

The Bright and Morning Star

"All the Good News
That's Fit to Print"

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FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH, TARRYTOWN, NY

Fall 2020

God is good,
all the time.
And all the
time,
God is good.

Hope for Tomorrow

by Pastor Torrey Robinson

They call it the "holiday season", that period from Thanksgiving to New Years. It is only fitting that Thanksgiving kicks off this special time of year. As we gather with family and friends on Thanksgiving, we reflect on the year gone by, and thank God as we recall His goodness to us.

It is ironic that this festive "holiday season" is also the darkest time of the year, as December 21st marks the winter solstice, the shortest period of daylight in the year. This year, as the COVID-19 pandemic surges and as many people around the world struggle in the financial fallout from reduced hours and layoffs, it is a dark time for many. But these dark days make a great time to recall the truth we recite together at the end of every worship service. God is good, all the time. And all the time, God is good.

In Psalm 92, the psalmist proclaims, "*It is good to give thanks to the Lord and to sing praises to Your name, O Most High, to declare Your lovingkindness in the morning and Your faithfulness by night.*"

As we bring the challenging year of 2020 to a close, we do so with thanksgiving and praise. That is the purpose of this edition of the *Bright and Morningstar Newsletter*. I invite you to peruse these pages to read stories of God's goodness in this past year. It is my hope that what we share will encourage you. And as you read each of the articles in this newsletter, I invite you to pray for the team member who wrote each story. ★

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How Do We Do VBS Online?

by Steve Armstrong, Associate Pastor

When it became clear that people didn't feel comfortable with a traditional, in-person VBS program, I really struggled with that question. Even though we'd been doing Sunday service, small groups, and youth groups online, VBS felt like a totally different animal.

First, we identified a curriculum. We chose a program

stuff. The event was intended to put a face on VBS (for campers and volunteers alike!).

On Sunday, we hosted a Kick-Off meetup on Zoom. Debbie Ocheltree led this event, introducing the week and getting the kids excited about the theme. Lynn Lange, Torrey Robinson, Jacob Lange, Maria Gaspar, and I led breakout groups

so the kids could chat with other campers. We also gave them a sneak peek at the first day's story.

Starting Monday, families held camp in their homes. We got some awesome pictures of families doing VBS together! I sent out daily emails to keep in contact with families. We hosted a second Zoom meetup on Wednesday, where we discussed some of the biblical truths they'd been learning so far. Kids were definitely engaged during these short sessions.

To cap off the week, our team of volunteers drove by kids' houses and distrib-

uted a few more fun things, plus gave them a certificate for completing VBS. Again, the purpose of the driveby's was to help kids see that when they did VBS at home, they were part of something bigger. Kids appreciated the contact and we ap-

called Bolt!, which was tailor-made to be used online. Want to check it out? Just click here and enter LETSBOLT (all caps for the password). There are three days of VBS videos, each one with a Bible story, game, craft, and a song.

Next, we brainstormed how to make this VBS experience personal. We didn't want kids to feel like they were just watching a video on YouTube; we wanted them to feel connected to a community.

To that end, on Saturday we arranged for families to pick up their "Bucket of Fun" at the church. The buckets (assembled by Mindi Blakey and Jen Polimeno) were filled with snacks, games, stickers, assorted goodies, plus all the materials families would need for VBS. At the church, we had VBS singers/dancers (Catherine & Caroline Grimes, Jashon Samples, and Katrina Lange) perform some old VBS favorites as we cheered all the campers coming to pick up their

preciated the chance to interact with them one more time.

Pray for the 38 kids and 23 families who attended Camp. Pray that the Holy Spirit and the Word of God will transform their hearts and lives, even though we weren't able to meet in person. In all of this, we are confident in God's ability to move, as God's love and power are boundless.

