

08/01/2016
Its Hip To Be Square

"Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up" (Jas.4:10).

In 1986, Huey Lewis co-wrote a song entitled "Its Hip To Be Square." The overriding sentiment of the song is that the writer has removed himself from the humdrum of life to a simpler way..."Don't tell me I'm crazy..Don't tell me I'm nowhere... Take it from me... Its hip to be square..." Today's verse is from a section in the epistle of James about submitting to the Lord. If you read verses 1-10, you'll find that it talks about stuff we ought to give up and ways we should not act if we truly want to be one of the Lord's people. We can't be friends with the Lord and the world at the same time, and God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble... The Lord is looking for purity in our lives, and we must be humble enough to realize it. The old ways of the world will lead us down a path that we should not want to travel. As we look at the political race we are mired in right now, we see folks who are in the habit of extolling their own virtues, or as they did at the conventions, have other people do it for them. How much "humble" do we see? It is our responsibility as Christians to reflect what is good about being a follower of Jesus. Aren't we always looking for a lift or a boost in life? Today's verse is the unembellished way to get it. It comes from an absolute humble heart... Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up... I think Huey Lewis might have gotten it.... Maybe it is hip to be square...

Have a great start to your week... Begin it with a RAK or two... Love mark Phil.4:11

08/02/2016
The Doxology

"Praise God, from whom all blessings flow;
Praise Him all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host;
Praise father, Son and Holy Ghost!"

Doxology by Thomas Ken 1709

Merriam Webster describes a doxology as a liturgical expression of praise to God. In its completion, it usually includes the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The apostle Paul really cared for the church at Ephesus, as he stayed there for over two and a half years. We have these words recorded in the Book of Acts regarding his departure; "They all wept and embraced him and kissed him. What grieved them most was his statement that they would never see his face again. Then they accompanied him to the ship" (20:36-38). When Paul writes his letter to them, its obvious what a special place they have in his heart. It would be good for all of us to read and meditate upon Eph.1:1-14. Verses 3-14 has often been called a doxology because it recites what God has done and is an expression of worship to honor Him... The verses will take on a

special meaning to all of us if we read them this way; In verses 3-6, Paul speaks of the blessings we have through the Father... Next, in verses 7-12, we have those that are dedicated to the Son. Finally, there are the blessing we have through the Holy Spirit in verses 13-14... I think this is a cool way of searching the scriptures, after all, we are supposed to worship Him in Spirit and in truth... (Jn.4:24). I would like to look at each part of this section of Ephesians this week, and I think we can find a true devotional value in them. I hope you will read along with me so that our praise to the Lord will become more and more meaningful...I don't know about you, but I think I'll be singing Doxology all day long... Pretty good stuff to be going through our hearts and minds, wouldn't you say?

Have a wonderful day.... Do good and give God the credit.... Love mark Phil.4:11

08/03/2016
Doxology - Praise God

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ" (Eph.1:3).

In verses 3-6, the apostle Paul exhorts the blessing(s) we have through God the Father... Jewish people used the word "bless" to express both God's kindness to us (blessed us in the heavenly realms) and our praise or thanks to Him. This occurs five times in the Book of Ephesians, and emphasizes Paul's perception that in the exaltation of Christ (his resurrection and enthronement at God's right hand) and in the union with the exalted Christ, that ultimate issues are involved. These issues that pertain to the divine realm and in the final analysis are worked out in and from that realm...I know that this section (3-6) is supposed to be about the doxology of God, but it is impossible to subtract Jesus from the Father... Lets listen to Jesus' words after His resurrection; "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, I am returning to my Father to my God and your God" (Jn.20:17). We see here that Jesus says that God is both His Father and our Father too... Paul asserts here in verse three that through their union with the exalted Christ, Christians have already been made beneficiaries of every spiritual blessing that belongs to and comes from the heavenly realm. We have a wonderful and glorious completion of this part of the doxology in verse six. "To the praise of His glorious grace, which he freely gives us through the One He loves..." We find here that we are elected by grace. Why? I believe this is the beginning of the doxology... It is for God's glory! We ought to wake up each morning with praise for our Father in our hearts and on our lips.. God has started the ball of salvation rolling toward its inexorable end, which is eternal life with Him.... Doxology Part 1.... Praise God....

Have a great day... Make your little part of the world better.... Love mark Phil.4:11

08/04/2016
Doxology Part 2 - Praise Jesus

"In order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of His glory"
(Eph.1:12).

In verses 7-12 we find the second part of the apostle Paul's doxology, in the Book of Ephesians, this time referring to Jesus. Christ now takes center stage, as we ponder about how we are blessed to have Him in our lives, and how worthy of our praise that he is... "In Him we have redemption through His blood, forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding" (V 7). The folks in Ephesus were certainly familiar with the Greco-Roman practice of redemption, as slaves were set free by the payment of a ransom. He is letting them and us know that we were once slaves to sin, but are set free and have redemption through His blood... This theme is repeated again and again in the New Testament (2:13; 1 Pet.1:18-19)... "Who gave Himself for us to redeem us from all wickedness and to purify for Himself a people that are His very own..." (Tit.2:14). When things don't always seem to add up, Paul provides us with a bit of math to allow it to "add up..." "To be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment ---- to bring all things together under one head, even Christ" (V 10). Christ is worthy to be the object of our praise because "in Him" says that He is at the very center of God's plan for us... Whether the universe or the individual Christian is in view, only in a relationship with Christ is there a meaningful future. Today's verse (12) wraps up it all up in a perfect package for us... In order that we, who were the 1st hope in Christ, might be for the praise of His glory... Doxology, Part 2... Lets us always give praise to Jesus Christ...

