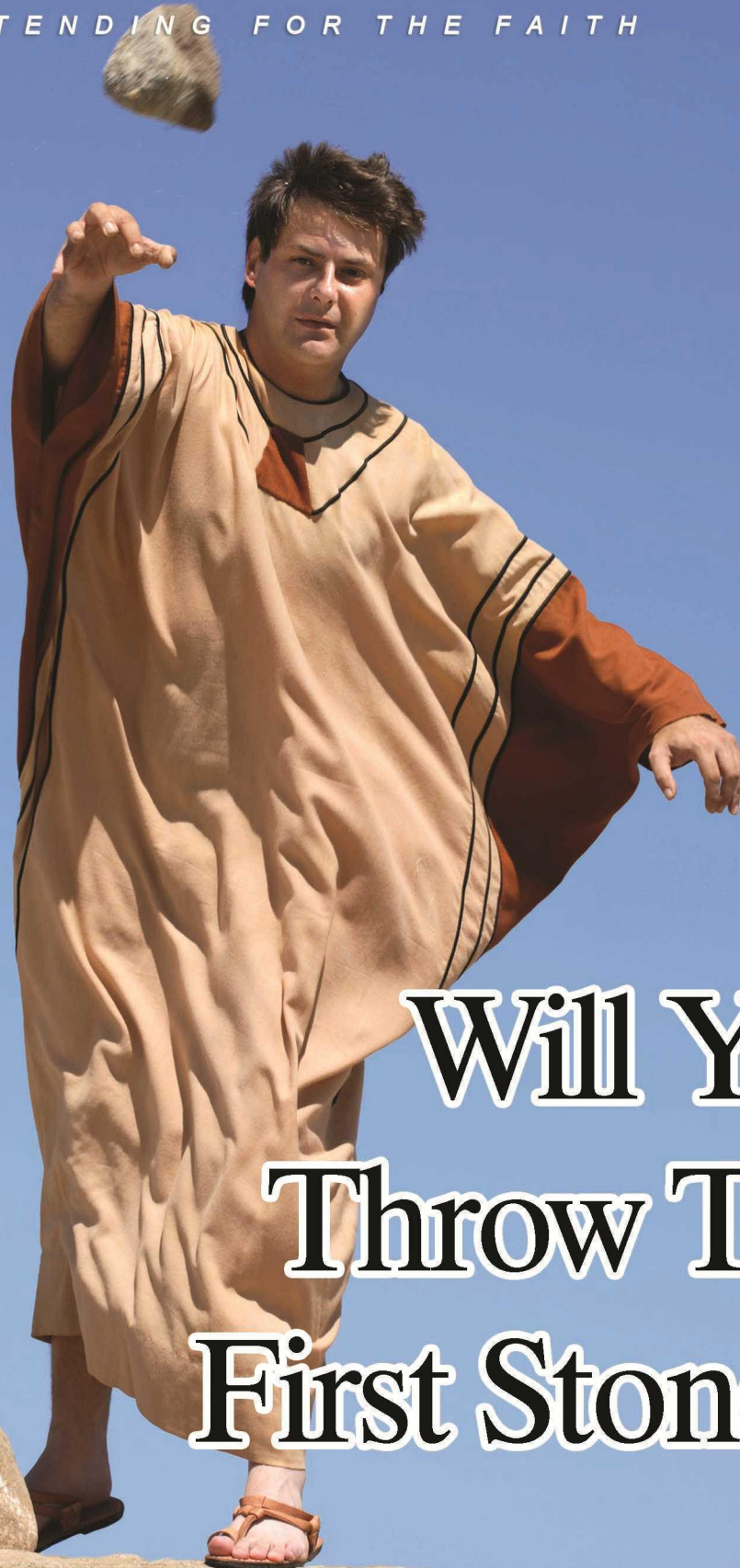


April - June 2013

ARMOR OF GOD

CONTENDING FOR THE FAITH



Will You Throw The First Stone ?

Will You Throw the First Stone ?

Abundant Life in Christ

The Lamb and the King

Lessons from a Good Samaritan

Remembering Passover

Passover is considered the most solemn occasion that Bible believing Christians need to observe. And certainly it should not be treated otherwise since it commemorates the event that opens up the possibility for mankind to have access to the true God again. Isaiah 59:2 tells us that “our iniquities have separated between us and God, and our sins have hid his face from us, that he will not hear us.” Sin stands in the way between God and man. Since all have sinned and fell short of God’s glory (Rom. 3:23), no human initiative or effort can possibly restore the relationship man had with God from the beginning.

But then God is the epitome of love, mercy and compassion, and He really wanted “all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth”, 1 Tim. 2:14, that’s why He devised a way through which man can call on Him again and avail of His plan of salvation. He sent His only begotten Son to die for humanity so that the sins that blocked man’s access to God will be paid for and removed - thus enabling mankind to come before God and avail of His good graces.

When Jesus and His disciples kept the Passover ceremony during the night in which He was betrayed, He reminded them twice to “Do this in remembrance of Me” (1 Corinthians 11:23-25) Christians, especially those who are not of Israelitish origin, have every reason to commemorate the Passover. We need to be thankful for this glorious event especially with the apostle Paul’s reminders in Ephesians 2:11-13, saying: “Therefore, remember that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by the so-called Circumcision which is performed in the flesh by human hands, remember that you were at that time separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.”

Remembering Passover is remembering that we need salvation. And Christ made it possible through His sacrifice during an event that we need to continually keep in mind.

- Eleno S. Mellomida

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Will You Throw the First Stone?

by Winston S. Co

It was customary for Jesus to teach in the temple court. On one occasion the teachers of the law and the Pharisees brought in a woman caught in adultery before Jesus to be judged. This incident as recorded happened on the Last and Greatest Day of the Feast.

The account is intriguing. Bible scholars tend to agree that John 7:33-8:11 was not part of the original manuscript. The style seems to attune more to the synoptic gospel writing. Nonetheless, there is a good reason for its inclusion in the Bible, and undoubtedly vital spiritual lessons can be learned from it. Let's explore the text and find the inspiration therein.

The account tells of Jesus being tested by the Pharisees and teachers of the law. Jesus was teaching at the temple court at

dawn during the Last and Greatest Day of the Feast when they brought a woman caught in adultery to Him.

They knew Jesus was not a judge or a member of the Sanhedrin. In cases like these, the accused was brought and charged before the council where they were investigated and subsequently judged. This case was similar with what they did to Jesus and the apostles - particularly Peter and Paul. But in this unusual case, they brought the woman before Christ seeking for judgment. Obviously, it was the wrong venue. The right forum for this would be the Sanhedrin where some of the accusers might be members. The motive was questionable. Obviously, they were not seeking judgment but were testing Jesus.

Story

The accusers brought the woman caught in adultery to Jesus. She stood in the middle of the crowd fearing for her life while the accusers intensely charged her with adultery before Jesus. They were putting Jesus to a test. The test was to discredit Jesus and His teaching on justice, mercy and faith; on repentance and forgiveness. The test was for Jesus to either uphold the law or keep true to His message of forgiveness. The scenario was either Jesus had to condemn sin and allow her to be stoned to death or to negate His own teaching on forgiveness and let her go free. Either way, they could manufacture an accusation against Christ.

