THE GRAPEVINE Monthly Magazine of Botley Baptist Church

When everything seems out of focus, the important remains in focus



FEBRUARY 2021

The Times They Are A-Changin'

written by Bob Dylan

Come gather 'round people Wherever you roam And admit that the waters Around you have grown And accept it that soon You'll be drenched to the bone If your time to you is worth savin' Then you better start swimmin' or you'll sink like a stone For the times they are a-changin' Come writers and critics Who prophesize with your pen And keep your eyes wide The chance won't come again And don't speak too soon For the wheel's still in spin And there's no tellin' who that it's namin' For the loser now will be later to win

2

4

For the times they are a-changin'

Come senators, congressmen 3 Please heed the call Don't stand in the doorway Don't block up the hall For he that gets hurt Will be he who has stalled There's a battle outside and it is ragin' It'll soon shake your windows and rattle your walls For the times they are a-changin'

Come mothers and fathers Throughout the land And don't criticize What you can't understand Your sons and your daughters Are beyond your command Your old road is rapidly agin' Please get out of the new one if you can't lend your hand For the times they are a-changin'

The line it is drawn 5 The curse it is cast The slow one now Will later be fast As the present now Will later be past The order is rapidly fadin' And the first one now will later be last For the times they are a-changin'

© 1963, 1964 by Warner Bros. Inc.; renewed 1991, 1992 by Special Rider Music

1

PASTORAL MUSING

Let me begin with an apology. Due to events beyond our control, we were unable to produce and publish "The Grapevine" in November and December 2020, and January 2021. Several articles submitted for these three issues are reproduced in this issue, and dated.

News just in that Captain Sir Tom Moore has entered his eternal rest. I can only imagine our Father in Heaven greeting him with six words we all would love to hear, "Well done! Good and faithful servant! ... Come and share your Master's happiness!"

As the accolades and tributes streamed in, Capt Sir Tom's life reminded of two things. First, he demonstrated the compelling lesson of the "Widow's Mite".

"While Jesus was in the Temple, he watched the rich dropping their gifts in the collection box. Then a poor widow came by and dropped in two small coins.

"I tell you the truth," Jesus said, "this poor widow has given more than all the rest of them. For they have given a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, <u>has given everything she has</u>." (Luke 21:1-4)

Captain Sir Tom gave all that he had. He could walk, with the aid of a zimmer frame nonetheless, and he set the target to accomplish 100 laps of his patio before his 100th birthday, to raise £1,000 for the NHS. Captain Sir Tom did much more than raise £32 million for the NHS. In giving of himself, he inspired thousands of people to do the same: give what they had and let God multiply it untold times, **for His glory!** This is *extravagant generosity*! Only God can be that extravagant, to take what we give and multiply it with the riches of Heaven!

God does not need us to give Him what He already owns (Psalm 50:10-11); He desires us to acknowledge, everything we have was given by Him. He delights in our trust in Him, when by faith we offer Him **all** we have!

Which brings me to the second thing I was reminded of. Captain Sir Tom said, *Tomorrow you will find everything will be much better, even if today were alright.* We know this in another context, *faith means putting our full confidence in the things we hope for, it means being certain of things we cannot see. (Hebrews 11:1)* Exercising our faith by surrendering to the will and plan of God, is putting our full confidence in each "tomorrow" and being certain, the tomorrow we cannot see, will be much better than today. After all, aren't we journeying towards the day when "time" will be no more and this creation enters into God's eternity?

Like many others, we received sad news of people in our family and among friends, struggling with health issues, several recently entered into God's rest. Listening to the tributes by grieving family and friends we realised, each of them gave from what they had; some had the gift of happiness and joy which they shared, others had the gift of hospitality which they shared, some shared the gift of positivity, others the gift of friendship. As each shared their gifts, God multiplied it to bless family, friends and community even more! This is God's way of comforting those who mourn!

One of the phrases being used is, whether 2020 was a "good" or "bad" year, and whether 2021 will be a "good" year. How do we measure good or bad years? Can we all agree on which years are "good" and which are "bad"?

Well above measuring and agreeing, the main question is, Are we not each of us, responsible for modelling "good" and reveal the "bad" for what it is?

Is there then a measure for a "Good Year"?

The writings of Jewish sages explain, there is only one criterion by which we judge any year, or any day for that matter: **How much did we grow?**

Our God-breathed life in a fallen world is to change with a view to improve, to learn with a view to growing. Easy or hard, fun or boring, every day is measured by the degree to which we are better than the day before it.

Difficult you say? Well, Jesus said, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything. He will remind you of everything that I have ever told you.

We cannot choose what happens to us, but we can choose to grow and learn from everything that comes our way. And the Holy Spirit is with us always to remind, teach and guide us to be Christ-like.

Yours in the journey of growing,

Kalyan

Walking Through the Darkness

When God appeared to the Israelites at Mount Sinai, they became extremely frightened. Moses tried to encourage them, but they stayed fearful and "*remained at a distance*." Moses, however, walked closer to God "... *approaching the thick darkness*." He kept walking towards and through darkness because he understood that in the midst if the darkness, *God was there*.

We all go through dark times. For some it is financial difficulties, for others outright poverty. Some face a seemingly irreparable marriage, others a painful relationship with a family member. Darkness envelopes and overwhelms us at the loss of a loved one, the loss of a job and at times of illness — our own or that of someone we cherish. What then is our response to dark times? Do we keep our distance from God? Or do we get closer to Him by walking towards the darkness and through it?