Have a great day.... Let His light shine through you.... Love mark Phil.4:11

08/05/2016
Doxology Part 3 - Praise The Holy Spirit

"And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in Him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession ---- to the praise of His glory" (Eph.1:13-14).

As we complete the doxology found in the 1st chapter of the Book of Ephesians today, lets review a bit. Verses 3-6 mark the blessings found in God, while 7-12, speaks of those that come through the Son. In verses 13-14 we find that the Holy Spirit is worthy to be praised because of the blessedness of His nature... The apostle Paul is speaking to Ephesian Christians here, and to us. He speaks about the Word of truth, the gospel of your salvation and of its importance. The

Spirit inspired Word was and is so important, that those who received it were marked with a seal... Those who accept the Word into obedience receive the promised Holy Spirit... Verse 14 continues to make some astounding statements about the Holy Spirit. First, He is the deposit guaranteeing our inheritance... WOW! He is a stone cold guarantee that the promise of eternal life given to us by the Lord through our obedience to Him will be carried out. "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Christ Jesus for the forgiveness of sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2:38). In His master plan, God did not give us Himself and His Son and then leave us to languish and try to work everything out by ourselves... The promised Holy Spirit is ours to guarantee that our promised inheritance will be carried out until the redemption of those who are God's possession, today's verse says... The doxology is complete as Paul writes; to the praise of His glory... Lets finish with the song;

Praise God, from whom all blessings flow; Praise Him, all creatures here below;
Praise Him above, ye heavenly host; Praise Father, Son and Holy Ghost...

Have a wonderful day... T G I F Thank God I'm Forgiven.... Love mark Phil.4:11

08/06/2016
Baptisms

There are many baptisms in the Bible. Today I will test your knowledge about a few of them...
As always, have fun.

TRUE OR FALSE

- _____ 1. Simon the sorcerer came to be baptized by Philip.
- _____ 2. Paul referred to the crossing of the Red Sea as a baptism.
- _____ 3. Lydia was baptized by Paul and Barnabas.
- _____ 4. John the Baptist promised that one after him would baptize with the Holy Spirit and fire.
- _____ 5. Ananias baptized Paul.
- _____ 6. In Corinth, Crispus, the synagogue ruler, believed and was baptized by Paul.
- _____ 7. In Ephesus, Paul baptized 12 men who had been baptized by John the Baptist.

_____ 8. The Gospel of Mark begins with John the Baptist preaching in the desert.

_____ 9. One Lord, one faith, one baptism is found in the Book of Philippians.

_____ 10. The Book of Hebrews compares the flood waters at the time of Noah to baptism.

Have a great weekend and a meaningful and glorifying day of worship on His day... Love mark
Phil.4:11

08/08/2016

The Miracles Of Jesus... Water To Wine

"This, the first of His miraculous signs, Jesus performed at Cana in Galilee. He revealed His glory, and His disciples put their faith in Him" (Jn.2:11).

I would like to begin a series of devotionals about the miracles of Jesus, so what better place to begin than with His first one. Perhaps we ought to start with an observation about Jesus' miracles in general, as we might aptly ask, "why miracles?" There were times that Jesus acted in an almost ambivalent manner of His fame as a "wonder-worker..." For example, in Mk.5:43 after He healed the daughter of Jairus the Lord gave strict orders "not to let anyone know about this..." If the purpose of miracles was to broadcast His power, one would hardly expect Him to say, "keep quiet about it." We may even see frustration in Jesus' voice when he said, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe" (Jn.4:48). Maybe it is not too much of a stretch to say that the Lord performed miracles reluctantly, as a concession to human weakness. I think there is one thing we can be sure of... Jesus wanted His teachings, and not His power over nature, to be at the center of His ministry. Roughly 2,000 years of experience have taught believers that reported miracles have limited power to persuade, and the reason is apparent... The worth of testimonies depends on the credibility of those giving the report. Enthusiasts often report inaccurately. Surviving records from the ancient world demonstrate that both in Jewish and Greco-Roman circles, miracle workers abounded. Lets be sure that Jesus did not want to be confused with the charlatans who claimed to do miracles... We want to take a closer look this week at the reason Jesus performed the miracles He did. In them we know that we serve the Son of God, who had not only the truth on His lips, but the power to back up His words. We will start with the rather unspectacular turning of water to wine as we begin this series....

Have a great start to your week... Begin it with a RAK or two... Love mark Phil.4:11

08/09/2016
Soul Food

"His mother said to the servants, 'Do whatever He tells you' " (Jn.2:5).