The law says in Deuteronomy 22:22 that the woman and the man caught in adultery must both be put to death by stoning. In this instance, only the woman was caught and presented before Jesus. The man was either set free or could have escaped capture. Nonetheless, it was not an issue to Jesus.

Perspective

What are Christians supposed to take out from the story? Did Jesus negate the

law in favor of grace and forgiveness? Pressed for a reply, Jesus bent down to write on the ground. Much speculation has been spent on what Jesus wrote on the ground for no one knew since the Bible did not mention about what He wrote. The gesture of writing on the ground was more important than what He wrote. That was why the scripture records the gesture and not on what was written.

Jeremiah 17:13 is a very familiar verse to the Jews that says: "LORD, you are the hope of Israel; all who forsake you will be put to shame. Those who turn away from you will be written in the dust because they have forsaken the LORD." The verse says that those who turn away from the Lord their names will be written in the dust as contrasted to the redeemed whose names will be written in the book of life. In this instance, as they came to test the Lord, Jesus bent down to write on the ground - signifying those who turn away from the Lord will be put to shame and lose their salvation.

The true essence of the story lies not in what Jesus wrote rather on what Jesus said that silenced the accusers and

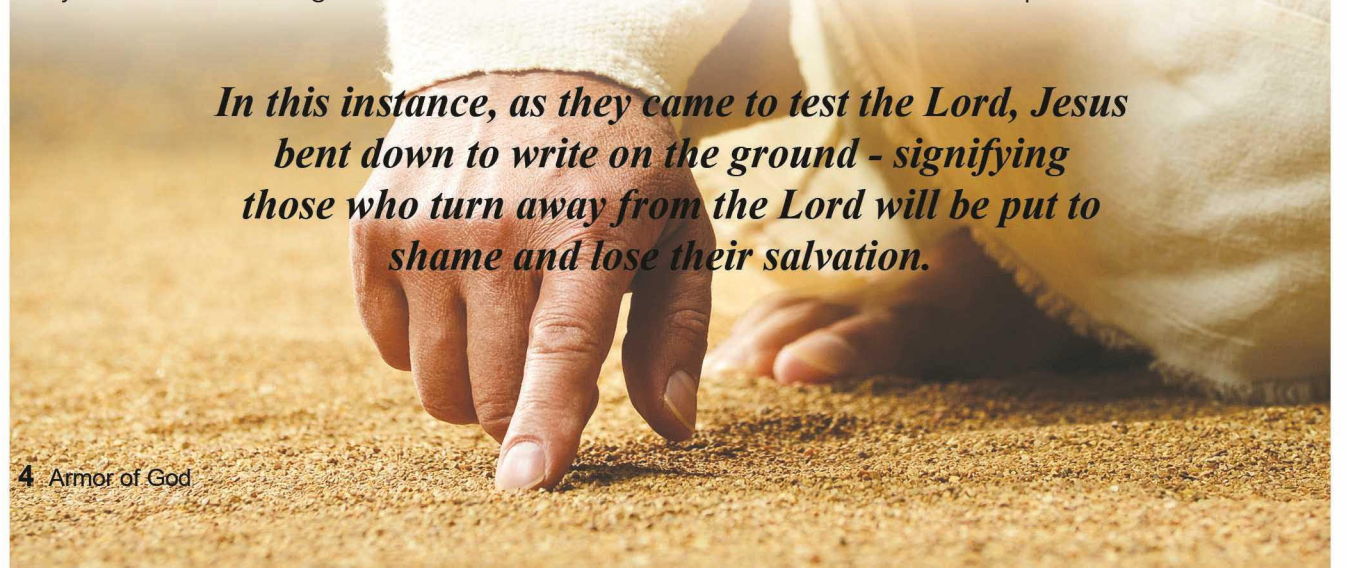
what He told the woman caught in adultery. Nonetheless, it was not the writing on the ground that drove the accusers away but what Jesus said. Now, let us consider and analyze what Jesus said. Jesus made two very important statements;

"Those who are without sin cast the first stone"

This is an interesting statement from Jesus. He did not condone wrong doing neither did He pass any judgment. This is a statement that in judiciary connotes coming to the court with "clean hands." When one comes to seek justice, he must come with a just cause and not out of malice and deceit.

The scripture says in Romans 3:23 that "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." We are no better than any other person for we are all sinners. The people who accused the woman caught in adultery were themselves sinners. They were no better than the woman. In the sight of God, no one has the right to accuse another of sin when all of us have sinned against God and are in danger of condemnation ourselves.

This episode must be viewed



In this instance, as they came to test the Lord, Jesus bent down to write on the ground - signifying those who turn away from the Lord will be put to shame and lose their salvation.

*Our role is to save people not to condemn people.
We are called to save people from the fire*

and understood in the context of the principle laid out by Jesus in Matthew 7:1-6, known as the Sermon on the Mount - Jesus said: "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."

James fully understood this principle and he wrote: My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in gold apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment; And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool: Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts (James 2:1-4)?

He added: "Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a

doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another (James 4:11-12)? There is only one true judge who judges righteously and He is Christ. A time of Judgment is coming when Christ will judge the world (1 Corinthians 4:5; 2 Timothy 4:1).

The message tells us that we have no right to judge or condemn others for we ourselves are sinners. We are no better than the rest of the people for we too are sinners. When we judge others, we will be judged with the same measure as well. This is what Jesus meant by "let him without sin throw the first stone." Therefore, Jesus shows His consistency of teaching.

"Go and sin no more."

Then, Jesus said to the adulterous woman; "go and sin no more." Jesus did not condone sin. The statement acknowledged that the woman sinned and Jesus told her to stop sinning. Any transgression of the law is sin. There is no going around it. Jesus recognized sin as wrong. He condemned sin by telling the woman to stop sinning.

Jesus came the first time not to judge or condemn the world but to save it, John 12:47. Jesus said, I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance, Luke 5:32. He preached a message of repentance and reconciliation. (Luke 24:47)

Peter, in Acts 3:18-20 said this; But those things, which God before had showed by the



mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled. Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord; And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you.

James said in 2:13: "Mercy triumphs over judgment." As a Christian, it is not our role to condemn nor judge people. There is a judge and He is Christ. Our role as Christians is to let people know what sin is, share the good news of salvation, show compassion and light the way of righteousness.

Our role is to save people not to condemn people. We are called to save people from the fire (Jude 1:23). Love covers a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8). Jesus further said: Love thy enemy, pray for those who despise and fully use you. Pray for what? Pray for enlightenment, understanding and realization of wrong so there maybe repentance and reconciliation. In the process, they too may attain salvation. Now, would you throw the first stone or would you rather save them from the fire and extend a hand to salvation? **AG**



Abundant Life in Christ

by Eleno S. Mellomida

In John 10:10 Jesus said, "I came that they may have life, and they might have it more abundantly." Is the abundant life the acquisition of all the best things this world has to offer? Is it equivalent to a complete absence of need? Is it the result of sharing with, or saving those who are reeling in the brink of danger? Or is it the feeling of joy, peace of mind and internal satisfaction by knowing something special where others are totally unaware? What is this abundant life that Jesus said He brought with Him when He came the first time?

