

## **A Biblical View of the Law of Motion**

***There is that maketh himself rich, yet hath nothing: there is that maketh himself poor, yet hath great riches.***

***Proverbs 13:7***

Sir Isaac Newton was a brilliant English mathematician, physicist, astronomer, theologian, and inventor who was born in 1643 and died in 1727. Of his many accomplishments we have received the Laws of Gravitation and also the Laws of Motion. The Third Law of Motion states that for every action there is an equal and opposite reaction. This law is applied in physics, yet we may also observe a type of this in the spiritual realm. Many of the verses in the Book of Proverbs are antithetical with the first half of the verse stating a truth based on a certain condition, but then concludes with an opposite resulting condition.

Today's verse shines light on the vanity of chasing after riches. This is something that Solomon may have observed in others, but it also could be said of his own life. Granted with divine wisdom, Solomon started out well but he forsook the wisdom that was granted to him and filled his life with empty carnal pleasures. Though rich and powerful, his life had become spiritually bankrupt. His multiple wives and concubines, coupled with countless treasures, could not erase the regret and emptiness he felt in his later years. Conversely, there are people who from a worldly perspective seem poor, yet they are content and satisfied because of their standing with the Lord. True riches are those things which add enduring value to our lives. Our relationship with the Lord should positively impact every moment of our earthly life, and at the end of our life we will enter into the eternal kingdom to enjoy the presence of God. Luke chapter sixteen shows the contrast between a certain rich man and a beggar named Lazarus. After reading the entire account, it becomes very obvious who was the richer of the two men. The rich man's treasures were laid up on earth, while Lazarus's wealth was invested in God's heavenly bank. Jesus presented the rhetorical question: For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? (Mark 8:36) Even without the truth of the Bible, there are a number of situations from history that teach the lesson about the vanity of temporary earthly riches. The accounts of rich and famous people whose lives become morally bankrupt or empty are glaring examples of how poor the rich actually are.

As believers, God has graced us not only with a rich relationship with Him, but we are also greatly blessed by rich relationships with our fellow saints. Each day we should thank God for how we are truly enriched by Him. ~J. Ekis

## Heart strength

*Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD.*

*Psalm 31:24*

It has been said that courage is not the absence of fear, but the mastery of it. The mastery of a thing is generally achieved by strength, or skill, or both. In this text, it is strength of heart that is to master fear, and that strength is linked to hope in the LORD. Thus, courage is not borne of a strong will, but of a trusting heart yielded to God. Such trust is connected by hope, as we understand that hope, as used in the Bible is not simply a fleeting wish, but is something that we are certain will come, yet has not presently arrived. In the beginning of this psalm, David expressed his hopeful trust in the LORD with a combination of statements of faith and prayers for deliverance: "In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness. Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defence to save me. For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me. Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou art my strength. Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth" (vv. 1-5).

To follow this example, we need to be reminded that our strength must come from the LORD. There are plenty of these reminders in the scriptures. For example: "Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD" (Psalm 27:14). "The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped" (Psalm 28:7). "My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever" (Psalm 73:26). "Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee; in whose heart are the ways of them, who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well; the rain also filleth the pools" (Psalm 84:5-6). From these it is clear that our hope, our help, and our strength in times of trouble must all come from the LORD. May we each connect such courage to our hope, in this and every day. "Have not I commanded thee? Be strong and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed: for the LORD thy God is with thee whithersoever thou goest" (Joshua 1:7).

## Shocked

*Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. – Matthew 7:22-23*

Our Lord taught two opposing truths. It is clear that in terms of doctrine God's children ought to be able to identify false teachers by their outward characteristics – their teachings, their actions, their words. We should know them by their fruits (Matthew 7:15-20). But almost immediately, He proceeded to warn us that there are those that are not so easy to discern, for even they themselves are deceived as to their eternal status. These are they who will be shocked in the judgement. They called Him Lord, yet they were never His own. This is a sobering warning, and one which all of God's professing children do well to meditate upon in solemn introspection.