Miracles guaranteed a stir, and Jesus' time on earth was brief... If charlatans gained attention with theatrics designed to deceive the credulous, then genuine miracles more than likely would gain even more. The miracles would dot the " i " on the truth and power of the gospel message. The turning of water into wine at the wedding feast in Cana, made this point in a precise manner because it was unspectacular. The compassion of Jesus was not at center stage as no one was healed or brought back from the dead... A violent storm was not calmed, and no large crowd was miraculously fed... Miracles were a means to an end in confirming the faith, knowledge and teaching of the message. As the church matured and the apostles recorded the New Testament, the need for the miraculous became less acute. The miracles confirmed the truth and proclaimed the Son of Mary to be the Son of God too... Since we've mentioned Mary, it appears that she had ties to the inner circle of the wedding party, as the unspeakable happened... They ran out of wine... There was no Diet Coke with a twist of lemon or sweetened ice tea back in those days. It was either water or wine... A distraught mom turned to her son, with the implication that He could do something about it... It would appear she knew that Jesus was extraordinary, as she had watched Him grow for 30 years and must have sensed a special relationship between Him and God. She may not have understood the implications of His name, "God with us," but she knew enough to be confident that He could do her a small favor. Are we confident enough in our extraordinary God and His Son? Are we knowing enough that we are able to think of God as someone we can go to at any time? Mary wanted to save her host from embarrassment, and God says that we ought to be embarrassed if we don't turn to Him....

Have a great day... Do good and give God the credit... Love mark Phil.4:11

08/10/2016

Obedient Servants

"Jesus said to the servants, 'Fill the jars with water;' so they filled them to the brim" (Jn.2:7).

"If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread" (Matt.4:3). The turning of water into wine at Cana didn't have to be Jesus' first miracle. The devil gave Him an opportunity to turn stones into bread, but He refused to do so... It would have been equally impressive, don't you think? Mary may have been stretching her prerogatives when she hinted to Jesus that He use His power over nature to help a kinsman save face. At its best, supplying a wedding feast with more wine seems to trivialize His mission on earth, and at its worst, it might take on the

appearance of showmanship... How was turning water into wine for a family acquaintance to save embarrassment any different than turning stones into bread? Perhaps the difference we might want to look at here is the presence of a rather large audience that included His disciples, servants and guests... Jesus didn't turn water into wine in the loneliness of a desert where it would have had little or no impact. But in this crowded gathering, Jesus became more than a carpenter's son living in Nazareth... At this point in Jesus' life, He was ready to inspire faith. In front of all these folks, He did so through this amazing miracle. When we all reflect on the situation and the miracle itself, doesn't it inspire faith in you too? We serve a Savior who not only had the message of truth, but the power to back it up. Perhaps we might use this as a comparison in our own lives. We are not only to speak the truth, but back it up with the way we live... As obedient servants, its almost like a miracle...

Have a wonderful day... Make your little part of the world better... Love mark Phil.4:11

08/11/2016
A Better Vintage

"Everyone brings out the choice wine first, and then the cheaper wine after the guests have had too much to drink; but you have saved the best till now" (Jn.2:10).

It would appear that folks have imbibed wine throughout history, and from today's recording of Jesus' first miracle, they did so at wedding feasts. Perhaps the master of the banquet was a sommelier of sorts, as he made the comment found in today's verse. John hints that he and the guests were unaware of the source of this special vintage, but the servants as well as Jesus' disciples knew the truth. Did it become common knowledge among the guests that Jesus was the source of this finer wine that He produced by a miracle? John did not say, but made it crystal clear that there were witnesses at the event. The disciples were in the process of learning from Jesus, and when "He thus revealed His glory, His disciples put their faith in Him" (V 11). Faith was taking root! During the course of the next few years, as sign followed after sign, and they heard Him teach, faith would grow... But lets get back to this particular miracle one more time... I would like to take this wine analogy to another level. Jesus not only changed water into wine, but by the evidence found in the story, it was a wine of much higher quality. I don't pretend to be a sommelier myself, but I know that people pay a lot of money for very special wines...When we decide to take Jesus fully into our lives, we get the Son of the Living God.... I don't know about you, but that's the best vintage that has ever been... The best has been saved just for us....

Have a great day.... Let His light shine through you... Love mark Phil.4:11

08/12/2016

Lydian Hospitality

"If you consider me a believer in the Lord, come and stay at my house....After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house, where they met with the brothers and encouraged them. Then they left" (Acts 16:15; 40).

The woman Lydia, flits in and out of our Bibles, only being mentioned here in the 16th chapter of the Book of Acts... We know that she was a successful business person from Thyatira who was a dealer in purple cloth. We know from history that this cloth was very expensive, with the dye coming from small mollusks. It took thousands of these mollusks to make just a drop of this costly dye. We know that Paul encountered her in Philippi, where there was no synagogue. We know that she was not familiar with Jesus, but knew about God. Paul studied with her there along the river and it says this; "The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message. When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us into her home" (V 14-15). Many folks read the Bible and hear what they need to do to be saved but don't act on it... Lydia did! I've really saved the best part of Lydia's story for last. Just as soon as Lydia became a Christian, she invited Paul and Silas to stay in their house. We all know that following this, Paul and Silas were attacked by a crowd, striped and beaten, and thrown into prison. The miraculous story of the earthquake and subsequent conversion of the jailer ensues, and Paul and Silas are told to leave the city. Before they left, where do you suppose that they went? If you guessed Lydia's home, you get bonus points today. Lydia's hospitality probably puts us all to shame, after all, if we invite someone into our homes, we must spend hours making it presentable... The word hospitable means being generous and friendly to guests... Lydia did not hesitate a milli-second in showing her hospitality to her new Christian family, and did it twice... It would do us good to follow the lead of this woman who makes just a brief appearance in the Bible, but a lasting effect... We all need to practice Lydian hospitality...

Have a wonderful day... T G I F Today God Is First... Love mark Phil.4:11

08/13/2016

Today's quiz is a difficult one about 1st century churches. I hope I test your knowledge of them this morning. As always, have fun...