A random reading of the above statement of Jesus sounds like an offer to make life sufficient, convenient and abundant in terms of material resources. Sadly, majority of those who believed in Jesus are living under less desirable conditions - that include those who are merely 'influenced' by Christianity. When people are living under extreme need of life's basic necessities, an abundant life is like an elusive dream, a "pot of gold" at the end of the rainbow - as the adage goes. Thus, if Jesus was talking of a living condition that is totally free from material inadequacy, the signs of failed promises are apparently visible. What kind of abundant life is Jesus talking about? And how does one acquire this status if we start putting

our hope in Him?

Life apart from God

After Adam, man started living in the way that he chooses; and in most cases opposite to the ways of God. The Bible tells us that all have sinned and come short of God's glory (Romans 3:23). And the wages of sin is death. (Rom. 6:23) Sin played a major role in almost all the hardships afflicting humanity. Adam and Eve started it; since then, humanity continued to live a life apart from God's guidance. Mankind in general may not have committed the kind of sin Adam did, but one way or another, everyone violated God's laws (Romans 5:12-14).

Let's recall the time when man chose the way that brought him to such a situation. Genesis 2:8-10 narrates: "And the LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there he put the man whom he had formed. And out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food; the tree of life also in the midst of the garden, and the tree of knowledge of good and evil. And a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads."

This was not an ordinary garden. The hands of the Creator had a direct hand in designing what could probably be the most desirable

piece of real estate on earth. And God placed the first man and woman there to keep and maintain it (Gen. 2:15). With all the amenities of convenient living without exerting much effort to supply their needs, Adam and Eve savored the good life within the garden. God was their supplier. They were not in want of anything.

Obedience to God was all that was needed for them to stay permanently in the garden. In short, they were totally free from the burdens and yoke of life which most inhabitants of the earth today are saddled with. That was how delightful their situation was, until God drove them out of the garden, leading them to a new life solely guided by their own 'instincts'. Since then, God is hardly considered in almost all activities of man. Man relied solely in his own 'intelligence' to discover for himself how to run his affairs. He designed his own system of government and formulated his own laws; and yet the ideal system that hopefully will bring about the good life for everyone are still to be discovered.

Now, God's parting words to Adam were woven in unpleasant terminologies. God said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, saying, You shall not eat of it: cursed is the

ground for your sake; in sorrow you shall eat from it all the days of your life; Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to you; and you shall eat the herb of the field; In the sweat of your face shall you eat bread, until you return to the ground; for out of it you were taken: for dust you are, and unto dust you shall return.” (Gen. 3:17-19)

The verses quoted above have direct bearing with mankind’s material needs to sustain his physical existence. God decreed that man has to work hard for it. And this was the first ‘inconvenient’ condition which God laid down before Adam’s departure from the garden. This incident marked the beginning of man’s sojourn apart from the source that could have provided a life of ease, comfort and abundance.

Man’s Unlimited Capability

Despite God’s pronouncement however for man to “sweat it out” for his bread, mankind proved that he can stand up to the challenge. God may have cursed the ground, yet He did not “stand in the way” for man to become productive to supply his needs for as long as he continue to abide by God’s advisory to work for his physical sustenance. Hard work is one of God’s immutable principles that will work for anyone. God still love His creation; He wanted them to abide by that principle.

Today, with the advancement in science and technology that the succession of generations have developed and translated into reality, the patriarchs of old will certainly get awed and baffled if they will miraculously rise from their graves and witness how the present generation became extremely sophisticated. These alone proved man’s unlimited capability to accomplish great things in the physical realm. Of course, God confirmed man’s feat in advance. Notice: “Behold, they are one people, and they all have the same language. And this is what they began to do, and now nothing

which they purpose to do will be impossible for them (Gen. 11:6).

So we know man can hurdle every obstacle that deters him from succeeding in all his physical endeavors. Man has the ability to utilize the resources of the earth and become productive. He can prosper by capitalizing on his creativity, smartness, diligence, and wit. He can take care of his survival needs even without God in the picture. The reality is, not everyone listed in the lineup of the rich and the famous believed in the God of the bible.

Abundant Life According to Jesus

Jesus’ definition of abundant life is far from consistent with man’s prevailing concept of what it is. He confirmed this, saying: Take care and be on your guard against all forms of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions, Luke 12:15. The abundant life that Jesus referred to cannot be measured through the fatness of one’s bank account. The Greek word Jesus used for *abundantly* is *perissos*. It means superabundant in quantity, superior in quality, very highly beyond measure. And one personality on record who went through the experience of becoming “superabundant” is King Solomon.

Solomon’s wealth, wisdom and prominence cannot be equaled by any of the 21st century tycoons. And it is unlikely that any nation on earth today may have attained the prosperity and prestige of the Solomonic kingdom - where peace and abundance were enjoyed by all his constituents. Let’s pick up few of the passages to picture what the situation was during his reign.

1 Kings 4:20-27 reads: “Judah and Israel were as many as the sand by the sea. They ate and drank and were happy. Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt. They brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life. Solomon’s provision for one day was thirty cors of fine flour and sixty cors of meal, 10 fat

oxen, 20 pasture-fed cattle, a 100 sheep, besides deer, roebucks, and fattened fowl. For he had dominion over all the regions west of the Euphrates from Tipsah to Gaza. And he had peace on all sides around him. And Judah and Israel lived in safety, from Dan even to Beersheba, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, all the days of Solomon. Solomon also had 40,000 stalls of horses for his chariots, and 12,000 horsemen. And those officers supplied provision for King Solomon, and for all who came to Solomon’s table, each one in his month. They let nothing be lacking.” (English Standard Version)

That was just the “tip of the iceberg” of the wealth and the resources Solomon owned. The succeeding chapters will tell us the grandeur of the edifices that he built where gold was used unsparingly to embellish its interiors. In addition to that, “God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore” (1 Kings Chapters 4-8).

Yet, despite all the trappings of wealth, power and wisdom, Solomon openly expressed sighs of frustration. He wrote: “Then I became great and increased more than all who preceded me in Jerusalem. My wisdom also stood with me. All that my eyes desired I did not refuse them. I did not withhold my heart from any pleasure, for my heart was pleased because of all my labor and this was my reward for all my labor. Thus I considered all my activities which my hands had done and the labor which I had exerted, and behold all was vanity and striving after wind and there was no profit under the sun. So I turned to consider wisdom, madness and folly; for what will the man do who will come after the king except what has already been done? And I saw that wisdom excels folly as light excels darkness. The wise man’s eyes are in his head, but the fool walks in darkness. And yet I know that one fate befalls them

both. Then I said to myself, "As is the fate of the fool, it will also befall me." Why then have I been extremely wise? So I said to myself, this too is vanity. For there is no lasting remembrance of the wise man as with the fool, inasmuch as in the coming days all will be forgotten. And how the wise man and the fool alike die! So I hated life, for the work which had been done under the sun was grievous to me; because everything is futility and striving after wind. Thus I hated all the fruit of my labor for I was great, and increased more than all that were before me in Jerusalem: also my wisdom remained with me (Ecclesiastes 2:9-18).

