

VOICE OF CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

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CHRISTMAS IS STILL EXCITING

The thrill of Christmas has lost some of the glitter but I still get excited. The changing of the seasons and the special attention given at this time of year still touches the kid in me. As many of you, we didn't receive lots of gifts when I was a kid but the special time still lingers in my mind. With the exception of one brother, all of my family is on the other side and from that perspective, memories become a bigger part of Christmas. Immediate family becomes more personal and wonderful as we share with each other. Perhaps time has given many of us the real understanding of the Joy of Christmas and a deeper appreciation of the meaning of the same. The touchable shadows to the spiritual. The Savior shadows Santa although I still like Santa. Enjoy Christmas to the brim and have lots of fun. Just remember the greatest gift of all, Jesus Christ.

Pastor George Ferrington

PUTTING THE WILL OF GOD ON DISPLAY "The Good Leaven of the Kingdom of Heaven"

We will be looking at good leaven and the concept of it's use as told in Matthew 13:33; **"Another parable He spoke to them: the kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened."** Before we look at the good leaven I want to continue discussing Jesus' warning to His disciples against the leaven of Herod and the Pharisees, and how it works against the soul of the believer, thus keeping him from operating with and in the mind of Christ.

There is a story in the Bible found in Mark 8:13-21 that we need to look at: **"And He left them, and getting into the boat again, departed to the other side. Now the disciples had forgotten to take bread, and they did not have more than one loaf with them in the boat. Then He charged them, saying, 'Take heed, beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the leaven of Herod.' And they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'It is because we have no bread.' But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, 'Why do you reason because you have no bread? So you do not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still hardened? Having eyes, do you not see? And having ears, do you not hear? And do you not remember?"** As we look at this story we discover that the failure of Jesus' disciples was in the fact that they were afraid because they didn't pack a lunch, and Jesus had multiplied food for them twice. The disciples thought life was based on what they lacked, and because of this wrong thinking process they were contradicting the revelation God had just given them about spiritual provision. What this boils down to is the fact that they were building their thought life on the

improper foundation of earth's reality. The problem with this faulty foundation is the fact that: **".....you have made the commandment of God of no effect by your tradition."** (Matt. 15:6) Why? Because the revelation of multiplication remained only a memory in their minds it became tradition in a matter of hours. That tradition was based on the fact that the disciples believed Jesus was supplying their needs. A good question to ask at this point is, what happened as a result of this faulty thinking? The plug got pulled on God's power! Why? Because the disciples chose to rely on and trust tradition rather than the regular fresh hearing of God's Word. Pastor Bill Johnson said it this way, *"Tradition isn't necessarily an evil thing; it's just usually yesterday's word."* Yesterday's word is not what the believer needs! The Bible says faith comes from hearing—not from having heard.

I will be the first to admit that the disciples had the fresh word, but their problem was in the fact that they didn't get the point. What point? Revelation requires an experience, and the manifestation of the experience requires a new way of thinking. All of this is made clear when we hear what Jesus said to them: **"Do you not yet perceive nor understand? Is your heart still troubled?"** (Mark 8:17) It's important that we understand that Jesus did not talk to them like this before they fed the multitude. Why? Because Jesus understood that they would have had no reference point to help them understand. The reference point in all of this was the miracle of multiplication. Let me say this another way—they did not know by experience what God could do even though Jesus led them into the experience expecting them to make the miracle a new standard for their thinking. The "truth" of any miracle from God, especially those you are a part of, is the fact that God intends you to learn how to see into the spiritual realm. Pastor Bill Johnson said it this way in his book: *"A miracle is a tutor, a gift from God to show us what exists on the other side. When I experience a miracle, and later revert back to the same doubt, complaining, moaning, and groaning, it's because I have not allowed the testimony of the Lord to have it's full effect on the way I think."*

In next month's article, we will discuss **"THE FIRE OF CIRCUMSTANCE."** It's important for us to realize that sometimes fear masquerades as wisdom. Until then, may the Good Lord bless and keep each of you.

Gene R. Brown, Associate Pastor

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

I stopped by Walmart Wednesday afternoon to get some last minute items. It was Thanksgiving Eve. I am not sure if that is a holiday or not!! I had been to Monroe to finish some shopping. I had to get a big stuffed Rudolph. It was on my list of requests! I was somewhat reluctant. It was really big and to carry it through the mall was going to be an effort. I decided to see her smile would be worth it!!! I am so glad I did. Everyone I ran into smiled and commented on Rudolph!! He made lots of smiles!!! I purposely did not rush. Too often, I spend most of my time rushing from one task to the next in an effort to catch up on the endless lists of things which need to be done. I even stopped and got a peppermint-chocolate shake and took time to sit and watch the crowd as I enjoyed the calories which I did not need. I will work those off!!!

I better get back to my Walmart story!!! After I had gathered my items, I was standing in line patiently waiting my turn to check out. A little boy about 8 years old asked if he could go ahead of me. He only had a big chocolate candy bar. I told him that would be fine. The clerk was still checking someone else out. She glanced at him and seeing the dollar bill in his hand told him

that he would need more money. I said I would help him. He was dressed okay but I could see fear in his eyes when he had asked if he could go ahead of me. He seemed to be in a hurry. I heard someone gruffly ask him what he was doing. He responded quickly that he was getting a candy bar. Dad was busy getting his drinks. My heart went out to the little fellow. I wondered if he would have a big Thanksgiving meal. I hoped that he would. He waited his turn and put his candy and dollar down. I paid the balance he owed. He hurried away but not before he graciously thanked me. He touched my heart forever. I thought—that is what Thanksgiving and Christmas is all about. Taking the time to meet a need and give a helping hand and being appreciative of the things and family that we too often take for granted. I thought about the Christmas song of the little boy who wanted to buy his Mom some Christmas shoes. I was so glad the little boy stopped me.