I recently read an article on a news website by a professing Christian woman bragging about her freedom as a believer. She openly confessed and even boasted about her present fornicating lifestyle yet astoundingly asserted that "The Jesus I know doesn't condemn me like other Christians do." As I read those words, our text in Matthew came to mind. I thought, it is not about the Jesus you know, but about if the real Jesus knows you. We can be justifiably concerned that many in the modern professing church are in a similar situation – lifting their hands in worship services while justifying their sin-celebrating lives before a fabricated Savior made in their own image.

The internal witness that our Lord has given His own is the Holy Spirit. Let us say that again – the HOLY Spirit. A holy God created us, a holy Christ died for us, and if we have been redeemed, a Holy Ghost lives within us. As believers, our lives which were once dominated by fleshly lusts and self-promoting sin are now not only redeemed, but continually being cleansed. The sweet influence of our heavenly Guide within ensures that we will not desire any kind of double-agency. While the war between the flesh and Spirit will continue until our last breath and only be fully eradicated upon our entrance into Heaven, it is also true that, if we are truly saved, we are being transformed into the image of our Lord daily. Yes, the Spirit is enabling victorious living and is winning the long war between our fleshly nature and our new man.

Those professing Christians who do not feel this struggle nor sense and experience this victory have no real claim upon the Savior they claim to know. It is entirely possible to put lipstick on a pig in spiritual terms – i.e., to dress and act and talk the part of a believer, and yet to be filled inwardly with dead men's bones. After all, tares will grow with the wheat until the day of harvest, and no eye is skilled enough as the Master's to be able to spot the difference.

The judgement is coming. Let us first resolve to be certain that we not only know Him, but that He knows us – that the Christ we claim to love is the soul-saving, life-transforming, Spirit-giving, entirely-holy Jesus of the Scriptures, seated now at the right hand of the Father, and not some figment of our imagination or extension of our desire for a god made after our own sin-tolerating, vice-excusing likeness. Then, may our thrice Holy God enable us to find and help the self-deceived of our generation who are a gnat's eyelash away from an eternity of fire and brimstone, yet because of the soft gospel being peddled from so many pulpits, they don't even know it. – D. Murcek

## Out of Order

*"I have seen servants upon horses, and princes walking as servants upon the earth."  
Ecclesiastes 10:7*

In 1848, amidst a divided nation, James Russell Lowell wrote *The Present Crisis* which rapidly became the poetic anthem for the abolition movement in America. His thoughts echoed the words found in our scripture text today:

*"Truth forever on the scaffold, Wrong forever on the throne,  
Yet that scaffold sways the future, and, behind the dim unknown,  
Standeth God within the shadow, keeping watch above his own."*

The god of this world has turned everything upside down; it being his nature as a fallen spirit to subvert truth and exalt the lie. When the Prince of Peace visited this earth He was greeted with vituperation, crowned with thorns, and subjected to an ignominious death while Caesar, Herod and Pilate sat ensconced in gorgeous array. This is a well proven biblical pattern. Observe the arrogant Haman occupying the seat of authority while Mordecai sits with the servants in "the king's gate". David languishes in caves while Saul sits enthroned. Elijah makes due in the wilderness while Jezebel and Ahab luxuriate in the castle. John awaits his execution in the dungeon while Antipas enjoys the fineries of the palace. Paul is beaten and chained while the incestuous Nero contemplates his latest perversion.

Believers take heart for though now *"we are made as the filth of the world, and are the offscouring of all things "* *"it doth not yet appear what we shall be"*! The divine reversal will remediate the injustice, for the first shall be last ,and the last first when His kingdom comes.

Have a blessed day,

*Pastor*

## Spiritual Amnesia

*Only take heed to thyself, and keep thy soul diligently, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen, and lest they depart from thy heart all the days of thy life...*

*Deuteronomy 4:9*

Forgetfulness can plague all of us. Because man is prone to forget concerning spiritual matters, God's word contains warnings against forgetfulness and admonitions to remember important events and eternal truths. In the Old Testament, memorials were constructed to remind God's people of his mighty acts, while in the New Testament the Christian church observed the ordinances of baptism and communion to commemorate our Lord's mission of salvation. Remembering and observing the events and commands of the Bible is the spiritual fuel that energizes believers.