Obviously, Solomon's exposure to unlimited resources does not in any way portray an abundant life according to Jesus' standard. Solomon could have taken a clue from his father David's perspective: "Surely every man at his best state is a mere breath. Surely every man walks like a phantom; surely they make an uproar for nothing; he amasses wealth and does not know who will gather them" (Psalms 39:5-6). And the sobering truth according to Peter is, "All flesh is as grass, and all its glory like the flower of grass, the grass withers, and the flowers fall off" (1 Peter 1:24).

An abundant life which Jesus brought involves more than what people are striving to accumulate. In the course of one's "busyness" to accumulate wealth, the reality that life is momentary, fleeting and will fade away - sooner or later - can be easily "overlooked" until perhaps some sort of 'medical condition' begins to develop.

Is Poverty Godly?

This article in no way encourages slothfulness, nor upholds the "vow of poverty". Diligence and productivity is a biblically endorsed virtue (Proverbs 6:6-11; Ephesians 4:28; 2 Thessalonians 3:7-12). Abraham, the father of the faithful, was very rich in livestock, silver and gold (Genesis 13:2). Yet, he was not enslaved by wealth. His attention

was focused on the more lasting and enduring promises of God. The author of Hebrews wrote: "These all (including Abraham) died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city (Hebrews 11:13-16). The country mentioned is described in the 21st chapter of the book of Revelation.

The men and women who were known for their unwavering faith in God preferred to look forward on the promises of God rather than "plant their feet" permanently in this world. They were not influenced, nor absorbed by a system whose fundamentals are founded on the 'way of get' - from politics, to business and even religion. There were wealthy men who followed Jesus during His walk on earth; one of them is Joseph of Arimathea who took care of Jesus' dead body. He was a very rich man who waited and looked forward to the coming kingdom of God (Mat 27:57; Mark 15:43).

Source of True Life

Now, money and the things money can buy is everyone's primary concern. It is the uppermost thing that occupies the mind of the average person. The three basic needs of man - food, clothing and shelter - will have to be satisfied first before man can branch out into other 'worthy' endeavors. We also understand from God's word that this human body that we strive painstakingly to provide, maintain, please, and satisfy to the best of our ability shall one day return to the ground from where it was originally

taken (Gen.3:19)

Paul sounded a little bit 'blunt' when he said, "Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them" (1 Cor. 6:13). Of course, he was not espousing abandonment of physical nourishment. He is merely referring to the time when this perishable body will be changed to an imperishable one by a resurrection (1 Cor. 15:53-54). He meant having eternal life liberates one from relying on the elements produced from the ground for survival. Immortal life is life inherent - it lives on its own; and only God so far has it (2 Tim.6:16). But the good news is that He can impart it to



In the course of one's "busyness" to accumulate wealth, the reality that life is momentary can be easily forgotten

anyone as a gift (Rom. 6:23) on certain conditions prescribed in His word (Romans 2:6-7). That is precisely one of the reasons why Jesus came and died for humanity.

Back to the Garden

What then was the most valuable 'opportunity' that man lost in the sad episode committed by our first parents in the Garden of Eden? The following passages will tell us: "Then the Lord God said, Behold the man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever'. Therefore the Lord God sent him out from the Garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life" (Gen. 3:22-24).

Definitely, being denied access to the tree of life which was openly available for Adam in the beginning to partake was the most crucial aspect covered in the prohibition. The last part of Gen. 2:22 tells us that the tree of life in the midst of the garden represented life – eternal life – and eating it allows one to live forever. The physical convenience lost in this tragic chapter of human history cannot compensate for the spiritual benefits that Adam could have had out of obedience. Partaking of the tree of life will lead man towards his ultimate destiny.

When you have life inherent, a life that doesn't rely on the substances that the earth produces to keep it going, a life that continues to exist without the need of breathing, a life that is totally impervious against diseases; or even against the weapon of a determined assassin, or for that matter any factor or element which tends to cut off physical life, what more do you need? People will do everything to hang on to dear life, but God did not design the physical body to live forever. This short span of life that



For, All men are like grass, and all
their glory is like the flowers of the field;
the grass withers and the flowers fall.

1st Peter 1:24

we have is basically intended to allow us to avail of the chance to live forever.

Jesus Offers Life

Understanding God's purpose why He created humans is the most important knowledge one can ever possess. Knowing the reasons behind our existence is the wellspring that provides stable perspective and peace of mind. It is the source of freedom from worries, anxieties, frustrations, and emptiness. And many of those who "made it" in this world are not privy to it. Is it any wonder that some "achievers" - top caliber people of means and even power - are not completely happy, dependent on drugs, can't sleep soundly and worst tend to become suicidal? They may have accumulated almost everything in this life which the majority can only have it in their dreams; yet they still succumb to frustrations, emptiness, emotional

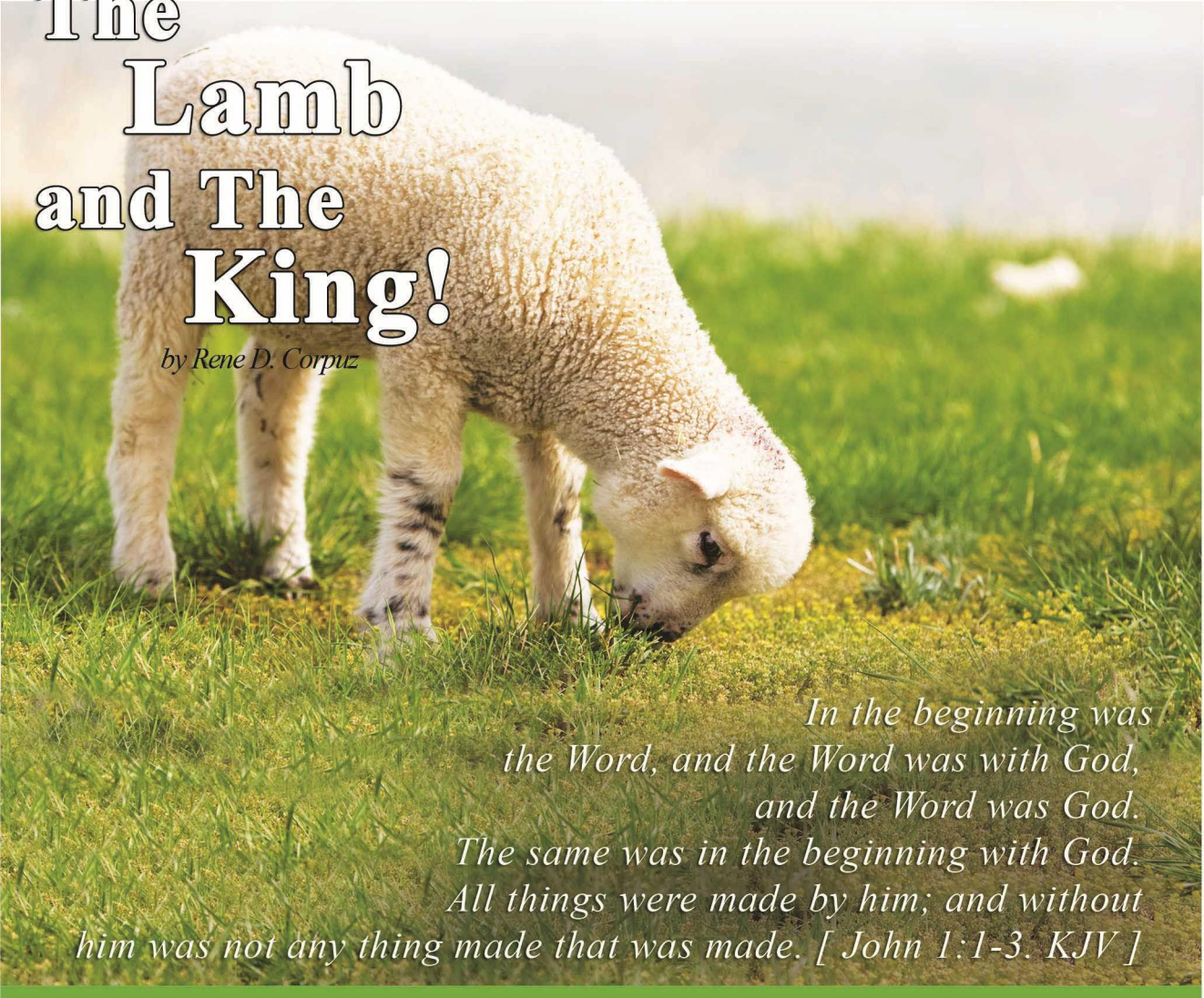
stress, and desperation. Certainly it is not the kind of abundant life Jesus wanted us to have.

