



The Mustard Seed



Rehoboth Baptist Church Newsletter ~ December 2015



Jesus Pushed the Elf Off the Shelf

By: Kimm Crandall

“Mommy, if there really was a naughty and nice list we would all be on the naughty list.”

This statement from my seven year old had much greater theological depth than she knew. Her observation didn't come from a manipulative self-pity over being naughty. It came from a clear view of what she knows about the gospel: “None is righteous, no not one” (Romans 3:10).

As the traditions of the holidays swirl around my children, my hope is that they will learn to distinguish the law from the gospel. **I want my kids to know that God is not another Santa Claus.** I long for them to embrace the fact that they are not capable of being good enough to receive anything but coal in their stockings and that our hope for goodness can only be found in the only One capable of perfection.

With the advent celebration and family traditions intersecting this season there is a very clear battle between law and gospel going on. Many parents think it is cute to set an elf on a shelf in a funny predicament leaving notes such as, “I saw you steal a cookie today. If you are good from now until Christmas I promise that I won't tell Santa. If you are extra good then maybe you will get that iPod you asked for.” It's just another extension of the naughty and nice list. It's the law kicked up a notch and it gives parents a way to manipulate their children's behavior as they deal with children high on Christmas treats and anticipation (I'm sure we are all tempted to do the same).

Sadly, it is just a more intense reality of what many children are taught all year long. Do good and you will be accepted by God and will receive good things. Do bad and you will be punished by God or worse yet, be turned away. **It's the law, masked as Karma, masked as parenting.**

Thank God for the Gospel! Thank God for the incarnation of the Son who came down to save us from this filthy mess into which we've gotten ourselves. Thank God that we no longer live under this burden but now live in the freedom of Christ. Is that not what Christmas is about in the first place?

We no longer have to live within the confines of the

law. **The Holy Spirit was not left to look over our shoulder to make sure that we are being good enough for God.** Jesus didn't come for those who were good enough and He certainly didn't come to tattle on us. The Son Of God humbled himself into the restricted form of a human body, lived a sinless life worthy of one million iPods, and willingly hung on a tree to die for those who deserved not only coal but much worse. He did this all knowing that we could never be good enough to appease the Father.

We could not earn a righteousness of our own so God's gift to us was the righteousness of his Son wrapped up in a blood-stained, tragic death, which culminated in a cry of “It is finished.”

“It is finished” declared Jesus’ annihilation of the naughty and nice list. It was with that cry that He pushed that elf off the shelf so that we could be free. My friends, rest in Him this season. Rest in His goodness and not your own. And please, give your children the greatest gift that they will ever receive: the grace that tells them that they have a Savior who loves them and has come to rescue them from the crushing news that they will never be [good enough](#).

Holiday Message

by Mike Poole

Don't let the holidays stress you out
Spending all your time running about
You don't need butter for the rolls
You don't need to paint your toes
You don't need cranberry sauce
You don't need to kiss your boss
You don't need to over cook
You don't need to jump in the brook

Thinking all is done
Feeling I've not won
What did I forget?
Is it Christ whom you haven't met?
He is patiently waiting for you
Your salvation is OVER DUE

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MISSION NEWS!

Who is the missionary this month?

"Can I get an Amen?"

"No Bible, no breakfast!"

Now, you know! Yes, Danny Croce, Chaplain Danny, Chaplain at the Plymouth County Correctional Facility.

Danny grew up in the "Village" section of Brockton, MA - a section of a few blocks with 5 barrooms, 3 package stores and a club. Upon high school graduation in 1975, he worked in a shoe factory by day and boxed and hung out by night. From there he moved on to become an iron worker. With more cash and the crowd he hung with, he began to do drugs and went on to cocaine.

In February 1984, he was involved in a car accident that ended in the death of a police officer, one known to Danny and his family. While an inmate in PCCF, he began to cry out to God during his sleepless agony; God answered and he was able to sleep. He borrowed a New Testament. There he read of Jesus saying, "You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire." Matthew 5:21 - 22.