So, what are some of the factors that contribute to forgetfulness? Varied and abundant distractions, hectic schedules, lack of proper rest, or lack of focus can all play a part for a person forgetting spiritual truths. The root cause of each factor is that the adversary of our soul, the devil, aggressively seeks to cloud or remove retention of any spiritual influence. Certainly, disobedience was the major contributor for Adam and Eve to eat of the forbidden fruit, but forgetting the severity of God's warning could also have played a part. Once sin infiltrated the human race it became more difficult for man to retain God's admonitions. Consider two examples from scripture where remembering made a difference. The account of the Prodigal Son in Luke 15 illustrates the effectual impact of remembering that his father had servants who were living in better circumstances than he was experiencing. When he came to himself and reflected on the better conditions of his father's servants, he resolved to humble himself and return to the father. In Matthew 27 after Peter denied the Lord three times and the cock crew, he then remembered the warning that Jesus gave. Having his memory jarred, Peter renewed his resolve to follow Jesus.

God has provided some ways for us to offset the effects of spiritual amnesia. Multiple passages instruct us to meditate on and hide the Word of God in our hearts. A disciplined practice of daily Bible reading helps to remind us and enforce the truth of the Scriptures in our lives. Jesus said: Blessed are they that hear the word of God, and keep it. One of the many ways we are blessed by keeping God's word is that it helps to reinforce the Word in our minds. Prayer and supplication with thanksgiving can give the peace of God, which passes all understanding, and will keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

J. Ekis

## **Astonishing authority**

*And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.  
Matthew 7:28-29*

This final commentary from Matthew on the reaction of the Jewish people to Jesus' Sermon on the Mount reveals a major aspect of its impact. There were, no doubt, other aspects of the sermon that were new and surprising to its hearers. The very opening precepts regarding those who are blessed in the economy of the kingdom of God were, in large part, contrary to the popular sentiments and religious teaching of their day. For those oppressed by Roman rule, poverty of spirit, meekness, mercy, and persecution would have been unexpected sources of happiness. Then, to suppose that one's righteousness could exceed that of the well-known and respected pious members of the Pharisees and scribes would have certainly invoked consternation. To go to the extent of loving one's enemies, doing good to those who spitefully use and persecute you, just like your heavenly Father does, and in contrast to standard Rabbinical teachings, would have been extremely foreign.

All these strange sounding teachings were coming from one who claimed that He would fulfill the law, even though many of His teachings directly contradicted the teachings and practices of the scribes and Pharisees with which they were all so familiar. These long-standing doctrines of the Rabbinical commentators of the law were referred to by Jesus in this sermon with such expressions as "it has been said," or "ye have heard that it was said by them of old time." The scribes, who were mainly of the Pharisees' faction, would teach in the synagogues by quoting the various Talmudic commentators from the past as their sources of authority. It is said that they would also often debate some of the varying views of the ancient teachers. However, in contrast, Jesus put forth His doctrine with one authoritative claim, "But I say unto you." As the Son of God, He needed no other reference. He, as the living Word, was the eternal author of the law over which the scribes debated and was laying down the true intent of the law of the kingdom. They were not accustomed to hearing such authority. Yet He had shown and continued to show many miraculous proofs of His person and authority, and the gospel message culminates these proofs with His powerful resurrection. Mankind is thus called beyond astonishment to belief of the truth.

## **A Guide for Repentance**

*Have mercy upon me, O God; according to thy lovingkindness: according to the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions. – Psalm 51:1*

*(A reading of the entire 51<sup>st</sup> Psalm is recommended)*

One of the hardest things to do is repent. Refusing to repent is what keeps so many souls out of heaven. For believers, lack of repentance hinders our walk with the Lord, keeping a barrier between us and His fulness of blessing and countenance.

The man after God's own heart, King David, taught us how to repent. Psalm 51 is a veritable manual on this spiritual necessity. When confronted by the prophet Nathan regarding his sin with Bathsheba, David, as King, could have ordered the execution of the prophet. But he wisely permitted the Word of God to smite him in the inner man, and under inspiration of the Spirit, penned a doctrinal treatise on how to find restored fellowship with an offended Maker.

When our sin comes to light, we must be penitent. The sacrifice the Lord requires is a broken spirit and contrite heart (Ps. 51:17). If there is no sorrow for our sin, there can be no removing its influence from our progress.