Jesus came as the savior of the world, John 4:42. The much quoted passage in John 3:16 will have to be understood in the light of Jesus' mission to restore man's relationship with God, and attain salvation and eternal life. Jesus told the devil that "man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God" (Mat. 4:4). The words of God provide the fundamentals in living a life that will lead to eternity.

Jesus has an offer. He said, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls, Mat. 11:28-29. And He promised, "... I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts" (Rev. 21:6). Will you take His offer, and start living the kind of life He wanted us to have? **AG**

The Lamb and The King!

by Rene D. Corpuz



In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. [John 1:1-3. KJV]

The apostle John tells us Jesus was there at the very beginning with God as a Being he calls the Word, and that the Word himself is also a God Being. There were two of them in the beginning, and the Word—that is, Jesus—is presented by John as the very Creator of everything. The implication of which is obvious. Jesus existed long before He was incarnate and born as a mortal child. Even the apostle Paul spoke of Jesus as the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, which goes without saying, even the angels were His creation (Colossians 1:16-17).

Jesus is God! This is the opening

message of the gospel of John. He is the very Creator. But Jesus is not only presented as a God Being, He is also introduced to us as the Son of God (John 1:18, 34, 49; Mark 1:11). The apostle John wanted us to know this critical truth. It is important that we come to know and understand who the real Jesus is, His divine nature and origin, if we are to grasp the value of His sacrifice, of what He had to give up, of the true worth of His blood that shall save us.

Jesus—the Lamb of God

“Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” This is how John the Baptist introduced Jesus.

The Jews and the Israelites in general are familiar with the expression and concept of a lamb as an animal sacrifice.

Most of them were accustomed to going back and forth to the Temple in Jerusalem bearing an animal sacrifice whose sole purpose was to die as payment and atonement for their sins before God. But hearing of a real, living person to serve as a sacrifice, to die on one's behalf would have been strange for many of them—perhaps, even unthinkable. After all, to literally offer another person's blood, to die on one's account, is not something any Israelite would have actually done. Furthermore, to voluntarily offer

oneself to die in place of a person who deserves his punishment is equally unthinkable. The Jews are taught and understood the writings of Moses and Ezekiel that every person is responsible for his own sin (Deuteronomy 24:16; Ezekiel 18:4, 20). Hearing John the Baptist referred to Jesus as the "lamb of God" would have stirred questions at the back of their minds. While there is a general recognition among the Jews that John the Baptist is a prophet, that in the near future he would succeed his father Zacharias (Luke 1:5) and serve in the Temple as high priest, for John to point to Jesus as the Lamb of God (a sacrifice and an atonement for sins) would have been strange in their ears.

Israel believed in the concept of an animal sacrifice as payment for sins. However, the reality, as revealed in the Epistle to the Hebrews, is that the blood of bulls and goats cannot truly take away sins (Hebrews 10:4). The apostle Paul made it clear that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23). Blood must be spilled, otherwise there can be no remission of sins (Hebrews 9:22). True justice requires that we must pay for our own sins with our own blood, and no animal blood can serve as a substitute. Fortunately for us, the writer of Hebrews explains, there is a blood that qualifies to pay for our sins in exchange for our own, the blood of Jesus—the blood of the very Creator God that brought us into existence (Hebrews 9:12). All that the ritual of the animal sacrifice was meant to teach us was that there is a way to redeem us from the penalty of our sins without having to shed our own blood.

Redemption is a concept most people are familiar with, an exchange, to redeem another, to take the place of. But more than that, it also tells us how much importance and value the Father of the Lord Jesus is giving us—the Father believes we are worth dying for, worth redeeming. And the blood of

Jesus will pay for our sins; it is able to redeem us (Ephesians 1:7). The Father himself gave His only begotten Son so that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16). Jesus was prophesied, in the Old Testament and by John the Baptist to serve as a sacrifice for sins, and he has become "the Lamb of God that takes away the sins of the world..." His blood, the blood of a God, is able to pay for all sinners, and for any sin. It can pay for the sins of all those who had lived in the past, in the present, and those yet to be born.

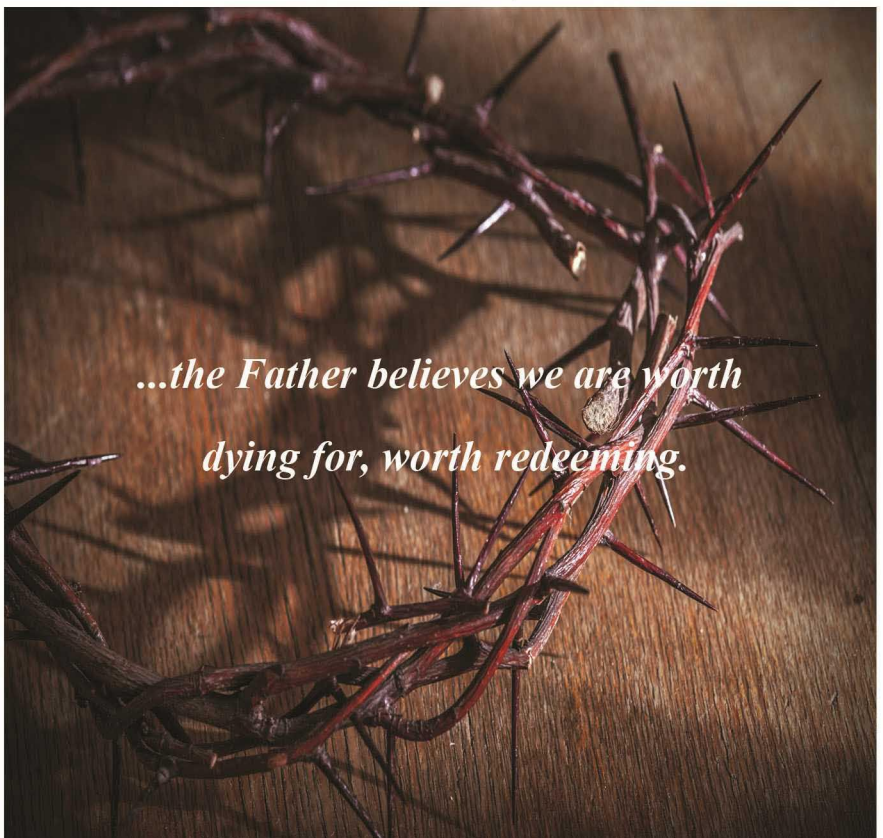
It is by the Father's choice to offer His own Son to save us, and Jesus was willing to give up His own life as the ransom price. The message is clear and unmistakable: God loves us and does not want us to die. He loves us enough to be willing to sacrifice His own Son.

