

First Presbyterian Church

of Sylva, North Carolina

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PASTOR'S CORNER

LIVING A BEATITUDE LIFE

If you walk into any bookstore today you will find whole sections of the store containing books written about how to succeed in life. Book shelves are filled with “How to” books. These books include topics such as how to be popular, how to be happy, and many more. Magazine articles abound setting out the traits of people who live fulfilling lives, and encouraging us to do the same. Stephen Covey’s book, “The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People” was on a national bestseller list some years ago. And he is writing new best-selling motivational books today. According to Mr. Covey, the seven habits of a highly effective person are: 1) Be proactive 2) Begin with the end in mind 3) Put first things first 4) Think win/win 5) Seek first to understand, then to be understood 6) Synergize and 7) Sharpen the Saw – or take care of yourself.

These books regarding how to succeed are always popular since we all want to know how to live a productive and successful life. But do we Christians seek out what God has to say about living a good and blessed life? Which life habits cause us to be blessed by God?

Scripture has much to say regarding the way that we should conduct our lives. When Jesus was preaching the Sermon on the Mount he outlined the primary attributes of people who receive the rule of the kingdom that He brings. He described eight habits of people who are blessed and have God’s blessing. He gave an explanation for each blessing and He gave a pronouncement of blessing over the people who follow each of these eight practices. These blessings that Jesus promised have been called the Beatitudes. And Jesus’ list of life habits that bring down blessings contrasts sharply with much of the secular advice about the traits needed to live well and be happy. Let’s see what Scripture says

about how we should live in order to receive God’s blessings and to live a good life.

In Matthew 5:3 the Beatitudes begin with Jesus pronouncing a blessing over the poor in spirit. He declares that theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Seven more blessings or “beatitudes” follow: “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. And blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”

The first blessing is to the poor in spirit. The poor in spirit are those who recognize their spiritual poverty and, casting aside all self-dependence, seek God’s grace. The blessing given to those who mourn probably doesn’t mean people in bereavement, but those who experience the sorrow of their sin. They mourn over the sin and the brokenness of our world and they try to do their small part to change it.

Who are the “meek” to whom Christ gives His blessings? The word “meek” carries the idea of humility and gentleness. Everywhere throughout Scripture, God stands against the proud. So the Beatitude blessing given to the meek would be given to a person who would be the opposite of a proud or arrogant person. Christ goes on to pour His blessing on the peacemakers. He calls them the sons of God. Jesus promises that we will be blessed when we follow peaceful solutions. Another Beatitude calls down a blessing upon us when we are merciful. We are promised mercy if we are merciful. Do we make tough choices that take care of the “bottom line” or do we reach out to the overlooked ones who are in need? Are we known for our generous kindness and helpfulness to others? To the unattractive? To animals? Blessed are the merciful.

Then Jesus speaks a blessing on those who hunger and thirst after righteousness. He promises that they shall be filled. And He pronounces more blessings on those who are pure in heart. Our Lord is calling down His blessings on those who want to follow Him, who want Him to take over their lives and who want to obey Him. To follow Him is to follow truth, justice and love.

And the last Beatitude or blessing is given to those who are persecuted for righteousness sake. Blessings attend the way of those who are reviled and persecuted because they are loyal to righteousness. They are blessed because they are willing to suffer persecution in order to follow Jesus. Lies are told against them. Since Christ had to suffer we often are asked to share His sufferings. This last Beatitude tells us that enduring persecution brings a reward in heaven.

We don't understand all that the Lord is telling us here. He speaks in mysteries. The world holds up materialistic goals and Christ tells us that we can't serve both God and money. To be popular by the world's standards we often need to be competitive. We need to take care of "Number One." But our Lord tells us to mourn, to be meek and poor in spirit. Sometimes even those in the Church insist that it is very wrong to be our brother's keeper. But Scripture begs us to feed the hungry and take care of the sick. It would seem that we have to be ready to break with many of the goals that the rest of the world tells us are so important and march to a different drummer. And we may be persecuted when we go this different Way. But even though the Way Jesus is leading us sometimes goes against worldly wisdom, this is the narrow way, the way strewn with earthly and heavenly blessings, the way described in the Beatitudes.