This godly sorrow will stem from the God-given gift of guilt. It is in the inward part that God desires truth and in the hidden recesses where he makes us to know His wisdom (Ps. 51:6). The modern professing church has adopted so much secular psycho-babel that we often fail to recognize that the emotion of guilt is the gift of conscience that God has given to act as our compass to find our way back to His grace.

Being weighed in the balances and found wanting, we must own our guilt externally to God – we must confess our sin, knowing that He is faithful and just to forgive our sin and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. It is no one else's fault that we have offended a Holy God. We dare not justify our actions a moment longer. This is "my transgression", "mine iniquity", "my sin". Only by this verbal humiliation before the throne of God can we expect to receive restoration.

This all stems from a holy desire within to be reconciled and re-aligned to our good God. Our sin has defiled us before Him and exposed us in His courts. We must be washed and cleansed (Ps. 51:7) so that we may enjoy both the pleasure of His countenance and power for His work. A clean heart and right spirit (Ps. 51:10) will re-invigorate us to His divine purpose and plan for us.

What a wonder that once we confess and forsake our sin, He restores to us the joy of our salvation and continues again to uphold us by His Spirit (Ps. 51:12)! God takes no pleasure in hiding His face from us – He was waiting all the time to purify us and continue our transformation into the likeness of His dear Son. He will now, yet again, so graciously condescend to use us when we open our lips to shew forth His praise and teach transgressors to their conversion (Ps. 51: 13, 15). How remarkable that He loves us so!

We all stumble in many ways. Let us resolve to keep a short list of our sin. If we are not frequently approaching the throne of grace to obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need, something is off in our spiritual life. Victorious living starts with humility and recognition of our weakness and faults. May our good God continually keep our hearts tender and right before Him. – D. Murcek

### **We Would See Jesus**

*John 3:30: He must increase, but I must decrease.*

John the Baptist had a powerful, though brief, impact on his generation. He was “*a burning and shining light*” though only “*for a season*”. How refreshingly different it is to observe a man so devoid of self who willingly bowed out of the limelight in the stead of one so much his superior. In the modern context we observe the venal politicians unwilling to cede their pretentious thrones of power, tenaciously clinging to the levers of power until they are run out of office. Even then they pine for recognition, dedicate libraries to themselves, and speak of their legacy ad nauseam. But for our consideration today is the Baptist, who was content to find a servile position that Christ might be magnified in the eyes of his followers. In so doing, John affords to us a sterling example of true discipleship.

In days of yore it was customary for the royal page to clear the passageway with the officious command “Make way for the King!”. It is the obligation of every minister of the mysteries of God to politely get out of the way. Servants of God do well to remember that no one attends their meetings to see them or to hear their words. Like the Greeks of John 12:21, the people “*would see Jesus*”. Let us assiduously clear the pathway of all things which obscure and detract from the King.

So easily do we fall into the trap of considering ourselves to be more important than we actually are. Admittedly, we all have an “I” problem. John’s credo was “*I must decrease*”. The chief purpose of man is to bring glory to his creator and this is best accomplished by hiding beneath the shadow of the cross. Psalms 40:16: *Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as love thy salvation say continually, The LORD be magnified.*

Have a blessed week,

*Pastor*



## The Great Wait

*And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.*

*Isaiah 25:9*

Waiting does not seem to come naturally to most people, and yet waiting for things is something we do every day. The day often starts with waiting for coffee to brew or waiting for the toaster to pop. We leave the house and wait in traffic, then hurriedly rush to a building where we wait for an elevator. Going to a restaurant on certain nights often requires waiting for a table to become available. We wait in doctor's offices, we wait in lines at amusement parks and ball parks, and on it will go this side of heaven.

