place totally and give your life meaning and fulfillment. Meanwhile, come to Hillside and be loved. Your journey will continue (without Chris) and you will be OK. There is a reason you are here, and we will be there for you all the way.'

*Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all Wisdom,
singing Psalms and Hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.
And whatever you do, in word or deed, **do everything in the Name of the Lord Jesus,**
giving thanks to God the Father through him. (Colossians 3:16, 17)*



*I sought the LORD, and He answered me; He delivered me from all my fears.
Those who look to Him are **radiant with Joy**; their faces shall never be ashamed.
(Psalm 34: 4, 5)*

Let's go into prayer.

P.U.S.H. Pray Until Something Happens

Prayer: a passion for the Presence of God!



Be joyful in Hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. (Romans 12: 12)

*Prayer is more powerful than all your self-efforts. Pray **big** and watch God work.*

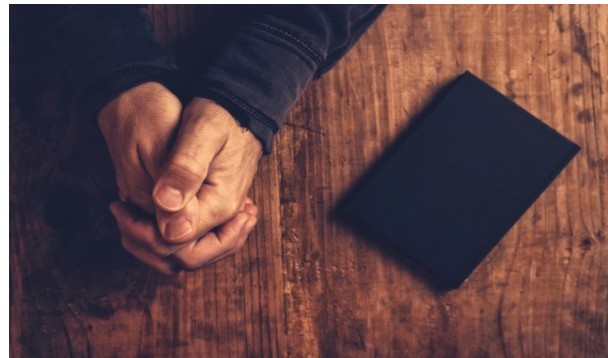
When prayer becomes your habit – miracles become your lifestyle.

Thru prayer, we find fulfillment and true Joy and develop our saving Faith in Father God. We don't need the platitudes of society to provide Peace.

Thru prayer, we can ask the Holy Spirit for just the right words to help a friend thru troubling times. We can be a 'bridge over troubled waters' or, better yet, walk thru those waters with her.

*This hard place in which you perhaps find yourself is the very place in which God is giving you **opportunity to look only to Him**, to spend time in prayer, and to learn long-suffering, gentleness, meekness - in short, to learn the depths of the Love that Christ Himself has poured out on all of us.* (Elisabeth Elliot, missionary, author)

Fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of Faith. For the Joy set before Him, He endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12: 2)

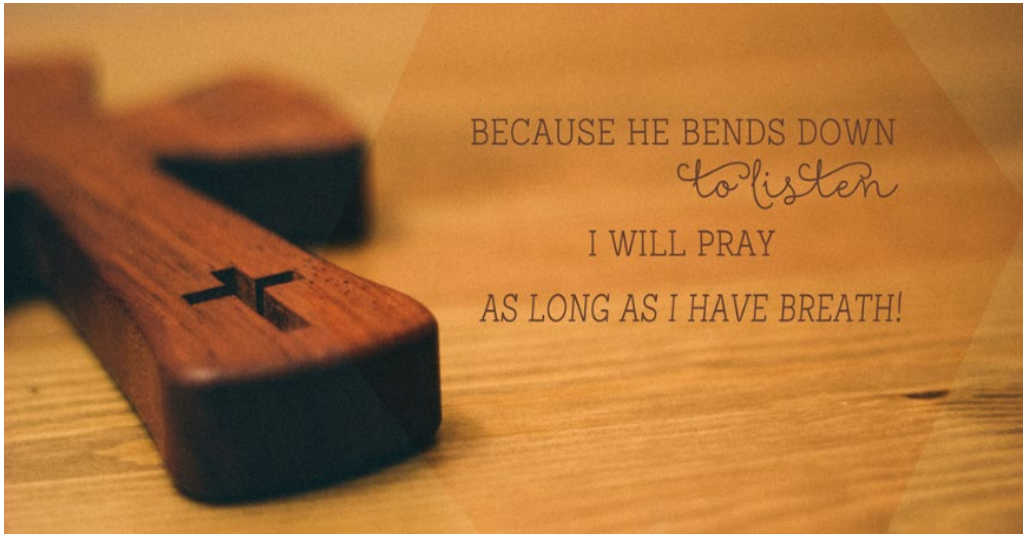


Men ought always to pray, and not to faint. (Luke 18: 1)

Prayer is our powerline.

Let us saturate everything we do in prayer.