Just a thought!!!

Cheryl Ferrington

GOD WITH US

Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, born in a manger over 2000 years ago, lived, ministered, and died a cruel death on a cross over a span of 33 years. Yet at this time of year it is important for us to be brought in remembrance of the reason for His coming.

When God created the earth, the heavens, and all that is therein, He felt the need to create a being in His own image. God desired to have fellowship with this part of His creation, and to bring His man being along in wisdom and stature to a point comparable to Himself. As we know, man failed in the Garden of Eden, and this sin nature created a chasm between man and God. Over time it became obvious that mankind was inclined toward sin and disobedience. Even with all of the godly kings and prophets, still mankind sinned and turned from God. But in God's great master plan, He purposed to offer a perfect sacrifice on behalf of His creation—a sacrifice that would be once and for all sufficient and complete. To do so that sacrifice had to be proven perfect. In the Old Testament before the priest could offer up the bulls, goats and birds on the altar of sacrifice on behalf of the people it had to be proven without spot or blemish and worthy to be offered. The birth, life and death of Jesus proved Him to be a perfect and innocent sacrifice for us; thereby placing any that would accept Him as Lord and Savior in a position of righteousness before God. Jesus came once as that sacrifice, He will not come again to the earth until He comes to claim His throne as King of Kings and Lord of Lords over all creation. We that have trusted in Him will rule and reign with Him.

Many have questioned the notion that Almighty God, in His sovereignty and deity, would lower Himself to the point of becoming flesh as Jesus, the Son of God and the Son of Man. They find it hard to believe that the God that created the universe could be contained in the form of a man. Yet we that believe know that it's true, and that it is the basis for our eternal faith and hope. What was God thinking? What was the purpose in mind? The following story related by Kenneth Hagin, Jr., helps illustrate this great plan of God.

A man named Bob didn't much believe in God and was quick to let anyone know. His wife, however, was a believer and raised their children to have faith in God. One snowy Christmas Eve, Bob's wife and children pleaded with him to go with them to church. He refused. "Christmas is nonsense!" he said. "Why would God lower Himself to come to earth as a man?" So his wife and children left, and Bob stayed home.

A while later, as the wind howled outside, Bob relaxed in front of the fireplace. Suddenly he heard loud honking noises. He looked out the window, but a blinding snowstorm hindered his view, so he went outside to see what was going on. In the field by the farm, Bob found several wild geese that had gotten separated from their flock. They had lost their bearings in the snow and were wandering around aimlessly. Bob knew the geese wouldn't last long in the storm. They needed a shelter where they could stay until the wind and snow stopped. He opened the barn doors and waited for the geese to go in, but they stayed in the field. Bob got behind the geese and tried to shoo them into the barn, but this only

scared them. He then got grain and laid a trail on the ground to the barn door. But the geese still would not go in.

All of Bob's efforts to help had failed. He realized the geese would never follow a man and thought, "If only I were a goose, I could save them." Then he had an idea. He went into the barn, pick up one of his tame geese, and carried it outside behind the wild geese. When he released his goose, it flew through the wild flock and straight into the barn. One by one the wild geese followed it to safety.

He stood silently for a moment, considering what he had just thought. "If only I were a goose, I could save them." Then he remembered what he had said earlier to his wife: "Why would God lower Himself to come to the earth as a man?" Suddenly, it all made sense. Mankind was like those geese: blind, lost, and perishing. God sent His Son to become like us so He could save us. Now Bob understood what Christmas was all about and why Jesus Christ had come. Bob fell to his knees in the snow and prayed, "Thank You, God, for coming in human form to get me out of the storm of sin!"

Throughout all of creation, Jesus has been an ever present Savior, to deliver us from the sins of the world. John 1:14 tells us, "**And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth.**"

The greatest gift every given to mankind, a Savior that embodied the grace and truth of God the Father. For it to be a gift it had to be freely given. But for it to be a gift it must be received. To receive all that the Father has done through Jesus, we must understand the significance of receiving without guilt or condemnation. God does not look upon the sins of His people. He only sees the blood of Jesus. Lay aside your sins and enter boldly before your Heavenly Father, and worship Him for Who He is and what He has done through Jesus. Have a blessed and holy Christmas season in the power and love of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Bro. Mike Woods

CHRISTMAS CHURCH FELLOWSHIP—Sunday December 20th, 5:00 PM til Menu—Gumbo, salads, Christmas goodies, deserts, etc. "Whatever you want to bring!!!" We plan to tell the kids a Christmas story and celebrate the birth of our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ. If you can participate, please let Judy Woods or Cheryl Ferrington know as soon as you can. If you can't bring a dish, don't stress. We want to have fellowship and fun together, and there will be plenty of food. Might even get to sing a little. Merry Christmas!

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**MERRY
CHRISTMAS**