He knew he was in trouble. He attended a Sunday morning chapel service and stayed after to talk to the chaplain. "Is Jesus talking about going to hell?" "I'm in deep trouble!" The chaplain said, "you need to be saved". He asked Danny if he believed Jesus had died for his sins and told him to tell God that in prayer in his cell. That was the beginning!

After release, Danny found Brookville Baptist Church where Dennis Bauder was pastor and returned to iron work. One day he crushed his thumb. After 2 years of therapy, he was still unable to return to iron work. He hung out at church with Dennis, mowing, painting, accompanying him on visitation. When asked what he was going to do, he said he felt God wanted him to serve Him full time, but he had no education beyond high school. He applied for a scholarship and went to Wheaton College in IL. While a sophomore there, he got a call from the chaplain at PCCF, who informed him of a new building and the need for a full time chaplain. He learned he'd be "faith-funded", which was explained as "you go to churches and tell your story and trust God". Since 1996 that's what Danny has been doing.

Asked how RBC can help him, Danny answered: PRAY for inmates and especially the staff. You see the staff compare themselves to the inmates and think they're all set, not sinners. PRAY for former inmates who have found the Lord, that they will find good churches

and follow the Lord. He also mentioned that they always need Bibles. They give paperback Bibles to all who come to chapel. Those who complete the 400 lessons receive a leather bound Bible with their name on, costing about \$50.

Steve's Devotional - Jesus is Here

By: Steve Brown

The incarnation of God in Christ happened in the past. And now, because he came, we never have to feel that God doesn't care. People asked if there was a God and, if there was, what he was like. A monster? A child abuser? A God with lightning bolts aimed at the people who get out of line? Does he love? Does he love *me*?

Then the laughter of God spilled over into a sour, bent and dark world. We knew, because he came, that God was there. He was love.

The cross happened in the past as a space-time event. When Jesus said, "It is finished" (John 19:30), he meant that what was needful in terms of our redemption had been accomplished—completely, totally and absolutely. When it was finished on the cross, it was really finished. Now I don't ever have to feel guilty again. Someone, in answer to the question "When were you saved?" replied, "Well, about 2,000 years ago." That is profoundly true because of something that happened a long time ago in the past.

The resurrection of Christ—a dead man getting up out of the grave—was a past space-time event. It really happened then.

Do you remember what the risen Christ said to his disciples (Mathew 28:18-20)? He said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." That, of course, was a statement made by the Son of God. Christ's statement to his disciples, though to be applied to us today, was also an actual, past space-time event.

But what he said after that was not.

He said, "And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

When I worship, Jesus is there. When I go through the valley of the shadow of death, Jesus is there. Jesus isn't just a past event. He is the most important, the most exciting, the most relevant, the most joyous and the most loving person in my life right now. In his presence, I am forgiven, loved and accepted. In his presence, I find meaning, joy, hope and radical freedom.

Jesus was not only there in Jerusalem some 2,000 years ago; he is here right now...even as I write this. (In fact, as I understand it, I'm not writing this by myself. Jesus is here with me as I write and that means you ought to pay attention. Jesus is also there with you as you read this, perhaps saying, "Don't listen to



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everything Steve writes. Some of it is pretty good because he was listening to me, but some of it you will need to filter because I had nothing to do with it.”)

Back when I was still a pastor, a teenage girl who was worried about her mother’s salvation asked me to talk to her. As I talked to the mother, I was amazed by her hostility to organized religion and to Christians whom she said were all hypocrites.

I let her talk. As I listened, I quickly realized she had a point. Some Christians had done some terrible things to her and I could give her no defense except to tell her how sorry I was. After the woman “ventilated” her anger and was spent, she then got quiet. I noticed that she became softer. She had finally met a Christian who didn’t judge her and who accepted her anger.

Then the woman said, “Steve, let me tell you something that I’ve never told anyone before, but I think you should know. Every night, just before I go to sleep, I whisper, ‘Good night, Jesus.’”