Patience is something that all believers will need throughout their Christian journey. In Peter's second epistle it is listed as one of the graces we are to add to our faith. Our faith is to grow as we mature in our walk with Christ and patience is one of the qualities that help to deepen our faith. Faith deals with things unseen and the *trying of your faith worketh patience (James 1:3)*, and James continues to speak of patience performing its perfect work in us with the goal of conforming us to the image of our Savior. Almost daily there are circumstances which require us to wait on God. Though He certainly hears our prayer and promises to answer, there is often a waiting period before the answer arrives. Sometimes the answer is not exactly as we had asked; it is then that we must wait and trust that *all things work together for good*. Our knowledge of scriptural truth is not immediately endowed to us when we first believe, but it comes through study, application, and patiently absorbing the truth from daily experiences. Isaiah tells us that percept must be upon precept, line upon line, here a little and there a little. There is no fast-track for learning His word. The Bible contains many exceeding great and precious promises, but many of them rest in future fulfillment. The promise of forgiveness of sincerely confessed sin is current and constant, while ultimate and complete deliverance from the presence sin awaits on the other side of this life.

There is coming a day when our waiting will be over and the fulfillment of each of our loving Father's promises will be complete. For now, as we wait, we must remember that those *that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength*. Until then, *wait on the Lord: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait I say, on the LORD. (Psalm 27 :14)* J. Ekis

## Surprising faith

*And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.*  
*Matthew 8:2-3*

Matthew's account, as well as those of Mark and Luke, of this leper gives no indication of where the leper was before this. Since it is the first incident that he records upon Jesus descending from the mountain (v. 1), it is not improbable that the leper had heard at least some of the teaching, albeit from somewhat afar off due to the stigma and related rules of his disease. Another detail that Matthew provides is that great multitudes were following Jesus at this point after the Sermon on the Mount. In that case, it is quite surprising that a leper in that day would come close enough to Jesus for this interchange to take place, in addition to probably having to make his way through the multitude. The boldness of his entrance was accentuated as he took a humble position of worship, which we learn from the other writers evidently began with kneeling and ended with falling on his face before Jesus.

Yet the boldness of his entrance was outdone by the strength of his threefold confession. First, from his position of worship he calls Jesus "Lord," indicating that he understood that this man that he worshipped was more than just a man, and before anything else deserved any and all respect and awe that could be mustered. Was this perhaps stimulated or confirmed by the authority with which He had spoken? The leper also unequivocally states that Jesus can make him clean. This confession of the societal outcast moved past the astonishment of the multitude and boldly confirmed complete faith in Jesus' authority and ability to cleanse him from his incurable disease. His third confession, in between these two, reveals his understanding that Jesus also had the authority of prerogative to cleanse him or not. No doubt the crowd witnessing the Sermon and then this event was once again surprised at the bold faith of this man, in his presence, profession, and willing trust in Jesus' sovereignty.

They surely experienced additional surprise when Jesus, moved with compassion according to Mark's account, simply reached out and touched the physically and ceremonially unclean man, against the societal boundaries, and replied, "I will; be thou clean." To see this man immediately cleansed, not just in the process of recovery, such that he could be sent to the priest for final pronouncement of the fact, should have been the final surprise for the crowd, in addition to an attestation of the validity of this man's faith in the person and authority of Jesus the Son of God. Should it be any less for us today?

### **Spiritualized Idolatry**

*He removed the high places, and rake the images, and cut down the groves, and brake in pieces the brazen serpent that Moses had made: for unto those days the children of Israel did burn incense to it: and he called it Nehushtan. – 2 Kings 18:4*

Moses' making the brazen serpent at God's command to rescue the Israelites from the curse of the fiery serpents (Num. 21:4-9) is a core typological event in the Pentateuch. Our Lord Himself unveils its theological import in His most famous discourse with Nicodemus in John 3:14-17. Here, the Master exalts the account of the brazen serpent to the high status of prologue to the most succinct yet powerful codification of His gospel message and mission. All that anyone caught in this barren wilderness of a curse-stricken world ever need do to be saved is look up to the cross where the Serpent of Hell is forever defeated by our Christ's crushing blow to his infernal head. Yes, look – and live!

Yet as important as this wonderful type was, it is remarkable to note that the Israelites transformed it into something wholly antithetical to its divine purpose. They apparently not only preserved the brazen serpent but turned it into an idol to be worshipped. No doubt over the passage of time the brazen serpents' original meaning was translated with distorted addendums to the point that this spiritual emblem became more of a snare to the nation than a reminder of Jehovah's providence. Not until King Hezekiah's revival of heart was it exposed for what it actually was apart from its original history – nothing more than a "nehushtan" – a piece of brass, that is all.