_____ 1. According to Revelation, what church was neither hot or cold? (a) Sardis, (b) Pergamum, (c) Thyatira, (d) Laodicea.

_____ 2. In what city did the church probably begin in the home of Lydia? (a) Philippi, (b) Ephesus, (c) Corinth, (d) Philadelphia.

- _____ 3. What church had 2 bickering women named Euodia and Syntyche? (a) Philippi, (b) Corinth, (c) Antioch, (d) Ephesus.
- _____ 4. In what church did Paul raise up Eutychus from the dead after he fell out of a window? (a) Ephesus, (b) Troas, (c) Athens, (d) Berea.
- _____ 5. In what city did the sorcerers burn their evil books? (a) Corinth, (b) Philippi, (c) Ephesus, (d) Athens.
- _____ 6. At what church were the disciples 1st called Christians? (a) Philippi, (b) Corinth, (c) Antioch, (d) Sardis.
- _____ 7. What member of the Colossian church received a personal letter from Paul? (a) John, (b) Philemon, (c) Aquilla, (d) Clydeous?
- _____ 8. What church received epistles from two different apostles? (a) Ephesus, (b) Philippi, (c) Galatian, (d) Corinth.
- _____ 9. All the believers were together and had everything in common in this church. (a) Sardis, (b) Berea, (c) Jerusalem, (d) Thyatira.
- _____ 10. What church began at the Day of Pentecost? (a) Antioch, (b) Galilee, (c) Jerusalem, (d) Athens.

Have a great weekend and an uplifting and glorifying day of worship on His day... Love mark
Phil.4:11

08/15/2016
Miraculous Purpose

"When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you. Heal the sick who are there and tell them, The kingdom of God is near you" (Lk.10:9).

If the purpose of Jesus had to been to impress His contemporaries with His power as a miracle-worker, don't you think he could have more spectacular stuff than just healing the sick? Imagine if He would have taken thousands of folks to the Sea of Galilee, spread His arms and parted the waters and had them walk across on dry land... That would not only have been impressive, but it would have reminded them of Moses... Jesus trod a fine line with His miracles. On the one hand, miracles served to proclaim Him as Lord, but on the other, He was anxious to tamp down the excitement. Today's verse comes from the sending out of the 72... Notice His

instructions; "Heal the sick who are there and tell them, the kingdom of God is at hand." The purpose of His ministry was not to amaze His countrymen with miraculous deeds. He aimed, rather, to have the great crowds know that the kingdom of God was in their midst... It is significant to note that Jesus most often combined power with compassion when a miracle was a part of His ministry. The Lord was moved when He saw suffering and healed many of the sick around Him. Lets be really straight about this because the miracles were not ends in themselves. Those he restored to health would eventually succumb to sickness and die like all of us. In the big picture, a few years added to their lives made little difference in the long run... The miracles of Jesus and those of the apostles after Him were intended to testify about the truth of what He and His people taught. In this era, when Jesus was becoming known, and in the era of the apostles as the church was beginning its mission, miraculous events played important roles... As the New Testament was formed, and the testimony of Jesus and the apostles grew strong, the need for the miraculous subsided.... All that Jesus has done for us is our miracle...

Have a wonderful start to your week... Begin it with a RAK or two... Love mark Phil.4:11

08/16/2016

Jairus And The Faithful Woman

"Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace" (Lk.8:48)... "Don't be afraid; just believe, and she will be healed" (V 50).

To get the full effect of the two miracles in today's two verses, you might want to read Lk.8:41-58... The miracles of Jesus provide us with a glimpse of His very special combination of compassion, power and humanity. In Vs 48 we are told about a woman's faith, and Vs 50 a man is told to believe... Faith and belief are a pretty powerful tandem, wouldn't you say? The stories involved in many of Jesus' miracles are those of people confronting distress and fear with hope and faith... How's that work for us today? The story of the faithful woman and Jairus may represent each one of us, either as we are, or will be... The story of every person's life, at least in this world, is both a tragedy and comedy. It is a comedy because a disproportionate amount of our time is spent in human pretension and pride along with face-saving prestige... In the end, life fails. We grow old, our bodies weaken, and we die. That is the way God designed it. If success actually means rising above our weaknesses, then none of us is destined to succeed... At best, we can hope to fail with grace... Jesus demonstrated such power that He gave life to the dead, something no "healer" of any age has been able to do. We can be sure that Jairus' daughter and the healed woman, eventually succumbed to death in some way, as all do... Healing, under the best circumstances, is temporary. Jesus made it crystal clear that He came to earth to save us from spiritual death, and not the maladies of life. He was to die for our sins, and those who place faith in The Great Physician can hope for eternal life where there is no dying, no parting of the ways, no tears, and no sorrow....

Have a great day... Do good and give God the credit... Love mark Phil.4:11

08/17/2016

Even The Winds And Waves

"And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with waves. But He was asleep. Then his disciples came to Him and awoke Him saying, 'Lord save us, we are perishing!' But He said to them. 'Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?' Then he arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm. So the men marveled, saying, 'Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him' " (Matt.8:24-27).