This mother wasn’t far from the kingdom and, in fact, did become a Christian shortly after our conversation. I wasn’t surprised. You see, Jesus—the one to whom she spoke each night—loved her and drew her to himself. It wasn’t a theology or a set of truth propositions. It was Jesus.

Jesus is here. Jesus is really here.

So laugh, dance, sing and rejoice.

Time to Draw Away

Read Psalm 23 & Matthew 11:28-29

How do you know that Jesus is with you right now... and has your back? Regardless of how you feel on a particular day, the fact is God loves, accepts, forgives and cherishes you as his son or daughter. God is at work in your life right now, accomplishing his perfect plan and purposes. And Jesus is your [elder brother](#). So you’re in and he is there. That is great cause for celebration.

First Christmas

by Pam Teschner

One day out of the blue (rather, out of heaven), the angel Gabriel stood in front of a very young woman. If it weren’t enough of a shock for a tall handsome angel to appear out of nowhere, he then announced to Mary, “You will be with child and give birth to a son, and you are to give Him the name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High.”

She, a virgin engaged to be married, was going to become pregnant with God’s son. Questions raced through her mind. “How in the world is that supposed to happen? How am I going to explain this one, and who will believe me? This changes everything!”

After learning how the impossible was going to happen, she looked up at Gabriel and simply replied, “I am the Lord’s servant, may it be to me as you have said.” The angel then vanished with a smile.

In response to her absolute surrender, the mighty

power of God moved upon her and the glory cloud of His Presence overshadowed her. In that private moment, heaven’s most astounding miracle materialized in secret – hidden in the womb of Mary and obscured by a cloud of glory.

Her heart was overwhelmed by the joy of His Presence and enveloped with His peace. Deity became two cells, then four cells, then eight, and soon the tiny heart of God’s Son began beating and circulating the atoning blood. All the fullness of Deity inhabited the humanity of a baby.

As the days of her pregnancy stretched on, she pondered all these things and treasured them in her heart. She kept turning the incredible message of the angel over and over in her mind – “the Most High God favors me, and I bear His Son...the King!”

While she and Joseph (who received his own personal message from the angel) were in Bethlehem to be registered for the census, the days were accomplished for her to be delivered. And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped Him in swaddling cloths, and laid Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. Far above the lowly stable, in the black of the night, stood a star as a bright sentinel over the King.

Mary sat in the hay tenderly cradling Jesus under the gaze of a few animals. She counted ten little fingers and ten little toes and marveled at his tiny little fingernails. She held her newborn baby boy...she held the Ancient of Days, the One who named the stars, and she looked in wonder into the eyes of her Creator – the very eyes of very God himself. And they called him Immanuel which means, “God with us.” And so, the light of the world dawned in the darkness of a stable.

The only sounds in the night were the breathing of the animals and an occasional switch of a tail. A cool breeze rustled the hay and caressed the tiny face of God then slipped out into the night whispering the miraculous birth of the King.

An ecstatic multitude of the heavenly host crowded around the portal anxious to charge through and announce the greatest news ever to be proclaimed. Gabriel gestured for silence and for some much needed angelic composure. Then he slipped through the portal and stood before a small group of astonished shepherds. The luminous angel told of the birth of their Messiah.

Meanwhile in the other realm, the angelic order was once more about to disintegrate. The angelic host couldn’t take it any longer and pushed their way through the portal. And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, “Glory to God in the highest and on earth, peace, good will toward men.”

The stunned shepherds rushed to Bethlehem and found Joseph and Mary in the stable. The scruffy men knelt in the hay before a manger that held God incarnate, the hope of humanity. In that humble hallowed place, they worshipped their Savior and their King.