David Grachek
Pastor

FAMILY LIFE DIRECTOR

" So don't lose a minute in building on what you've been given, complementing your basic faith with good character, spiritual understanding, alert discipline, passionate patience, reverent wonder, warm friendliness, and generous love, each dimension fitting into and developing the others. With these qualities active and growing in your lives, no grass will grow under your feet, no day will pass without its reward as you mature in your experience of our Master Jesus. Without these qualities you can't see what's right before you, oblivious that your old sinful life has been wiped off the books." 2 Peter 1:5-9 (The Message)

In the past I've been struck by Peterson's use of the words, "reverent wonder" to express what in many translations appears as the word, "godliness." I still desire more "reverent wonder" in my life, but lately that desire has more to do with the last sentence of these verses, "Without these qualities you can't see what's right before you, oblivious that your old sinful life has been wiped off the books." Oh how often I miss out on the wonderful obvious. In the last week though, I was blessed to be in the company of friends who have helped me to see it again (long may I gaze).

The first conversation took place with Bryan and Clair McManus. It was wonderful to hear how God has been challenging and nurturing their lives in Him and to hear how their prayer life is being enriched and deepened. Bryan shared some about what he's learned about prayer through a metaphor a pastor shared which likens our being, who we truly are, as being a mountain. What we experience as thoughts and emotions are then described as being like the weather that occurs on that mountain. In speaking about prayer with these thoughts in mind, prayer becomes a place where God's Spirit begins to speak through the weather of our thoughts and emotions down to the core/mountain of who we are. I thought Bryan's analogy really helps give legitimacy to our feelings and varied thoughts, without letting them define us.

The second conversation took place just a couple of days later with a friend I hadn't seen in at least three years named Annie Moussette. Annie is the mother of one of my best friends from college. Many of the characteristics I love about my friend I also

see in his mother which is primarily a great, and I really want to use the word “holy,” appreciation of frivolity and celebration. I think the word holy comes to mind in their case because what they really exhibit is a deep rejoicing of relationships. They have taught me what the joy of Christ looks like. In our brief conversation this time, Annie also shared that in the last year she had really discovered how to forgive herself and accept the fact that she is a child of God. This is the mountain. This is the indescribably gracious *obvious* that we have been given through the person of Jesus of Nazareth, our Christ.

I’m amazed at the frequent weather changes of my emotions and the sometimes frenzied nature of my thoughts. Through the gift of friendships and Scripture I have been comfortingly reminded that the eternal mountain of what defines “me” is the Good News of being a child of God. My prayer is that God’s empowering grace would enable us to share this incredible news, which is right before us, with our youth group, our children’s ministries, our families, our friends and in all our relationships; “that old sinful life has been wiped off the books” and we are a new creation, we are children of God and no weather pattern will ever be able to erode that Fact.

–David Cathcart

MISSION NEWS

From **Steve and Buffy White**, our missionaries in Brazil with South America Mission:

This quarter I’ve been teaching Numbers to Joshua using the “Oral Teaching” approach. No writing, all oral teaching and storytelling. Fortunately these books lend themselves easily to telling stories. Moses and Joshua are stirring Bible characters. A colleague suggested that we divide our huge freshman class into two sections. (Why didn’t we think of that before?) That was a lifesaver! At 28, it is by far the largest freshman class we’ve ever had. Our Portuguese teacher made the division for us, separating the stronger Portuguese students from those who needed to go slower.

We learned 12 stories by heart from Numbers to Joshua 6, plus gained experience in how to craft an oral story from the Bible test, in the strong Portuguese class. And we learned five stories in the class of those newer to Portuguese, and all but one PASSED! I had an interesting challenge that I wasn’t expecting with my “advanced” class. The weaker students were struggling mightily to learn. But maybe because it was easy, the advanced class became lazy, not trying, and doing poorly. So one day we had a little talk. I asked them if they knew any unsaved folks back at home who couldn’t read. Of course they all did. So we talked about how those people would ever learn the truths of the Bible if no one ever told them the stories. We talked about the power of God’s Word and how Isaiah 55:11 says “My Word (my stories) will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire.” We talked about 2 Corinthians 4:7 and how we’re just fragile vessels that carry a powerful message, so that God will get the glory. And we talked about what will happen to those folks back home if they never put their trust in Christ. They became quiet for a while, and we moved on. They started doing better after that.

Fourth quarter I’ll have the much smaller 2nd year class for the Epistles of Peter, John, and Jude. There are just three second-year students! (From mega to mini.) There will be a lot more one-on-one interaction as we explore these rich Bible letters. Pray that the Holy Spirit will open our hearts to His teaching in this last quarter of the year.