Being a person who has spent time out on the water, I really enjoy the miracles involving the sea. When the winds kick up out over the water, the power is amazing, and one's smallness in the face of it is recognized. The disciples that followed Jesus were just ordinary men like you and I. They did not know what to completely expect out of Jesus... Was he a prophet? Was he a Priest? Was he a King? Certainly His teaching had drawn them, but when the sick were healed, the blind were given sight, and the dead were raised, this was very different. Was he an ordinary man who performed miracles? Though they really didn't get it, Jesus knew that the difference between His being a prophet and His being the Son of God were miles apart... It was so important for Him to shepherd His disciples, and He had to help them grow. Do you get the feeling that he's still doing that for us today? The miracles were essential to the education of followers... They had witnessed His healing of the sick, and they probably sensed that His power over disease had something to do with His power over sin... It was time for Jesus to take us and the disciples one step farther. Not only did the diseased become whole when he spoke, but created forces were at His command too. Forces of nature bent to His will... The winds and the waves obeyed HIM! The lesson for us this morning? This Man, Jesus, was no ordinary Prophet... He was no ordinary Priest...He was no ordinary King... The one we serve as our Lord and Savior, was no ordinary anything. I may sing "Master The Tempest Is Rising" all day long.

Have a great day... Make your little part of the world better... Love mark Phil.4:11

08/18/2016

Water Walking And The Ghost

"During the 4th watch of the night Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw Him walking on the lake, they were terrified. 'Its a ghost,' they cried out in fear.' Jesus immediately said to them: 'Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid' " (Matt.14:25-27).

Today we'll look at the 2nd miracle of Jesus involving a tempestuous sea. Jesus had just fed the 5,000 with just 5 loaves and 3 fishes, and some of the people wanted to immediately declare Him their king. Perhaps they had the grand idea that He would lead them in a rebellion against the Romans. Jesus tries to tamp down their misguided zeal, and told the disciples to head across the sea while He went off to pray... By about 3 in the morning, they were only about half way across because of a storm... In a contrary wind, tossed around by the waves, the disciples did not realize that Jesus was fully aware of their difficulty. They were about to learn in an amazing way of His sympathy and willingness to come to their aid... He approached the distressed disciples in an entirely unexpected way, by walking on the turbulent sea as if it were as stable as a flat rock. The question that might come to mind here is this; Why did Jesus force the disciples to go out into the boat without Him? Maybe as humans, they might have been tempted to listen to the people wanting Jesus to lead them against the dreaded Romans, so He may have sent them away to reflect... The storm, then, had the effect of saving them from strong ambitions, and they would later realize that their trip and the stormy night had worked together for good..."And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, and have been called according to His purpose" (Rom.8:28). When the inevitable storms enter our lives, the Lord wants us to see Him walking on the water, saying; Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid... I believe that this miracle caused the disciples to grow in faith, and it ought to have the same effect on us... Jesus can calm our storms too...

Have a wonderful day... Let His light shine though you.... Love mark Phil.4:11

08/19/2016

You Gotta Get Outta The Boat

" 'Lord, if its you', Peter replied, 'tell me to come to you on the water.' 'Come,' He said. Then Peter got down out of the boat, walked on the water, and came toward Jesus." (Matt.14:28-29).

How could I possibly leave Jesus' miracles on the stormy seas, without including Peter's historic walk on the water. All three accounts in Mathew, Mark and John record the same reassuring words of Jesus saying, Do not be afraid... They were not seeing a ghost... Had the story ended here, the miracle would have been spectacular on its own, but Matthew adds a postscript.

Among the passengers on the boat was the disciple Peter, and Matthew directs his attention toward the fisherman. Ever impetuous and outspoken, Peter makes a challenge to the figure he can barely see though the mist, and the figure replies to him... Through the centuries, believers have found inspiration and courage from the stories about Peter, and it is no wonder... When others were hesitant, Peter had no doubt about what Jesus was capable of doing. Jesus told Peter to get out of the boat, put his feet on the water, and walk to Him.... For sure, Peter had a few idiosyncrasies, but he was not short in this instance about obedience. For whatever failure that led Peter to sink, it was preceded by the courage it took to get out of the boat and take a risk. I look at this story, and I am inspired! Peter's example ought to be an inspiration to all those

who have the courage to do an act of kindness, even when its not convenient. It should be an inspiration to those who are willing to share the good news of Jesus, even if they know that they may not be listened to... It should be an inspiration to all of us to witness for the Lord through our daily actions, even when we think that no one is looking. Even when success is not guaranteed, we do well when we venture out in obedience... To walk on water, you gotta get outta the boat...

Have a wonderful day... T G I F Thank God I'm Forgiven.... Love mark Phil.4:11

08/20/2016
Stuff About Churches

Today's quiz will be about curses in the Bible. I hope you've read about them some of them so that you can do well today... As always, have fun.

- _____ 1. What was the only animal to be cursed by God? (a) the pig, (b) the serpent, (c) the ass, (d) there were none.
- _____ 2. Who was sent by the king of Moab to put a curse on Israel? (a) Balaam, (b) Sihon, (c) Balak, (d) Clydeous.
- _____ 3. Who put a curse on a fig tree for not producing fruit? (a) John the Baptist, (b) Peter, (c) Jesus, (d) Paul.
- _____ 4. What son of Josiah was cursed by God? (a) Zedekiah, (b) Rehoboam, (c) Jehoiakim, (d) Jeroboam.
- _____ 5. According to the Law, what sort of handicapped people should not be cursed? (a) deaf and blind, (b) lame, (c) demon possessed, (d) stammerers.
- _____ 6. What happened to the ground in Genesis as a result of God's curse? (a) It dried up, (b) it blew away, (c) it produced thorns and thistles, (d) it flooded.
- _____ 7. According to Paul, who was made a curse for our sins? (a) the world, (b) us, (c) Jesus, (d) Paul himself.
- _____ 8. Who said that people that taught a false gospel would be cursed? (a) Peter, (b) Paul, (c) John, (d) Barnabas.
- _____ 9. Who told God that Job would curse Him to His face? (a) Satan, (b) Eliphaz, (c) his wife, (d) Bildad.