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Clue List of 100 Christmas Songs

A BOY IS BORN IN BETHLEHEM
 ALL I WANT 4 CHRISTMAS IS MY 2 FRONT
 TEETH
 ALL THROUGH THE NIGHT
 ANGELS AND SHEPHERDS
 AROUND THE CHRISTMAS TREE
 AULD LANG SYNE
 AVE MARIA
 AWAY IN THE MANGER
 BABY IT'S COLD OUTSIDE
 BABY JUST LIKE YOU
 BLUE CHAMPAGNE
 BLUE CHRISTMAS
 BOOGIE WOOGIE SANTA
 BORN ON EARTH THE DIVINE CHRIST CHILD
 CAROL OF THE BELLS
 CAROL OF THE BIRDS
 CAROLING WITH THE ELVES
 CHERRY TREE CAROL
 CHESTNUTS ROASTING ON AN OPEN FIRE
 CHIPMUNK SONG
 CHRISTMAS BELLS
 CHRISTMAS STAR
 CHRISTMAS WALTZES
 CHRISTMAS WITHOUT YOU
 CRADLE SONG
 DANCE OF THE ELVES
 DANCE OF THE GINGERBREAD MEN
 DECK THE HALLS
 DING DONG MERRILY ON HIGH
 DO YOU HEAR WHAT I HEAR?
 FELIZ NAVIDAD
 FIRST NOEL
 FROSTY THE SNOWMAN
 FUM, FUM, FUM
 GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN
 GOD REST YE MERRY GENTLEMEN
 GOOD KING WENCESLAS
 GRANDMA GOT RUN OVER BY A REINDEER
 GREENSLEEVES
 HAPPY HOLIDAYS
 HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING
 HAVE YOURSELF A MERRY LITTLE CHRISTMAS
 HOLLY AND IVY
 HOLY NIGHT
 HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS
 I SAW MAMA KISSING SANTA
 I SAW THREE SHIPS
 I STILL BELIEVE IN CHRISTMAS
 I WANT A HIPPOPOTAMUS FOR CHRISTMAS
 IF WE MAKE IT THROUGH DECEMBER
 I'LL BE HOME FOR CHRISTMAS
 IT CAME UPON A MIDNIGHT CLEAR
 IT'S BEGINNING 2 LOOK A LOT LIKE
 CHRISTMAS!
 JINGLE BELL BOOGIE
 JINGLE BELLS
 JOLLY OLD SAINT NICHOLAS
 JOY TO THE WORLD
 LET IT SNOW
 LET THERE BE PEACE ON EARTH
 LITTLE DRUMMER BOY
 LITTLE SAINT NICK
 LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM
 MAN WITH ALL THE TOYS

MEET ME UNDER THE MISTLETOE
 MERRY CHRISTMAS BABY
 MILK AND COOKIES
 MISTLETOE AND HOLLY
 MOST WONDERFUL DAY OF THE YEAR
 MRS. SANTA'S JIG
 MY TREE HUNG WITH TEARS
 NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS
 NUTCRACKER
 O, CHRISTMAS TREE
 O, COME ALL YE FAITHFUL
 OVER THE RIVER & THROUGH THE WOODS
 PARADE OF THE WOODEN SOLDIERS
 PLEASE MR. SANTA CLAUS!
 REINDEER BOOGIE
 RING CHRISTMAS BELLS
 ROCKING ROUND THE CHRISTMAS TREE
 RUDOLPH THE RED NOSED REINDEER
 SANTA AND THE KIDS
 SANTA CLAUS IS COMING TO TOWN
 SANTA LOOKED A LOT LIKE DADDY
 SILENT NIGHT
 SILVER BELLS
 SKATERS WALTZ
 SLEIGH RIDE
 STAR OF THE EAST
 SWINGLE JINGLE
 THIS IS THAT TIME OF THE YEAR
 TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS
 UP ON THE HOUSETOP
 WALKING IN A WINTER WONDERLAND
 WASSAIL SONG
 WE THREE KINGS OF ORIENT ARE
 WE WISH YOU A MERRY CHRISTMAS
 WHAT CHILD IS THIS?
 WHATEVER HAPPENED TO CHRISTMAS?
 WHITE CHRISTMAS

<< Continued from page 3 >>

God so loved us that he opened the treasury of heaven and gave his most precious gift – his only Son wrapped in human flesh. Even now, God draws us to the cradle of his humanity and overwhelms us with the glory of His Deity. How can we not fall to our knees in worship?