Jesus the King, the Anointed Messiah

John the Baptist declared that Jesus is the Lamb of God, the only

true sacrifice acceptable to God as payment for our sins. However, the disciples of John the Baptist appears to have the understanding that "the Lamb of God" is also the Anointed, the Messiah that is to come—the King of kings (John 1:35-42).

The Jews and the rest of the Israelites had been waiting for the Messiah, a descendant of King David. They are familiar with Daniel's prophecy of four kingdoms that were to come and go, after which the kingdom of God reigns (Daniel 2). The timing was just about right. Rome is the Fourth Kingdom, thus, the Kingdom of God cannot be far behind. When John the Baptist came on the scene, they asked if he was the Christ (that is, the Messiah—the King), Elijah or the Prophet (John 1:19-26). But John the Baptist point to Jesus as the one the Jews and Israel had been waiting for (John 1:30, 34). And while John the Baptist did not directly say it, his disciples understood he meant



*...the Father believes we are worth
dying for, worth redeeming.*

Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God—the King (John 1:40-41, 45, 49).

For a little over than 30 years ago, the city of Jerusalem had been in an uproar when news went circulating that a King had been born in Bethlehem. Wise men from the east arrived not long after, looking for the child that was to be king of the Jews, and sought audience with King Herod (Luke 2, Matthew 2). King Herod asked the wise men to search for the child and to tell him where the child was. When the wise men didn't return after several months, king Herod ordered the slaughter of every male child in Bethlehem and neighboring towns that was two years old and below.

When John the Baptist came preaching 30 years later, many of the Jewish Leaders were wondering if he were the prophesied Messiah, or the "Elijah". John the Baptist responded negatively to the questions. What many Christians do not understand today is that the

Christ is not just a "religious" leader as far as Israel and the Jews are concerned. To the Jews, the Christ—the Messiah—is their prophesied King, a descendant of King David, their savior from captivity and occupation of the Roman Empire.

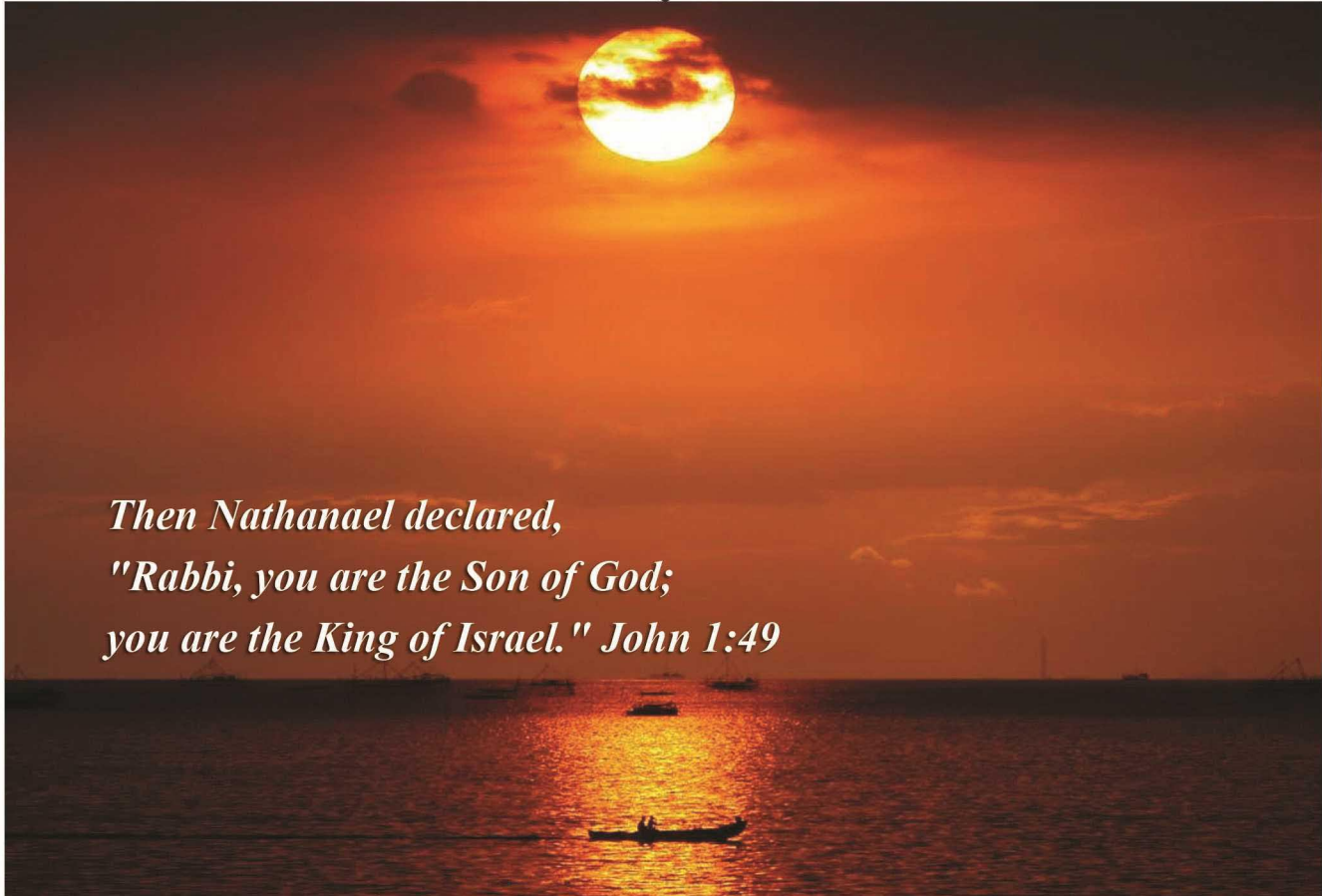
Jesus was born to be a King (Luke 1:30-33). He is also the Son of God (Luke 1:35). The disciples understood that the Messiah is both King of Israel and Son of God (John 1:49). Jesus taught us to always pray for the coming of the Kingdom of God to His Father (Matthew 6:10). Soon, Jesus will return as the "King of kings and Lord of lords" (Revelation 19:16, Revelation 17:14) and reign, as He should. The angels will declare, "the kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!" (Revelation 11:15).

In the many parables spoken by the Lord Jesus, He alludes to Himself as leaving for a while and

then returning. When He returns, Jesus clearly spoke of Himself as the one prophesied by Daniel the Prophet: "But He kept silent and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, "Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" Jesus said, "I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven." (Mark 13:61-62, Daniel 7:13-14).