_____ 10. What epistle says that praise and cursing should not come out of the same mouth?
(a) Galatians, (b) Philippians, (c) James, (d) it doesn't say that.

Have a great weekend and a glorifying and uplifting day of worship on His day.... Love mark
Phil.4:11

08/22/2016
Feeding 5,000 People In Color

"So the men sat down, in number about 5,000. And Jesus took the loaves, and when He had given thanks He distributed them to the disciples, and the disciples to those sitting down; and likewise of the fish, as much as they wanted. So when they were filled, He said to the disciples, 'Gather up the fragments that remain, so that nothing is lost.' So they gathered them up, and filled 12 baskets with the fragments of the 5 barley loaves which were left over by those who had eaten" (Jn.6:10-13).

The feeding of the 5,000 is the only miracle found in all four gospels. Using a sports analogy, John is the "color man" of the gospel writers. Let me bring you non-sports fans up to speed on that statement. In the broadcasting of the major sports (baseball, football, basketball and ice hockey) there is someone in the booth with the play-by-play person. He is usually an ex-player with some inside knowledge of the game and has been given the unofficial title of the "color-man," because he adds his insights of the action... A bare record of the deeds of Jesus was not enough for John, and he tended to follow stories about Jesus' miracles with descriptions of the ways in which people reacted. Read all four versions, and you will see what I mean... Conversations, amazement and controversy often ensued and though John recorded just a few of Jesus' signs, the color accompanying them is inspiring... John reports the story in a distinctive way, as the Lord enters into a dialogue with His contemporaries. What the other gospels record in a few verses, John describes in a long chapter. After all, feeding 5,000 (+) people until they are all full with just 5 barley loaves and 3 fishes from a boy, is pretty spectacular. Like the stilling of the storm or Jesus walking on the water, the feeding of the 5,000 demonstrated Jesus' power over the natural world... We will look at some of the aspects of this miracle and what various reactions of those in attendance meant this week. When I look at it, I see this.... If my Savior can feed 5,000 folks in this miraculous way, He can supply my needs too, both physical and spiritual... That's today's devotional, and its in living color...

Have a great start to your week... Begin it with a RAK or two... Love mark Phil.4:11

08/23/2016
Soul Food

"After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, 'Surely this is the Prophet who has come into the world.' Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make Him king, withdrew again to a mountain by Himself" (Jn.6:14-15).

After Jesus performed the miracle of feeding the 5,000 with only 5 loaves and 3 fishes, John describes, as he often does, the reaction of the people. Had you or I been there and had our stomachs filled by this miracle, I imagine that we would have been enthusiastic too... As we read in today's verses, they wanted to take Jesus by force if necessary, and make Him the king.

If He had the power to do this miracle, just think what He could do to those oppressive Romans... The next day, some of the crowd that was fed found Jesus on the other side of the lake and questioned Him. It was a supreme teaching moment for Jesus, and this is what he said; "I tell you the truth, you are looking for me, not because you saw miraculous signs, but because you ate the loaves and had your fill. Do not work for bread that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On Him God the Father has placed His seal of approval" (Vs.26-27). The people just didn't get it! They even brought up their forefathers eating manna in the wilderness and to this Jesus replied; "I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is He who comes down and gives life to the world" (Vs 32-33). They were looking for that elusive "bread" while Jesus offers the real stuff to them. He is offering "soul food." We didn't get to eat the miraculous food that day, but we do get to partake of the soul food that Jesus offers. Jesus has so much to give us. The soul food he offers is Himself... The true bread of life... We are so blessed....

Have a great day... Do good and give God the credit... Love mark Phil.4:11

08/24/2016

Eucharisteo - Give Thanks

"Jesus then took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed to those who were seated as much as they wanted. He did the same with the fish" (Jn.6:11).

Andrew, one of Jesus' disciples, found a boy with five small barley loaves and two small fish. It doesn't seem like any arm twisting went on here, and the boy shared his meager meal. Then the miracle happened... In many homes and restaurants around the country, before folks eat, a prayer is said. It may be communal or different people may just pause to silently give thanks... Perhaps our habit of doing this comes from this very miracle, as Jesus gave thanks over both the bread and fish. There is a distinct possibility that Jesus may have had more in mind than the thankful spirit appropriate for the sharing of God's bounty. The Greek word for give thanks used here is eucharisteo... Though I am certainly not a Greek scholar, Jesus used this exact same

word in Matthew 26:26-27 when He instituted the Lord's Supper... For that reason, the observance has been traditionally called the "Eucharist." John included the record of the institution of the Lord's Supper, but when the apostle wrote, Christians would have been familiar with it. One might wonder whether John may have wanted his readers to see the feeding of the 5,000 as a portent of the Supper they took in remembrance of the torn flesh and spilled blood of the Savior. It is no small coincidence that "Lord's Supper" language comes up in this very chapter... "Whoever eats my flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day" (V 54). When two individuals met Jesus after He had been raised from the dead, He became known to them this way; "Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when He broke the bread" (Lk.24:35). There is little wonder that the 5,000 that partook of the bread that had been blessed and distributed by Jesus said, "Surely, this is the prophet who is come into the world..." (V 14). Perhaps when we reflect on this miracle, and even give thanks before a meal, we'll think on a slightly different plane...