For unto us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end.

The concept of ecstatic angels was taken from Gene Edwards, *The Birth, the Chronicles of the Door*, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1991. Scriptures used: Luke 1 and 2, Isaiah 9:6

Christmas Will Rob You of Hope...If You Let It

By: Steve Brown

Christmas is about hope. Everybody knows that.

A friend came into my office this morning looking like he was about to cry. I asked him what was wrong and he told me. Then he said, "And Christmas is coming and that will make it even



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worse.” Note that it’s only October (as I write this) and he’s already worried about getting through Christmas.

It really shouldn’t be that way. Everybody knows that.

Christmas is coming. It’s hard for a Scrooge like me to get through Christmas anyway, but when stores start playing Christmas music weeks before Thanksgiving and I have to say something happy about Christmas in October...well...uh...it’s my favorite thing right after jumping off buildings.

Speaking of jumping off buildings, did you hear about the man on the ledge of a 10-story building threatening to jump? His wife, his children, and the police pleaded with him not to jump but to no avail. Finally his pastor was called. His pastor crawled out on the ledge and sat there talking to the man. They talked for over an hour...and then they joined hands and jumped together.

Sorry, but my friend’s comments reminded me of that story. I was fine until he came into the office and told me why he was depressed and then brought up Christmas. I said to him, “You’re worried about Christmas and it’s only October? Thanks a lot! Now we’re both depressed.”

It really shouldn’t be that way. Everybody knows that.

Christmas will rob you of hope if you let it. I know. There’s so much to do, so many things to remember, and on top of that, there’s so much wrong with the world that singing “Joy to the World” seems crazy. When I was a pastor, every Christmas I tried to find a way to say what had been said a hundred million times and to say it in a way that wouldn’t bore people to death who had heard it a hundred million times. (A bit of hyperbole there.) And that’s not all. People who were depressed before became more depressed at Christmas. People who had lost loved ones had grief that was magnified at Christmas. And for those who were lonely, Christmas was a horror. They were my people and I was responsible for giving them hope. After all, I’m ordained.

A pastor really shouldn’t be down at Christmas. Everybody knows that.

So before I wrote you, I told Jesus that Christmas made me depressed and I was already a Scrooge. He said, “Everybody knows that...but I like you, so I’ll help.” Jesus did and now I’ll help you.

As I sat before the blank page, I remembered that Christmas is a time when we celebrate the most astounding, unbelievable, crazy thing that has ever happened in the history of the world. God—yes, *that* God—came. He really came. The Word really became flesh and all the questions of importance found an answer. Is there any meaning to all of this? Is there any hope? Is there a God? Does he care? Will he forgive? Will he forgive me? Does he love? Does he love me?

Christmas is when God answered, “Yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes and yes!!!”

“For the Son of God, Jesus Christ, whom we proclaimed among you...was not Yes and No, but in him it is always Yes. For all the promises of God find their Yes in him” (2 Corinthians 1:19-20).

I remember one evening when I was a college student, a friend asked the girl he was dating to marry him. You could hear him shouting before he even got back to the dorm. “She said, ‘Yes’! Can you believe it? She said, ‘Yes’!” Pretty soon we were all laughing and slapping him on the back.

When I remembered that God said, “Yes,” I felt a little bit better about writing you.

But there is more. I not only remembered that he really came, I remembered that he never really left. In fact, it dawned on me that Jesus was looking over my shoulder as I was “spitting and cussing” about Christmas.

C.S. Lewis, when he was an atheist, said that he couldn’t get away from Christ. Lewis said that there was always someone there silently waiting and watching even if he didn’t know his name. He wrote, “To say I was searching for God is like saying a mouse was searching for a cat.”

In other words, as I thought about writing you, I wasn’t alone. It shouldn’t have surprised me. After all, Jesus did say, “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me” (John 14:18-19).

I was starting to feel a lot better and very close to speaking in tongues when I remembered something else. Jesus was going to return and clean up the mess. At the ascension, you will remember, there were two men (angels) who came as the disciples looked up into heaven. They asked, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11).