In the very first chapter of John, the apostle wanted us to know three vital information about the Lord Jesus: He is our Creator, He is the true Lamb of God, and He will be King! We must accept and believe these as part of our faith in God the Father and in His Son. May God the Father hasten the coming of His Son as King of Kings, we need Him!**AG**

(Note: All Scripture quotes are taken from the King James Version and from the New King James Version translations.)



*Then Nathanael declared,
"Rabbi, you are the Son of God;
you are the King of Israel." John 1:49*



Lessons from a Good Samaritan

by Ferdie S. Padilla

We are all familiar with the term “good Samaritan” and for good reason. Many are familiar with the parable told by Jesus Christ in Luke 10: 29-37. The parable was an answer to a question posed by an expert in the law : Luke 10:25 - 37 (NIV) “On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Jesus. “Teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” “What is written in the Law?” he replied. “How do you read it?” He answered: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” “You have answered correctly,” Jesus replied. “Do this and you will live.” But he wanted to justify himself, so he asked Jesus, “And who is my neighbor?” In reply Jesus said: “A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, when he fell into the hands of robbers. They stripped him of his clothes, beat him and went away, leaving him half dead. A priest happened to be

going down the same road, and when he saw the man, he passed by on the other side. So too, a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, took him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two silver coins and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Look after him,’ he said, ‘and when I return, I will reimburse you for any extra expense you may have.’ “Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “Go and do likewise.”

The Parable Dissected

It would be instructive for us to dissect this parable a little bit more and see what lessons we can learn from it. When we examine the parable closely, we will find

valuable life lessons we can adopt in our daily Christian walk.

1.) *Kindness can be shown to anyone* – In the parable, kindness was shown to the robbed man, a total stranger to the Samaritan. Nevertheless, this did not prevent him from lending a helping hand. In our sojourn in this life, from time to time, we do come across people like the victim of the robbers. If we do, we are supposed to lend a helping hand. There is this video clip of a young woman that was featured in an online newspaper who did exactly just that. A motorist got caught in the usual traffic jam and was able to record the act of kindness of a young woman. It was evident from the car’s windshield that it had rained. Judging from some of the pedestrians that were caught in the video, it was still drizzling as they passed by with their umbrellas open. A young woman was putting her coat to a little girl who was apparently naked until that time. After buttoning it on the little child, she gave her a pat and waved goodbye to the little

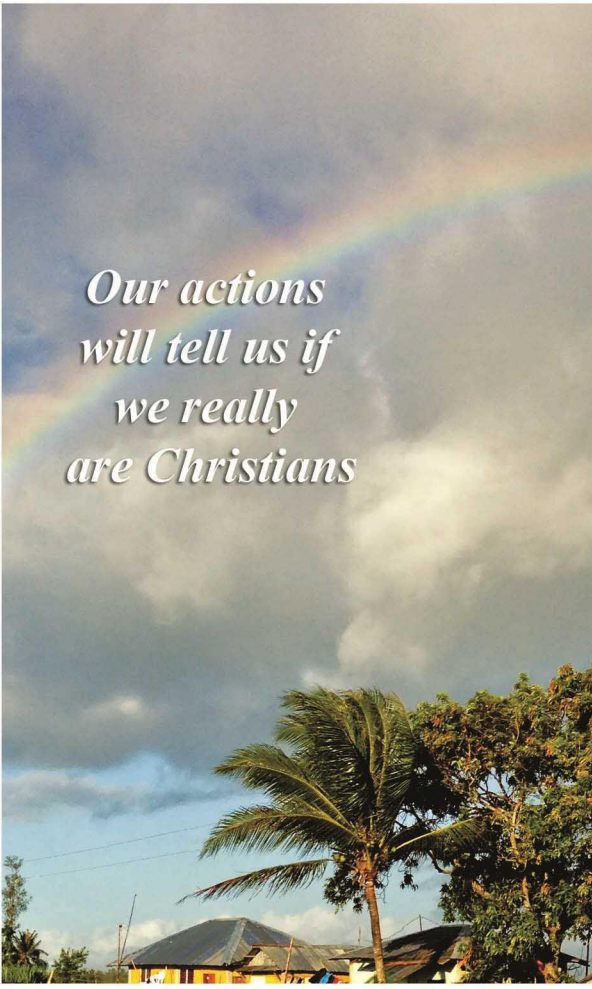
little girl and hurried away. It was a very heartwarming scene to say the least. The act of the young woman actually inspired one of the columnists to write about the incident and the article referred to her as a "good Samaritan". Anyone who sees that video clip will heave a sigh of relief. There are still people out there who actually care about others, just like the good Samaritan. As Christians, we are to do the same. Of all the people that should have this attitude of kindness, it is us. Why? We are supposed to develop love and love is described as being kind in 1 Corinthians 13:4 (NIV): "Love is patient, love is kind." But more often than not, those needing our help are not total strangers to us. We need not look far. They could be immediate family members. They can be friends. They can be colleagues. They can be brethren going thru a severe trial. If we know someone who does need help in any form, then we are to do as the Samaritan did – show kindness and help.

2.) *Kindness can be shown by anyone* – In the same breath that kindness can be shown to anyone, it can also be shown by anyone. This fact is highlighted when Christ used the character of the Samaritan in the parable. What is really interesting is that Christ also used two familiar religious figures of the day in the parable. A priest happened to pass by and did not help (verse 31). A Levite also came but passed by on the other side (verse 32). These two characters knew the part of the Law that the expert in the law quoted from when he answered the question posed by Christ in Luke 10: 26: Leviticus 19:18 (NIV) "Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD." But surprisingly, the character of the priest and the Levite did not know its application. Or if they did, they chose to ignore this man needing help. Instead, it was this Samaritan

who finally took pity on the man. Kindness and mercy in this instance came from a very surprising source – the Samaritan, a Gentile. It is not stated in the parable whether the Samaritan knew about the Law. Nevertheless, his action was in accordance with the Law. This was clear to the expert in the law when asked by Christ who was the neighbor to the man. It was the Samaritan who acted the neighbor, not the priest nor the Levite. The lesson here is that we do not need to be "religious" people to show kindness. We are Christians. We know the Law and its real intent, perhaps more than any other people. But what really matters is how we act. Our actions will tell us if we really are Christians. Since kindness can be shown by anyone, let us begin with ourselves. Let us become a source of hope for others who need our help especially to the family of believers.

3.) *When giving help, it must be done sincerely and if possible, generously* – When the Samaritan came to the man, he applied some sort of first aid. He bandaged his wounds and poured oil and wine on them. The Samaritan did not stop at this. He had the man ride his own donkey, looked for a suitable inn and guess what - he took care of him! He actually stayed with a complete stranger and looked after him. And when he had to go on his own way, he made provisions so that the man could be taken care of. He left some money to the innkeeper and gave instructions to him to take care of the man, to nurse him back to health. And he promised to reimburse the innkeeper for any extra expense that he may incur as a result of his taking care of the man. Now, we may ask: Is that not too much to do? To many of us, that would indeed seem too much. You personally take care of someone you don't know and spend for him so he can be taken care of. Can somebody really do that? Some may argue: This is just a

character in a parable, breathed into life by our Lord. The story is nice with a very good lesson but in reality this may not be the case. Well, the answer is, yes somebody already did just that – helping sincerely and generously. There is a record of it in your Bible. Yes, they are true Christians because they applied the lesson of this parable well to their fellow Christians. So where can we find that? 2 Corinthians 8:1 - 4 (NIV) "And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this



*Our actions
will tell us if
we really
are Christians*

service to the saints." During that time, a famine affected Jerusalem and the saints living in that area needed help. The Macedonian brothers even though they were not well off, gave as they were able and as Paul testifies "even beyond their ability." And what is really inspiring here is nobody coerced them to do it. It was a voluntary action. They even pleaded that they take part in this great service. This was recorded for us Christians so that we may gain inspiration and encouragement that helping others sincerely and generously can be done. The Macedonian brothers have already done so and have shown the way.