This strange history ought to give us as God's people pause. What things do we spiritualize to the point of trusting their symbolism rather than the glorious facts and, more importantly, the wonderful living Person they purportedly represent? Roman Catholicism's fascination with the crucifix comes immediately to mind as an example. How many people genuflect to an image of a languid, dying Christ. Is this nothing more than a "nehustan" – a usurping representation of the momentous event of the payment for our sin that took place once for all forever? Does it not flirt with being a mockery to a risen Redeemer Who is alive now and seated at the right hand of the Father in heaven, ever making intercession for us?

It is easy to find such examples throughout mainline Christendom. It is perhaps much more difficult for us to honestly assess our own hearts and lives in order to uncover whether we hold any invisible "nehushtans" in repute. Are there things, perhaps once right and good and meaningful, that we have exalted to such a revered status that we now offend God by our unwavering commitment to them? Things which we hold as pleasing to God that He Himself has never really asked us to hold or observe or do, that actually may get in the way of our hearing from Him? This is the essence of personal revival – looking for such spiritualized idolatry, like Hezekiah did, and breaking those idols to pieces so that God's blessings may flow full and unhindered in our lives. May He help us to this end. – D. Murcek

## Imaginations

Psalms 2:1: Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?

"Why indeed?", we may ask, seeing that God is the author of the unique ability to imagine. Without imagination we could never conceive of the events described in the Bible or, for that matter, the agonies of the cross, the power of His resurrection, the glories of heaven, or the terrors of hell. We must depend upon the power of imagination to formulate faith in all of the vital doctrines of scripture.

A Christian songwriter captured the human incapacity to comprehend the unseen world:

I can only imagine  
What it will be like  
When I walk by your side  
What my eyes would see  
When your face is before me  
I can only imagine

Knowing the importance of this attribute, the devil does his best to invade this faculty and infect our thoughts with vain imaginations. His evil inventions lead men into many destructive snares. Consider the evidence:

Genesis 6:5: 1And GOD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

Genesis 11:6: And the LORD said, Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.

Ezekiel 8:12 : Then s a i d he unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? or they say, The LORD seeth us not

Luk e 1:51: He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.

I Corinthians 10:5: Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

The serpent filled our primal parents with the foolish notion that they could be as gods. Vainly puffed up in the vanity of their nascent minds, they "refused to hear my words" and "walked" after the imagination of their heart" and in so doing found themselves cast out of paradise. In 1971 ,the devil inspired John Lennon to pen this paeon to universalism:

Imagine there's no heaven  
It's easy if you try  
No hell below us  
Above us, only sky  
Imagine there's no countries  
It isn't hard to do  
Nothing to kill or die for  
And no religion, too

We must assiduously petition God to sanctify our imaginations, lest they become corrupted with such worldly notions and "lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness." 2 Peter 3:17.

Have a blessed day,  
*Pastor*

## Know God

*Yet I am the LORD thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me: for there is no saviour beside me.*

*Hosea 13:4*

As Hosea continues in this chapter to deliver the message of condemnation to the northern kingdom, because of their continued self-exaltation and idol worship, the LORD reminds them that their pursuit of the false gods of the world about them will never provide satisfaction. Although they had turned to Baal worship, and sought help from Egypt against enemy attack, and even from the Assyrians who would eventually defeat them, their reminder from the LORD in this verse is that He is their only hope of salvation. He reaches as far back as their national deliverance from slavery by His powerful acts against Egypt, to remind them of His power to save them. And yet now they were looking to Egypt for help, instead of looking to the LORD. His clear message here is that He is the only savior, because He is the only true God. They may seek unto other gods, but the LORD is the one and only God that may be known. As the psalmist proclaimed, "For all the gods of the nations are idols: but the LORD made the heavens" (Psalm 96:5).