Have I told you the story of our German shepherd, Barnabas, biting the vet? It was not one of my most pleasant experiences. Our vet planned to give Barnabas two shots. When the vet gave him the first shot, Barnabas took it well. He didn’t whine or yelp. He took it like a man...uh...a German shepherd. I was quite proud of him. But when the vet went back to his little table to get the second shot, Barnabas watched him carefully. You could see it in my dog’s eyes. Barnabas was thinking, “It’s not going to happen, buster! Once was a surprise, but I’m not a stupid dog. You’re not going to do that to me again.”

When the vet got close enough, Barnabas didn’t bark or growl; he just opened his mouth and bit the vet’s arm off. Well, not quite, but he took a good piece.



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That not dissimilar to what Jesus said. "You did your worst to me the first time and I let you. I let you spit on me, laugh at me and hang me on a cross. But you won't do that the second time. The next time I'm coming with my angels, and with thunder, lightning and trumpets. Then every wrong will be made right, every scoundrel will be silenced, and every knee will bow."

Christmas is about advent—the first and the second. The first one gave us a taste of God's forgiveness, love and grace. The second one will be a Christmas celebration the likes of which the world has never seen...and we will laugh and laugh and laugh.

I feel a lot better about Christmas now.

I know. Things are bad. The world is a mess. People seem to have forgotten about God. It seems that truth and morality don't matter anymore. People laugh at us and make jokes. So many think that those of us who are called by the name of Christ are foolish at best and insane at worst. It's okay. Be kind and compassionate. They don't know any better. And when [Jesus comes](#), they will then know and grow strangely silent.

He asked me to remind you.

Carol Answers:

01 JINGLE BELLS, 02 WALKING IN A WINTER WONDERLAND
03 SANTA CLAUS IS COMING TO TOWN, 04 FIRST NOEL
05 RUDOLPH THE RED NOSED REINDEER, 06 LITTLE DRUMMER BOY, 07 I'M DREAMING OF A WHITE CHRISTMAS, 08 I SAW THREE SHIPS, 09 WHAT CHILD IS THIS?, 10 WE THREE KINGS OF ORIENT ARE, 11 DECK THE HALLS, 12 HOLY NIGHT, 13 FELIZ NAVIDAD, 14 BLUE CHRISTMAS, 15 SILVER BELLS, 16 SANTA LOOKED A LOT LIKE DADDY, 17 AWAY IN THE MANGER, 18 TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS, 19 ROCKING ROUND THE CHRISTMAS TREE, 20 FROSTY THE SNOWMAN, 21 LET IT SNOW, 22 GO TELL IT ON THE MOUNTAIN, 23 CHESTNUTS ROASTING ON AN OPEN FIRE, 24 IT CAME UPON A MIDNIGHT CLEAR
25 I SAW MAMA KISSING SANTA, 26 O, COME ALL YE FAITHFUL
27 SILENT NIGHT, 28 LITTLE TOWN OF BETHLEHEM
29 MEET ME UNDER THE MISTLETOE, 30 HARK THE HERALD ANGELS SING, 31 JOY TO THE WORLD, 32 O, CHRISTMAS TREE
33 AROUND THE CHRISTMAS TREE, 34 ALL I WANT 4 CHRISTMAS IS MY 2 FRONT TEETH, 35 GREENSLEEVES, 36 SKATERS WALTZ, 37 GRANDMA GOT RUN OVER BY A REINDEER
38 LITTLE SAINT NICK, 39 NUTCRACKER, 40 CRADLE SONG

Reflections on my reading in the Gospels

by Cindy Williams

With God all things are possible

Mark 10:17-22, 23-31; Matthew 19:16-22, 23-30, Luke 18:18-23, 24-30

I took note of the context of Jesus' words: "with man this is impossible, but not with God; all things are possible with God." Mark 10:27

A rich, young ruler had encountered Jesus, stating he'd kept the commandments. However, he could not accept Jesus' words to sell all he had and give to the

poor in order to have treasure in heaven. He went away sad because he had great wealth.