Have a wonderful day.... Make your little part of the world better.... Love mark Phil.4:11

08/25/2016
Eat 'Til You're Full

"When they had all had enough to eat, He said to His disciples, 'Gather the pieces that are left over. Let nothing be wasted.' So they gathered them and filled 12 baskets with the pieces of the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten" (Jn.6:12-13).

In the first three gospels, the feeding of the 5,000 is one of the several miracles done by Jesus to demonstrate His power over nature. Attempts to explain away this miracle by suggesting that Jesus and His disciples shared their lunch and the crowd followed their example are inadequate at best... Since Jesus indeed was God incarnate, miracles like this would pose no difficulties.

Through the prophets of the Old Testament, (Ezek.34:23-31) God promised when the true shepherd came, the desert would become rich pasture where the sheep would be gathered and fed... Jesus is our Shepherd who provides all our needs so that we lack nothing. "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not be in want" (Psa.23:1). We might also want to notice not only the spectacular nature of the miracle, but the frugality that followed... He did not just give them scrapes to eat, but they ate until they were filled. If I've got my Jewish history right, each disciple had a small wicker basket as a part of his attire. If we do the math there were 12 disciples, thus 12 baskets of food. Bread was regarded by Jews as a gift from God, and it was required that scraps that fell on the ground during a meal were picked up. Each of the disciples returned with his basket full. That we have a God who supplies our needs is an awesome thought. Jesus had already taught this; "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or what you will wear.... But seek 1st His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matt.6:25 & 33). A great miracle with wonderful lessons for us all

as John was persistent in moving the story from the signs of Jesus to His teaching and His person...

Have a great day... Let His light shine through you.... Love mark Phil.4:11

08/26/2016

WWZD

"Jesus entered Jericho and was passing passing through. A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore fig tree to see Him, since Jesus was coming that way" (Lk.19:1-4).

I remember singing "Zacchaeus was a wee little man, a wee little man was he..." since I was a small child and even enjoyed leading it in front of children many years later. We all know about Zaccheaus' height and his background as a rich tax collector. We probably even know the rest of the story from Luke 19:1-10... A few weeks ago I wrote about Peter getting out of a boat during a storm and walking on the water toward Jesus. Because of His faith, Peter got out of the boat. Because of his faith, Zaccheaus was willing to climb up into a tree just to get a glimpse of Jesus. Maybe the reason that some folks can't really see Jesus is that they are ashamed to climb the tree. Because he was a Jewish tax collector for the Romans, Zaccheaus wasn't exactly "Mr. Popularity" with his own people, and in drawing unwanted attention to himself he risked public humiliation. He climbed the tree anyway! It may not always seem like it, or the easiest thing to do, but following Jesus and our heavenly reward are more than worth the risk of the humiliation we may receive from the world... One of the wonderful parts of this story for me, is that Jesus knew the type of man Zaccheaus really was. He also knew that Zaccheaus could change. The way Jesus treated him made the difference. To precipitate that change, Jesus was went to Zaccheaus' home. Despite the criticism He received for going there, He changed Zaccheaus' heart and the way he treated people from then on... Jesus still changes people today, but the ball is clearly in our court. To do what Jesus wants us to do, may require not only climbing a tree, but even going out on a limb... WWJD was a popular term some years ago, so I've put a slightly different twist on it... WWZD?

Have a wonderful day... T G I F Today God Is First.... Love mark Phil.4:11

08/27/2016

Healthy Confessions

Today's quiz is about famous confessions found in the Bible, and there are a lot of them. If you don't do well, you may have to confess your need to read more.... As always, have fun...

- _____ 1. What wicked king of Judah confessed his sins when he was taken into captivity in Assyria? (a) Manasseh, (b) Josiah, (c) Jehoahaz, (d) Jehoikim.
- _____ 2. What king confessed that he had done wrong in taking a census of the fighting men of Israel? (a) Saul, (b) David, (c) Solomon, (d) Hezekiah.
- _____ 3. Who confessed his denial of Jesus? (a) Judas, (b) Zaccheaus, (c) Peter, (d) Clydeous.
- _____ 4. What king confessed his adulterous affair after being confronted by the prophet Nathan? (a) Saul, (b) Solomon, (c) Zedekiah, (d) David.
- _____ 5. What scribe bowed in front of the temple and confessed the sins of Israel while the people around him wept bitterly? (a) Nehemiah, (b) Ezra, (c) Hosea, (d) Nahum.
- _____ 6. Who confessed the building of the golden calf to God? (careful) (a) Moses, (b) Aaron, (c) Miriam, (d) the people.
- _____ 7. Who confessed his sexual immorality with his daughter-in-law, Tamar? (a) Reuben, (b) Judah, (c) Dan, (d) Simeon.
- _____ 8. Who confessed Israel's sins after he heard that the walls of Jerusalem were in ruins? (a) Ezra, (b) Zechariah, (c) Nehemiah, (d) Obadiah.
- _____ 9. Who was visited by the angel Gabriel while he was confessing his sin? (a) Shadrach, (b) Daniel, (c) Job, (d) Zephaniah.
- _____ 10. Who confessed his sin to an angel that only his donkey had seen? (a) Balak, (b) Aaron, (c) Caleb, (d) Balaam.