Although this is a specific message to the nation of Israel, which was also repeated to the southern kingdom through Isaiah (Isaiah 43:11), it remains a universal truth for all. The false gods of the nations (Gentiles) were represented in diverse ways, created and fashioned by human hands and notions (Isaiah 44:10-19). They cannot be known in a personal way, because they do not truly exist, but are made of earthly materials and/or are created in men's vain imaginations, so that there is no being to know. Therefore, the LORD says here that there is no god that may be known, except for Him, who is the living God. This is reinforced by Jesus' prayer for His followers, "And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

Thus, even today, the world defines all manner of gods that may be worshipped, whether seen or unseen, from the impersonal notions of Eastern religion, to the materialism or celebrity-worship of the West, or even the self-worship of the humanist, who obviously does not know himself enough to understand his own frailty. These are all false and unfulfilling substitutes. Therefore, let us hear the admonition with which John closes his first epistle, "And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen." (1 John 5:20-21)

## **Blessing His Name**

*Enter into his gates with thanksgiving, and into his courts with praise; be thankful unto him, and bless his name. For the LORD is good; his mercy is everlasting, and his truth endureth to all generations. – Psalm 100:4-5*

God is good. Everything He is, is good. Everything He does is good. His Word is good and right and true. His mercies, which are new every morning, flow from His goodness. It is wholly impossible for Him to ever be anything but good. He is especially good to His own – those He has redeemed by the blood of His dear Son, and to whom He has given an inheritance with the saints in light. Any complaint or grumbling or bitterness directed toward Him because of a cursed world is an affront to His goodness and should be eschewed by every one of His children.

But alas, are we not often found in the weakness of our flesh forgetting His wonderful goodness toward us? Do we not at times find it easier to murmur than to bless His name? Is not our propensity to forget Him when the blessings are flowing, and to question Him when the trials come? Brothers and sisters, this ought not so to be.

Our good God has not only created our lives but also authored our faith. He has not just ransomed our souls but has also made us to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. God's goodness sustains us daily. It is the cause of all good in our lives and is available to access (if we choose to do so) even in times of trouble and sorrow. We are His dearest possession, so much so that He will move heaven and earth to answer our prayers lifted in Jesus' Name. One day coming, when our breath is faint and our pulse fading, He will dispatch angels from glory to usher us through the valley of the shadow of death, and upon the other side, we will see our Savior standing at the right hand of God to welcome us into the inheritance prepared for us from the foundation of the world.

God is so very good. How can we not bless His holy Name? A modern Christian songwriter captured the essence of what our attitude ought to be toward our good God.

*All my life You have been faithful  
All my life You have been so, so good  
With every breath that I am able  
I will sing of goodness of God*

May we bless His name amongst our family and friends this Thanksgiving, and every day thereafter until we get to bless Him eternally and unencumbered before His glorious throne. – D. Murcek

## Forgetting the Past

*Numbers 11:5: We remember the fish, which we did eat in Egypt freely.*

God has graciously offered to expunge our sinful past for he says: “*their sins and iniquities will I remember no more*”. If our omniscient Father is thus willing to forget the host of misdeeds we have commissioned then it ought to be our chief delight to do the same. Once a fire is extinguished there can remain smoldering embers which, if given the right conditions, can reignite and restart the fire anew. In the believer’s life, assiduous care must be taken lest a remaining ember of the old nature suddenly reignite what was thought to be a subdued passion. Rather than delighting in their new found liberty, the children of Israel fell a-lusting after their former diet. The devil inexplicably afflicted them with amnesia in that they had forgotten the taskmaster’s lash, the cruel bondage, and, not to mention, the divine deliverance they had witnessed by the mighty hand of the Lord. O the leeks, garlic and fish had so much appeal. But fish, after so many days, emit an odiferous stench.

Lot’s wife pined for the lascivious life of Sodom. What evanescent thrill could have persuaded her to longingly look back upon the condign judgement of that perverted city of sin? How doth the arch enemy of our soul so often stir up remembrances of a life so ill spent. How does he gild the recollection with fool’s gold. How can it be that we are so easily duped into believing that we have suffered some sort of loss by taking up the cross and following Christ: that Egypt’s fare with Egypt’s bondage was superior to the wilderness manna with God’s glorious emancipation.

Paul reminds us to forget “*those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*”. Let us remember that the Master said “*I have meat to eat that ye know not of*”. Let this be our consolation when Satan excites our appetite for the fish of Egypt.

Have a blessed day,

Pastor