Jesus said to his disciples, "How hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of God!" Jesus said it again and added "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

The disciples asked "who then can be saved?" Jesus replied with the words, "with man it is impossible..."

Does it seem to you that we need to pray more than we do for our neighbors in Rehoboth to be brought into the kingdom? With God all things are possible!

A Letter from Joseph to his Mom after Jesus' Birth

by Dr. Ralph F. Wilson

Dear Mom,

We're still in Bethlehem--Mary and I and little Jesus.

There were lots of things I couldn't talk to you about last summer. You wouldn't have believed me then, but maybe I can tell you now. I hope you can understand.

You know, Mom, I've always loved Mary. You and dad used to tease me about her when she was still a girl. She and her brothers used to play on our street. Our families got together for supper. But the hardest day of my life came scarcely a year ago when I was twenty and she only fifteen. You remember that day, don't you?

The trouble started after we were betrothed and signed the marriage agreement at our engagement. That same spring Mary had left abruptly to visit her old cousin Elizabeth in Judea. She was gone three whole months. After she got back, people started wondering out loud if she were pregnant.

It was cloudy the day when I finally confronted her with the gossip. "Mary," I asked at last, "are you going to have a baby?"

Her clear brown eyes met mine. She nodded.

I didn't know what to say. "Who?" I finally stammered.

Mom, Mary and I had never acted improperly--even after we were betrothed.

Mary looked down. "Joseph," she said. "There's no way I can explain. You couldn't understand. But I want you to know I've never cared for anyone but you." She got up, gently took my hands in hers, kissed each of them as if it were the last time she would ever do that again, and then turned towards home. She must have been dying inside. I know I was.

The rest of the day I stumbled through my chores. It's a wonder I didn't hurt myself in the woodshop. At first I was angry and pounded out my frustrations on the doorframe I was making. My thoughts whirled so fast I could hardly keep my mind on my work. At last I decided just to end the marriage contract with a quiet divorce. I loved her too much to make a public scene.

I couldn't talk to you. Or anyone, for that matter. I went to bed early and tried to sleep. Her words came



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to me over and over. "I've never cared for anyone but you.... I've never cared for anyone but you...." How I wished I could believe her!

I don't know when I finally fell asleep. Mom, I had a dream from God. An angel of the Lord came to me. His words pulsed through my mind so intensely I can remember them as if it were yesterday.

"Joseph, son of David," he thundered, "do not fear to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit."

I couldn't believe my ears, Mom. This was the answer! The angel continued, "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

The angel gripped my shoulders with his huge hands. For a long moment his gaze pierced deep within me. Just as he turned to go, I think I saw a smile on his shining face.

I sat bolt upright in bed. No sleep after that! I tossed about for a while, going over the words in my mind. Then I got up and dressed quietly so I wouldn't wake you.

I must have walked for miles beneath the moonless sky. Stars pricked the blackness like a thousand tiny pinpoints. A warm breeze blew on my face.

I sang to the Lord, Mom. Yes, me, singing, if you can imagine that. I couldn't contain my joy. I told Him that I would take Mary and care for her. I told Him I would watch over her--and the child--no matter what anyone said.

I got back just as the sun kissed the hilltops. I don't know if you still recall that morning, Mom. I can see it in my mind's eye as if it were yesterday. You were feeding the chickens, surprised to see me out. Remember?

"Sit down," I said to you. "I've got to tell you something." I took your arm and helped you find a seat on the big rock out back. "Mom," I said, "I'm going to bring Mary home as my wife. Can you help make a place for her things?"

You were silent a long time. "You do know what they're saying, don't you, son?" you said at last, your eyes glistening.

"Yes, Mom, I know."

Your voice started to rise. "If your father were still alive, he'd have some words, I'll tell you. Going about like that before you are married. Disgracing the family and all. You... you and Mary ought to be ashamed of yourselves!"

You'd never have believed me if I'd tried to explain, so I didn't. Unless the angel had spoken to you, you'd have laughed me to scorn.