Have a great weekend and an uplifting and glorifying day of worship on His day... Love mark
Phil.4:11

08/29/2016
The Touch Of Healing

"And behold, a leper came and worshiped Him, saying, 'Lord, if you are willing, You can make me clean.' Then Jesus reached out His hand saying, 'I am willing; be cleansed.' Immediately his leprosy was cleansed. And Jesus said to him, 'See that you tell no one; but go on your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them' " (Matt.8:2-4).

I suppose that leprosy was the HIV of Jesus' time, and was among the most obvious of maladies known to man who lived in the world of Jesus. At the time, the disease was thought to be highly contagious and feared for both its physical effects and social stigma. The word "leprosy" in the Old Testament seemed to designate a hodgepodge of skin diseases. It was even used to describe a rotting deterioration that might invade clothing or walls of a house (Lev.13-14). Ancient medicine, as with many other maladies, lacked the diagnostic precision of modern science to help those who were infected with what modern medicine has called Hansen's disease... It was a terrible condition, and in advanced stages, victims suffered severe disfigurement of face and limbs. It is against this backdrop, that we look at the miracles of Jesus in which He cured people with this dreaded disease. The horrors of leprosy led to a comparison between the disease's effect on the body and the sin's effect on the soul. The self-righteous hurled insults ("unclean! unclean!") at lepers, and they were forced to leave neighborhoods, families and homes to live apart, where they huddled together in small groups. Why do I make such a big deal out of the healing of lepers you ask? Sin, like leprosy is a kind of living death. As far as God is concerned, there is the same stigma, suffering and loathing that became associated with leprosy. It is only through a relationship with Jesus that we can be cured from the disease of sin, that would make us an outcast from God. We'll look this week at Jesus' miracles concerning this disease and see what lessons we can all glean from them...

Have a great start to your week... Begin it with a RAK or two.... Love mark Phil.4:11

08/30/2016
The Ten Lepers

"Now, on His way to Jerusalem, Jesus traveled along the border between Samaria and Galilee. As He was going into a village, ten men who had leprosy met Him. They stood at a distance and called out in a loud voice, Jesus, Master, have pity on us. When He saw them, He said, 'Go, show yourselves to the priests.' And as they went, they were healed" (Lk.17:11-14).

The other three gospels record the healing of the single leper mentioned yesterday, but only Luke tells of this encounter with the ten lepers. His meeting with them happened at the later part of Jesus' ministry, as He was headed to Jerusalem shortly before His crucifixion... As Jesus traveled along the border between Galilee and Samaria, the meeting with the ten lepers was no accident. The lepers knew who Jesus was, and had reason to believe that He would be passing that way. As we see from the narrative, Jesus didn't heal them instantly, but had them obey the

"protocol " and present themselves to the priest. They set out to find a priest who would examine them and accept their gift as Jesus said, and were healed along the way. It might be interesting to note here that of the ten lepers, one of them was a dreaded Samaritan... Jews would not normally be in the company of a Samaritan, but leprosy made strange bed-fellows... The miracles of Jesus, as important as they are, frequently resolve themselves into lessons about Jesus' compassion, His authority to forgive sins, or His critics misplaced emphasis on ceremony and ethnic pride. An important lesson we might learn boils down to two important matters; (1) Those who receive God's blessing do well when they offer praise and thanksgiving to Him, and (2) noble hearts and Godly ways may be found among those who suffer from prejudice and rejection. For the next two days, we will try to get some practical lessons from Jesus' healing of the ten lepers. Read the rest of the miracle in Luke, as we will look at the "9" and the "1." There's some great stuff here...

Have a wonderful day.... Do good and give God the credit... Love mark Phil.4:11

08/31/2016

Praise And Gratitude And Ten Guys

"One of them, when he saw he was healed, came back, praising God in a loud voice. He threw himself at Jesus' feet and thanked Him ---- and he was a Samaritan" Jesus asked, 'Were not all ten cleansed? where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?' " (Lk.17:15-18).

There is not a preacher out there that does not have a sermon or two in his portfolio about the healing of the ten lepers. I remember many years ago when I preached mine, and I thought I was a pretty clever guy... There is a fascinating dynamic at work here, as Jesus healed the 10 lepers. Instead of healing them on the spot, He sent them to find a priest, and they were miraculously healed along the way. The the dynamic lies in the response(s) of those men that were healed. As we see, nine of them are never heard from again. Imagine that! Ten men are healed from the most dreaded disease known to man... They are afflicted with a sickness that causes them to be rejected by their families, friends and associates and made to live together in begging colonies. Ten men are healed, but only one, and a Samaritan at that, comes back to express gratitude. By the way, the title of that sermon usually goes something like this...

"WHERE ARE THE NINE?" This miracle performed by Jesus really does have some practical applications for us... "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom.3:23) We all have a deadly problem, just like those lepers had... The lepers cried our for help, just as we should... "Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins" (Jas.4:17). Life and death matters trump formality and etiquette, and if we know we have a problem, there is one to whom we can cry out... We cannot allow pride to stand in the way of our salvation.

God's power will not be given until we act in faith... We'll look at some more applications tomorrow.... Lets be the one and not the nine...

Have a great day... Make your little part of the world better... Love mark Phil.4:11