And I'd like to offer a special note to all those who helped make VBS happen, and to the Church family for supporting this ministry through prayer and giving.★



Testimony of Grace

by Doug Morton, Elder

Lately, God's been teaching me a few things. Now the reality is that God is always teaching us something, but more often than not, our attention to the spiritual life lessons we can and should be learning as we go through our daily routines is sadly lacking. But 2020 has been a unique year for so many. The tragedy of COVID has been a major factor in the lives of us all. It certainly has served as a vehicle for teaching me some lessons.

The lesson that has become so real to me lately, is the lesson of God's Grace. In sitting down with my wife, we often recount the material, physical, emotional, and spiritual blessings that God has given us. So many of these blessings are ones that bring us pleasure in some way, shape, or form. But God also shows us his grace and blessings in the painful aspects of life. Earlier this year, my father died at the age of 88. Grief is always painful, but the COVID environment, as it has for so many, added challenges and stress for our family in dealing with that grief. At about the same time, I was diagnosed with a kidney tumor. Once again, COVID complicated an already emotionally and physically challenging situation.

In his book, *The Problem of Pain*, C.S. Lewis writes, "God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences, but shouts in our pains. It is his megaphone to rouse a deaf world." Pain does have a tendency to catch our attention, cause us to ask questions, and seek out answers. What I came to realize was not so much about the reality of God's grace, but more so about what to do with it. Having been blessed far beyond what I deserve or could ever imagine, what should be my response? For sure, a constant attitude of gratitude goes without saying. But realizing how my "grace account" was so overflowing, this truth hit me. Even in our most painful and challenging situations, God wants us to draw from that account and personally disburse God's grace to those around us. It doesn't matter how I feel. It doesn't matter whether or not I think that an individual deserves grace. God reminds me that I don't get what I truly deserve.

God is good. My dad is with Christ and my tumor has been removed. My body is healing and because of the sacrifice and love of Jesus, I continue to enjoy His blessings and grace.★

Why Do I Profess to Being a Christian?

by Mindy Blakey

I was raised in a Christian home, so I do not recall a time when I was not hearing about Jesus. I was blessed to attend churches that taught me about the truths and promises of the Bible. I have asked Jesus to come "live in my heart: around the age of 6 or 7 but...as a teenager, my faith really grew and became my own. My church had a wonderful team of youth leaders that impressed on me the importance of not relying on my parent's salvation, but committing to following Jesus with my whole heart.

IT IS ALL ABOUT GRACE

This is not to say that I am perfect...far from it. I believe wholeheartedly that it is only the grace of God that has brought me where I am today.

Grace is "the free and unmerited favor of God, as manifested in the salvation of sinner and the bestowal of blessings."

God accepts people. He approves of us as his children, despite inadequacies within ourselves. When our selfish nature overrides gratitude...God has the grace on us. He sent His Son to give His life for us. He forgives all out transgressions.

Hebrews 4:16 says, "Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

When we are at our worst, 2 Corinthians 12:9 says, "(Jesus) grace is all you need, (His) power works best in weakness."

Sure these past months have been rough. But be more grateful for the blessings that you do have.

So seeing our weaknesses and need for something outside ourselves, it is how we accept God's grace.

WORKING TO BE A BETTER EXAMPLE OF CHRIST TODAY, THAN I WAS YESTERDAY

First: Have grace for oneself. Accept that mistakes will be made, but grow from them.

At times, I can be more forgiving of others, than my own self.

Second: Strive to treat others as Christ would. As a church, we are called to be Christ's hands and feet and help in a way that we are able.

There are so many people in today's world.

Third: Be more thankful. Sure these past months have been rough. But be more grateful for the blessings that you do have.

In this season, I am GETTING this opportunity to spend more time with my family. I have also technology to stay connected with friends, shelter, the food I eat, and a Christian community to "do life with".

I am still working on being a better example of Christ and expect that it will be a lifelong journey. My friends and family alike can point out many of my flaws; so I wholeheartedly believe the lyrics to that hymn:

Amazing Grace!