"Mom, this is the right thing to do," I said.

And then I started talking to you as if I were the head of the house. "When she comes I don't want one word to her about it," I sputtered. "She's your daughter-in-law, you'll respect her. She'll need your help if she's to bear the neighbors' wagging tongues!"

I'm sorry, Mom. You didn't deserve that. You started to get up in a huff.

"Mom," I murmured, "I need you." You took my hand and got to your feet, but the fire was gone from your eyes.

"You can count on me, Joseph," you told me with a long hug. And you meant it. I never heard another word. No bride could hope for a better mother-in-law than you those next few months.

Mom, after I left you I went up the road to Mary's house and knocked. Her mother glared at me as she opened the door. Loudly, harshly she called into the house, "It's Joseph!" almost spitting out my name as she said it.

My little Mary came out cringing, as if she expected me give her the back of my hand, I suppose. Her eyes were red and puffy. I can just imagine what her parents had said.

We walked a few steps from the house. She looked so young and afraid. "Pack your things, Mary," I told her gently. "I'm taking you home to be my wife."

"Joseph!" She hugged me as tight as she could. Mom, I didn't realize she was so strong.

I told her what I'd been planning. "We'll go to Rabbi Ben-Ezer's house this week and have him perform the ceremony."

I know it was awfully sudden, Mom, but I figured the sooner we got married the better it would be for her, and me, and the baby.

"Mary, even if our friends don't come, at least you and I can pledge our love before God." I paused. "I think my Mom will be there. And maybe your friend Rebecca would come if her dad will let her. How about your parents?"

I could feel Mary's tiny frame shuddering as she sobbed quietly.

"Mary," I said. I could feel myself speaking more boldly. "No matter what anyone says about you, I'm proud you're going to be my wife. I'm going to take good care of you. I've promised God that."

She looked up.

I lowered my voice. "I had a dream last night, Mary. I saw an angel. I know."

The anguish which had gripped her face vanished. She was radiant as we turned away from the house and began to walk up the hill together.

Just then her mother ran out into the yard. "Wait," she called. She must have been listening from behind the door. Tears were streaming down her cheeks.

"I'll get your father," she called, almost giddy with emotion. "We," she cried as she gathered up her skirts. "We," she shouted as she began to run to find her husband. "We ... are going to have a wedding!"

That's how it was, Mom. Thanks for being there for us. I'll write again soon.

Love, Joseph

December 2015

Rehoboth Baptist Church Mustard Seed

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday																																																	
<div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; margin-bottom: 10px;"> <p style="text-align: center; margin: 0;">Nov 2015</p> <table style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; font-size: small;"> <thead> <tr> <th>S</th><th>M</th><th>T</th><th>W</th><th>T</th><th>F</th><th>S</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>1</td><td>2</td><td>3</td><td>4</td><td>5</td><td>6</td><td>7</td></tr> <tr><td>8</td><td>9</td><td>10</td><td>11</td><td>12</td><td>13</td><td>14</td></tr> <tr><td>15</td><td>16</td><td>17</td><td>18</td><td>19</td><td>20</td><td>21</td></tr> <tr><td>22</td><td>23</td><td>24</td><td>25</td><td>26</td><td>27</td><td>28</td></tr> <tr><td>29</td><td>30</td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr> </tbody> </table> </div>	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30							<p style="text-align: center; font-size: 24px; color: red; margin: 0;">1</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">7:00 PM Deaconess</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">7:00 PM Missions</p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-size: 24px; color: red; margin: 0;">2</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">7:00 PM Prayer Meeting</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">8:00 PM Choir</p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-size: 24px; color: red; margin: 0;">3</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">Bill Rose</p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-size: 24px; color: red; margin: 0;">4</p>	<p style="text-align: center; font-size: 24px; color: red; margin: 0;">5</p> <p style="margin: 5px 0;">11:00 AM The Annual Ladies' Christmas Fellowship Brunch</p>							
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January 2016

Rehoboth Baptist Church Mustard Seed

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