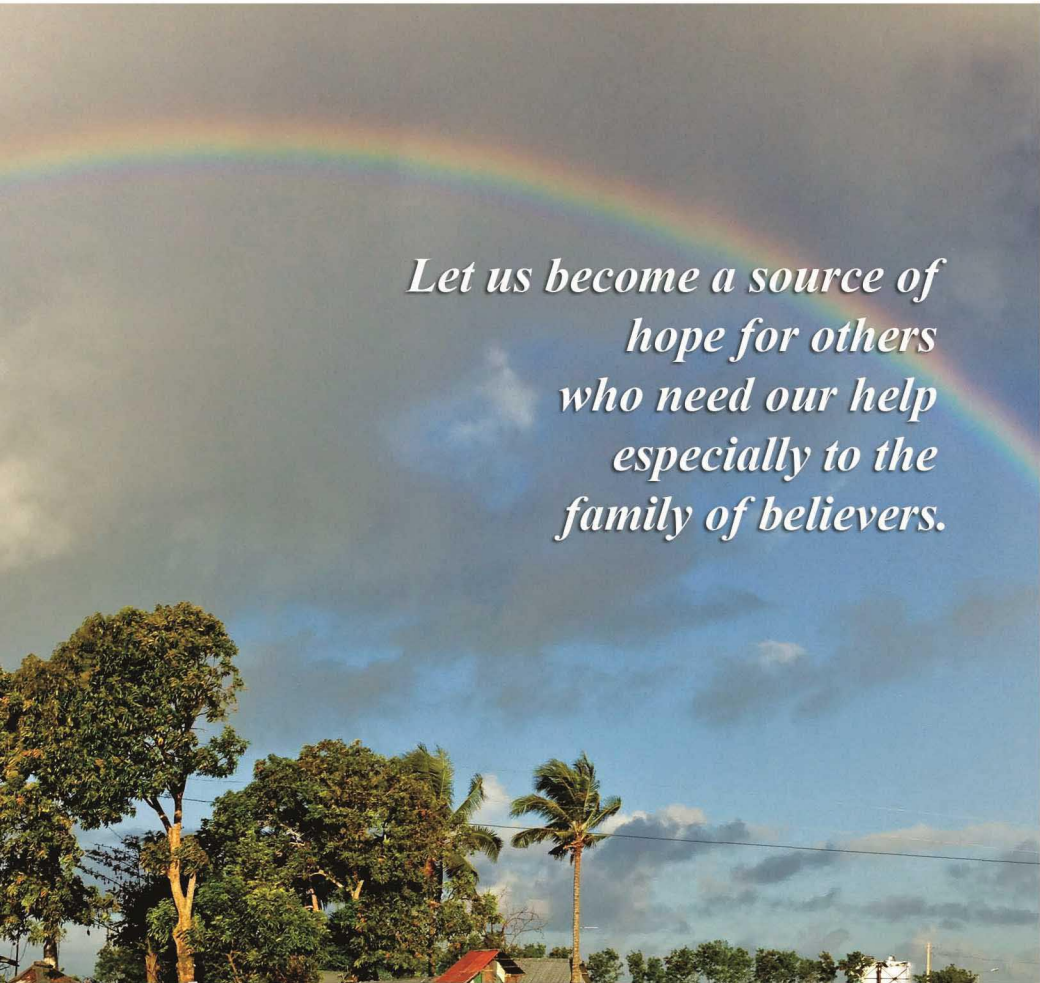
The Challenge

In closing, let us "retell" the parable and let us all take a first person viewpoint (the "I" person). Let us put ourselves in the victim's

sandals and try to really imagine what he had gone through as we go along. Here we go: I was travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho. I was well on my way, when suddenly a band of robbers came. I earnestly pleaded with them not to harm me and to just let me pass so I could go on to my destination. They did not listen to me. My pleadings fell on deaf ears. They stripped me of my clothes. Not content with that, they beat me severely. I could not stand up because of the intense pain. I could feel myself nearly passing out. I was groaning in pain when I saw a priest coming down my way. I remembered calling him out for help. But he just passed me by on the other side of the road. I was becoming desperate when suddenly I saw this Levite going down the road too. My prayers have

been answered at last! I called out faintly but I am sure the sight of a beaten man in this road would make anyone take notice. Alas! The Levite also passed by on the other side but I was certain he saw me. The two persons I expected to help did not even bother to stop by and check on me. What then could I expect from others? Who would help me? I was about to lose all consciousness when I saw this foreigner coming by, a total stranger, a Samaritan. I was not expecting any help at all and was sure to pass out sooner. But I was wrong. He came to me and had pity on me. He washed my wounds with oil and wine and put bandages around my wounds. After that he helped me to my feet. He had me ride his donkey instead. I could not believe what was happening. The stranger took me to an inn and he took care of me, as if I was his own brother. It was refreshing to know that someone went to great length to help me. This was more than I expected. I was able to sleep soundly that night. The next morning, I got up to thank the man. But I saw him talking to the innkeeper. I could see that he was already ready to go on his own way. I saw him give some money to the innkeeper and overheard him giving out instructions for my care even promising to reimburse the innkeeper should the money not be enough. I really could not fathom why this man had to do such a generous act of kindness. Yesterday, I was nearly half dead but thanks to this man I am alive to tell this story. I just do wonder if I could do the same to him if he needed my help or to anyone for that matter.

Let us wonder no more and act on faith when someone needs our help. After all, our Lord and Savior expect us to be good Samaritans. Otherwise, He would not have breathed life into that character when He took the opportunity to teach us who our neighbors are. Jesus is telling us, "Go and do likewise"[Luke 10:37 (NIV)]. **AG**



*Let us become a source of
hope for others
who need our help
especially to the
family of believers.*



THE CHURCH OF GOD INTERNATIONAL MEETING PLACES

Manila

6th Floor, Peaksun Building,
Princeton St. [Along Shaw Blvd.]
Mandaluyong City, Saturdays 10:00 a.m.

Naga

Villa Caceres Hotel, Naga City
Saturdays 10:00 a.m.

Alabang

Max Restaurant, Metropolis Star Mall, Alabang
Muntinlupa City, Saturdays, 2:00 p.m.

Malolos

Hiyas Convention Center - Governance Bldg.
Malolos City, Saturdays, 2:00 p.m.

Mindanao

Alson's Palace
Maranding, Lala
Lanao del Norte, Saturdays, 10:00 a.m.

Cebu City

Rajah Park Hotel
Fuente Osmena Circle
Saturdays, 2:00 p.m.

Iloilo City

Iloilo Midtown Hotel
Yulo Street
Saturdays, 2:00 p.m.

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