How Sweet the Sound.

That saved a Wretch like ME!

YOU ARE NEVER TOO IMPERFECT TO BE PERFECT FOR GOD'S GRACE.★

Testimony of Hope

by Christina

Originally shared on Sunday, Nov. 29, 2020 service

Good morning Church Family, my name is Christina and I'm honored to share a brief testimony of thanks for you this morning, in light of everything we've experienced as a community these past few months, this past year really, and also specific to my experience recently.

As most of you I'm sure know, my dad was diagnosed with a rare brain tumor in September, for which he had surgery and has since been undergoing daily treatment. As the one who made the initial 911 call, and as an only child, it's been, well, earth upending for me. But this has also brought to the light so much of what I am thankful for in this season. I think situations like this, years like this, have a way of guiding us to what's really important.

Jesus says in Matthew 19, verse 26, *'With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible.'* For context, Jesus is referring to the camel through the eye of a needle metaphor here. Man's impossible "This" in 2020 might be the coronavirus, it might be unity, it could be a number of things, but through Jesus all things, things we cannot even fathom with our logics and our science, are possible.

Among many other things, I am thankful for my own health, for the support I have around me, and I am thankful for how this epidemic, which can seem so huge and insurmountable, reminds us of how small we are. I mean how small we are, how small the coronavirus is, in comparison to the Lord and God's plan for us. This time has shown how connected we are, how much we need connection, a great

paradox in an age of "distancing" and "quarantine" and isolation.

And I find that amidst all the noise of our crazy daily lives and all the news headlines, there is one voice that always rises louder, one light that always makes a path for us.

If you catch my metaphor, that voice is Jesus. And this voice won't always say what we want to hear, and we may not always hear it, but Jesus always has a purpose, for whatever we go through.

So I've spent these last couple months really holding on to that light and listening for that voice. My dad, even on the worst of days when he feels the least himself, even then, he still always talks about Jesus's love, Jesus's care, for him, even when he can't necessarily see it, he knows

Jesus is there.

And that's why my other biggest gratitude this season, personally, is for my family. For my mom who has been so moved that she uses her time in the waiting room every morning to encourage the other caregivers and patients waiting around her. I am reminded every day of my wish to grow more like my dad, and to care for him as he has cared for me and the way he shows me God's grace in all things.

And I'm very lucky to have been raised in this church, where my parents were married 31 years ago, and getting to know the church family the past 23 years that I've been around.

Thank you for listening.★

**...this epidemic, which
can seem so huge and
insurmountable, reminds us
of how small we are.**

TOP 20 CHRISTIAN SONGS

1 Who You Are To Me Chris Tomlin Featuring Lady A	11 Revolutionary Josh Wilson
2 Jump Switch	12 Love God, Love People Danny Gokey
3 Who Am I Need to Breathe	13 Never Have I Ever Hillsong Young & Free
4 God So Loved We The Kingdom	14 Born Ready Coby James
5 Rise Up (Lazarus) Cain	15 Truth Be Told Matthew West
6 Glorify Jordan Feliz	16 Joy Invincible Switchfoot Featuring Jenn Johnson
7 I Trust You Jonathan Taylor	17 Graves Into Gardens Elevation Worship
8 Famous For (I Believe) Tauren Wells Featuring Jenn Johnson	18 Wake Up Sleeper Austin French
9 Devil Is A Liar Colton Dixon	19 You Keep Hope Alive Mandisa & John Reddick
10 There Was Jesus Zach Williams & Dolly Parton	20 Starts With Me tobyMac Featuring Aaron Cole

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Zoom and In-Person Worship Service: Sunday 10:30 am • Sunday School 9:30 am • Spanish Church 3:00 pme

The Bright and Morning Star is seeking contributions for the next issue on any topics of interest which glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.

Please send articles to: *The Bright and Morning Star* newsletter at the address above.

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