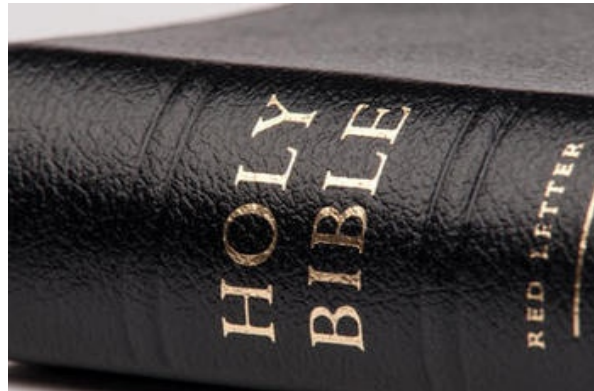
Prayer is the intimate, honest expression of the soul's dependence on God.



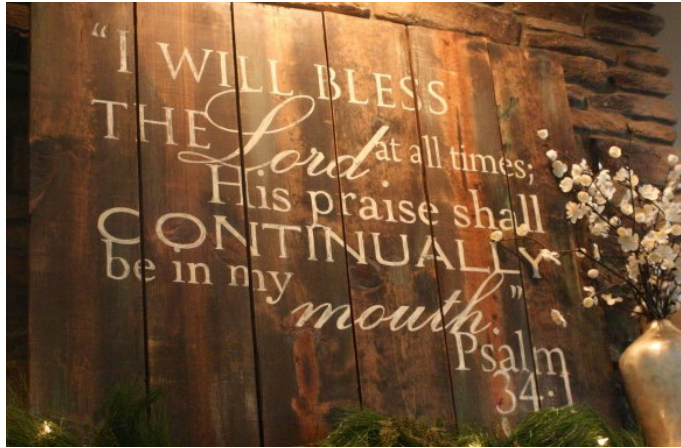
Who can you pray for today?
Who might God be putting in your path?

Call onto me, and I will answer thee. (Jeremiah 33: 3)

*In the morning, Lord, You hear my voice;
in the morning I lay my requests before You and wait expectantly.
(Psalm 5: 3)*



Let the fragrance of our prayers arise



I constantly remember you in my prayers. (2 Timothy 1: 3)

God Sightings/God Residing

See God thru His amazing creation. Embrace God thru the work He is doing inside you.

Stop and consider God's wonders. (Job 37: 14)

*I believe in Christianity as I believe in the rising sun;
not because I see it, but by it, I can see all else. (C.S. Lewis)*

Saturday, I will share with you guys an experience where God made Himself very clear. Suffice it to say for now that sometimes God doesn't answer our questions, our requests for guidance, with a simple yes or no. Sometimes He throws a couple miracles at us, instead. And He humbles us in the process. Can't wait to relate my story to you Saturday. At least I thought it was exciting. It was definitely God!

God sightings stir us to worship. And I stand in awe of You.

Have you seen God, lately?

Focus on Faith

Faith is not a cushion for me to fall back upon – it is my working energy. (Helen Keller)

It's not the strength of your Faith that saves you, but the strength of Him upon whom you rely.

(Charles Spurgeon, Pastor, author, 'Prince of Preachers')

In Church, this morning, our young, new Pastor Josh admonished us not to judge the harvest by the size of the seed. In our Lower Story narrative, we feel it takes a big seed to make a big tree. In God's Upper Story narrative, however, He sees things differently. The mustard seed is one of the tiniest, insignificant and common seeds in the area and the Jews of that day, who Jesus talked with, would know exactly what He was saying. This tiny seed would become a tree twenty feet high and wide and birds would *make nests in its shade (Mark 4: 32)*. We don't know how the miracle of the mustard seed works; *he sleeps and rises night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows and he knows not how (Mark 4: 27)*. It's a matter of Faith. He plants and waters and waits. He cannot control the sunshine. Then, *the earth produces by itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear (Mark 4: 28)*.

Tiny gifts can make a difference in real life. A simple little quarter doesn't count for much anymore; but have you ever been grocery shopping at Aldi's and someone says, 'take my cart and you can keep the quarter'? Feels good. Makes you want to pass it on and do the same for the next fellow. That little seed of generosity reaped a big harvest of people just feeling good about the day. In God's narrative, the tiny things, like seeds of Faith, bring about great effects and rippling results.

Pray that I can plant a seed of Faith in our friend's heart and watch God sprout a new Believer and harvest a soul. One less for Satan – one more for Christ.

Faith is: to Hear (Romans 10: 17), to Believe (Hebrews 11: 6), and to Obey (James 1: 22) the Word of God (Matthew 6: 33, 34).

Faith is the currency of God's economy.

Conclusion

The events of our lives can change quickly. They may seem uncanny and uncertain; but one thing we know to be true – thru all of life's unexpected moments, our God will never leave us. *Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go (Joshua 1: 9).* Leaning on this Truth is an appropriate Faith response. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit is the One constant throughout our lives.

Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the Lord your God is the One who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. (Deuteronomy 31:6)

In this world there will be pain (John 16:33) no doubt about it; but a Brother is born for adversity (Proverbs 17: 17) and we got Brothers here on Saturday morning who 'have got your back.' So, come on down and let's talk about it. Bring your pain; you'll be glad you did. Your Bro. in Christ, Dale.

This Saturday, we will finish chapter 8, and then next week, ponder the statement, 'all anger is preceded by judgment.' See you there!

Breakfast Benediction

May you all be Blessed real good!

*In 1979, Dr. Gabriel Barkay and his team discovered two silver scrolls in a burial ground outside the Old City of Jerusalem. In 2004, after twenty-five years of careful research, scholars confirmed that the scrolls were **the oldest biblical text in existence**, having been buried in 600 BC. What I find particularly moving is what the scrolls contain -- the priestly blessing that God wanted spoken over His people: *the Lord bless you and keep you ; the Lord make His face shine on you (Numbers 6:24, 25).* In giving this benediction, God showed Aaron and his sons (through Moses) how to bless the people on His behalf. The leaders were to memorize the words in the form God gave, so they would speak to them just as God desired. Note how these words emphasized that God is the One who blesses, for three times they say, *the Lord*. And six times He says, *you*, reflecting just how much God wants His people to receive His Love and favor. Ponder for a moment that the oldest existing fragments of the Bible tell of God's desire to Bless. What a reminder of God's boundless Love and how He wants to be in a relationship with us. If you feel far from*

God today, hold tightly to the promise in these ancient words. May the Lord bless you; may the Lord keep you. (Amy Boucher Pye, author, speaker)

²⁴ The LORD bless you and keep you;
²⁵ the LORD make His face to shine upon you and be gracious to you;
²⁶ the LORD lift up His countenance upon you and give you Peace.
So shall they put My name upon the people of Israel, and I will bless them. (Numbers 6:24-27)

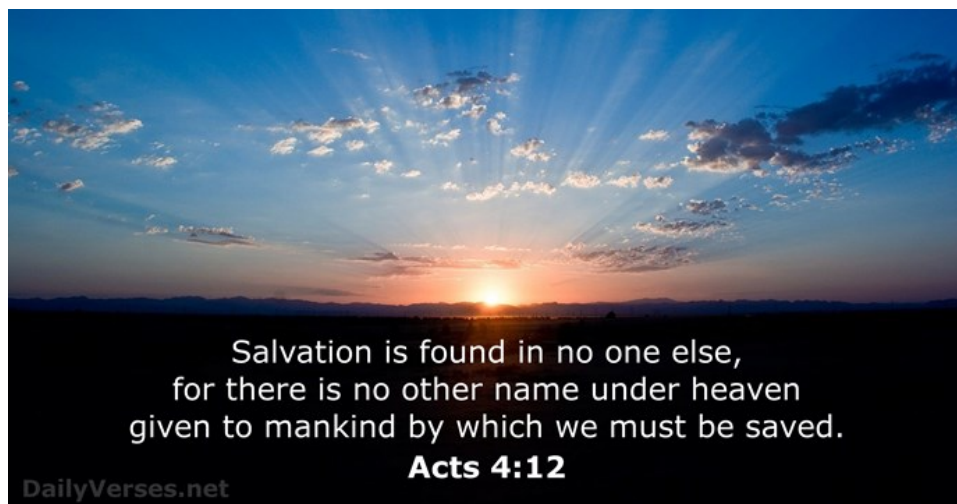
.....and may the dust of your Rabbi's feet cover your clothing.

*Why You ever chose me has always been a mystery. All my life, I've been told I belong
At the end of a line with all the other Not-Quites, with all the Never-Get-It-Rights.
But it turns out they are the ones You were looking for all this time.*

*'Cause I'm just a nobody, trying to tell everybody, all about Somebody who saved my soul.
Ever since You rescued me, You gave my heart a song to sing.
I'm living for the world to see nobody but Jesus.*

*Moses had stage fright and David brought a rock to a sword fight.
You picked twelve outsiders nobody would've chosen, and You changed the world.
Well, the moral of the story is, everybody's got a purpose.
So when I hear that devil start talking to me, saying, "Who do you think you are?"
I say, I'm just a nobody trying to tell everybody, all about Somebody who saved my soul.
Ever since You rescued me, You gave my heart a song to sing.
I'm living for the world to see nobody but Jesus.*

*So, let me go down, down, down in history as another blood-bought faithful member of the family.
And if they all forget my name, well, that's fine with me, I'm living for the world to see nobody but Jesus.
Nobody but Jesus.*



The Lord is at hand (Philippians 4: 5)