Buffy is having an interesting time with her CCA-MK classes. With furlough schedules, there are just four students here this year, but each one is in a different year and each has his own full set of classes. Buffy is teaching 11th grade World History and World Lit. and 9th grade English and Geography. Yes, that’s four different classes to prepare for each day. She also takes care of all the administrative details.

Now I’m going to have to write about something that no missionary ever wants to write about. You guessed it: money. Six months after we returned to Brazil, our health insurance rates skyrocketed. They went from \$635/month to \$1,160/month. OUCH.... Our monthly giving has been rock steady (*thank you*) at

our former support level. Which means our support account has been steadily sliding toward the RED. We're still in the Black but just barely. SAM will carry us for a while in the RED, but if it continues that way, they'll call us home to raise more support. We understand, we follow the news, so we know about the economic situation in the States. We also know well, after 17 years of missionary service, that our work and our support are in God's hands, so we are not worried. But we wanted to let you know what's going on and to ask you to pray, and if God leads you to increase your giving for our support, we bless you and may God bless you. 'Nuf said.

Prayer Requests

Praise:

- For good Ammi classes this quarter, even with the new approach and the oral curriculum.
- For far fewer fires during our dry season this year. The air is free of smoke!

Pray:

- That our financial support will increase enough to cover our health insurance costs.
- For the Ammi ministry trips to Indian villages in October. For good experiences and open hearts.
- And for an MK teacher to replace Buffy for the 2012-13 school year when we will be away on home assignment.

UPCOMING EVENTS

..Sunday, November 20 – Dedication of Christmas Child gifts. Our church will once again be participating in Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child. If you would like to put together a shoe box gift, there are some gift boxes on the table by the coat rack, or use any standard empty shoe box or small plastic container. Instructions for filling them are also on the table.

Information can be found at www.samaritanspurse.org.

..Our youth group will be collecting family size cans of fruit cocktail for the Thanksgiving boxes for United Christian Ministry.

..Sunday, December 18, during Morning Worship – Children's Christmas Program. Elizabeth Beck will be working with the

children in November and December to prepare for this program. Watch for more details.

..It is time to sign up for responsibilities for 2012 to be included in our church handbook, such as providing flowers on Sunday morning, coffee fellowship, assisting with Kid's Club, hosting Family Night Supper, ushering and greeting, etc. Sign-up sheets are on the table by the coat rack. Please consider how you can serve the Lord in these opportunities.

SYMPATHY..

..to the family of Allyce Cunningham. Allyce went home to be with her Lord on Sunday, October 16th. Allyce has been a member of our church since 1947.

PRESBYTERIAN WOMEN SCHOLARSHIPS

New 2012 Presbyterian Women's Scholarship applications are on the bulletin board in the fellowship hall. These are due back to the Presbyterian Women Scholarship Facilitator by February 15, 2012.

A NOTE FROM YOUR TREASURER

Twice in the past year, in order to pay current expenses, I have found it necessary (with the blessing of the Session) to borrow money from our Money Market Savings Account where all our designated funds reside. The first time was in February when we borrowed \$5,000 and the second was in September when we borrowed \$5,600 more.

I am asking that you pray about your giving and as the Lord leads and you are able, that you help us make up this shortfall. Also please pray for the budget committee which will soon be addressing our needs for next year. Thank you.

Deadline for the next issue: November 16

FINANCIAL REPORT YEAR-TO-DATE

As of the end of September

	<u>2011</u>	<u>2010</u>
Income to Regular Budget	187,922	214,873
Expenses from Regular Budget	201,516	212,715

ARE YOU MINISTERING IN NOVEMBER?

Coffee Fellowship:

6 Erik Enberg
13 Tom & Jae Crawford
20 Margaret Simpson & Grace Blunt
27 TBA

Kid's Club:

No Kid's Club
TBA
Besan Nash
TBA

Flowers:

Margaret Simpson
Larry & Susan Blair
Peg Shafer
Sylvia Smythe

Family Night Supper – November 2:

Steve & Marlies Owens, Stacey & Nick Grachek

Ushers & Greeters:

Phil & Patti Dennis
Alex Sparling

Deacon of the Month:

Mike Doppke, 293-0613
Gloria Stockton, 586-3572 (alternate)

Communion: November 6

Preparers: Judy McManus & Roger Moore
Servers: Judy McManus, Roger Moore, Roger Murajda, Jessica Morgan

God is in the business of taking old pieces of our lives,
refinishing them and, at just the right time, surprising us with
newfound beauty.”

Susan Duke