Going through dark times makes us feel far from God, many distance themselves from Him. But Moses teaches us an amazing lesson in these verses:

God is in the darkness! Dark times are not the time to turn away from God they are precisely the moment to draw closer to Him. And when we do, we can cultivate a profound relationship with Him — one that we can depend on and enjoy for the rest of our lives.

None of us wishes for adversity in our lives. However, as I've learned, nothing propels us toward the light like darkness does. Our hardships can often guide us right into the arms of God.

Moses said to the people, "Do not be afraid. God has come to test you, so that the fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning." The people remained at a distance, while Moses approached the thick darkness where God was. Exodus 20:20-21

Your Turn:

Whether you are going through tough times or enjoying an easier season of life, take some extra time today to cultivate your relationship with God through heartfelt prayer, Bible study, or just being still with Him. *contributed by Yael Eckstein*

How Old are You?

his seemingly impertinent and cheeky question needs a serious answer!

When I play with a little child I am one year old.

When I watch cartoons I'm three.

When I dance to the tune of music I am sweet sixteen.

When I try to heal someone's wound I'm sure I've crossed six decades of my life.

And when I chat with sparrows and robins, or chase after my dog and his ball, If they don't know their age, should I bother?

> What then is age? It's only a number!

Time and experience don't age me! I am as old as the company I keep!

One day I will be age-less When I enter into the presence of the Ageless One!

No one there will dare ask me

"How old are you?"

submitted by Kay Dee (2019)

DO YOU BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF PRAYER?

In the fifth blog in our special Christmas series, we consider what prayer is and why we do it

Persistence is one of those terms we as Christ-followers hear a lot about. This summer I dove into studying on what it means to strengthen your prayer life. Then, (some days more successfully than others) began practicing daily, what this looks like. Maybe you've seen the power of prayer immediately unfold before you, resulting in God answering questions, providing specific needs that you asked for, or performed Prayer which is incomprehensible to our human brains. There is something so incredible that occurs when we wait after praying, resulting in an impact so large the Earth can't hold the power of our spoken words.

"Firm or obstinate continuance in a course of action in spite of difficulty or opposition." — *Persistence*

Revelation describes the impact of our prayers, unlike anywhere else in the Bible. John writes about the vision God has allowed him to see and catch an insight into His holiness. Revelation 5:8 describes what happens when we pray: *"When he took the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and golden bowls filled with incense, which are the prayers of the saints"*.



Towards the 100-day mark of the pandemic, my pastor introduced the teaching and explained the meaning of *"golden bowls"*. Revelation is futuristic and symbolic, it also best describes Heaven and showcases God's incredible power. We catch a glimpse of His organisation - the roles played in Heaven and certain job descriptions.

While Revelation can be overwhelming and confusing to understand, I think it's easier to read and try to wrap our human minds around when we

break the passages down one-by-one and recognise what God is trying to describe and share with us.

For instance, I've always overlooked this aspect of Revelation and now find great comfort in this detail. God is sharing how He has created *"golden bowls"* in Heaven and they are filled with our prayers. The prayers of the saints can be read in other chapters, but this passage showcases more of the impact our prayers have.

Revelation continues to explain the impact of these bowls: "Another angel, with a golden incense burner, came and stood at the altar. He was given a large amount of incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar in front of the throne. The smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, went up in the presence of God from the angel's hand. The angel took the incense burner, filled it with fire from the altar, and hurled it to the earth; there were peals of thunder, rumblings, flashes of lightning, and an earthquake." (8:3-5)



When we pray, our prayers find themselves in the golden bowls. When the bowls are filled to the brim, Angels empty them by turning them over, showering the Earth with God's answer or the comfort requested.

Our prayers are so powerful they cause an Earthly reaction. The world doesn't know how to translate what God is sending to us.

We pray not to get our way. Our prayers change us and the world around us!

Each time we pray, our prayers fill the golden bowls of Heaven. Keep praying and filling the Golden Bowls in Heaven and wait to witness God's power. Don't fixate on God not answering our prayers. His answers to our prayers may pass us by and we would be blinded, hiding His holiness.

As printed in Premier's Woman Alive, by Macaila Britton at MacailaBritton.com

Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name.
For his anger is but for a moment, and his favour is for a lifetime.
Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning.
Psalm 30:4-5

Thanksgiving

"God commanded us to "give thanks in all circumstances" (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven; we have been preserved these many years in peace and prosperity; we in the west have grown in numbers, wealth and power as not many other nation have. But ...we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied, enriched and strengthened us. We have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own.

Intoxicated with unbroken success we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of redeeming and preserving grace, too proud to pray to the God that made us who we are, and gave what we have



President Lincoln authorised Thanksgiving Day in America, in 1863, in the midst of the Civil War.

It is one thing to be thankful to God when the difficulties are over and blue skies festoon our days; it is quite another thing to thank God in the midst of difficult and worrying times, when dark clouds continue to threaten with their constant rumbling and thundering.

Hard places and hard times are the best times to be thankful. For then we open our lives to the God who alone can bless and prosper us.

He cannot give us what we will not receive.

An attitude of gratitude is essential to receiving the grace and favour of our heavenly Father. And it is appropriate to articulate and proclaim our heartfelt thanks for God's every blessing, given now and in eternity.

THE TARGET

In Seminary, Professor Thornton was known for his elaborate object lessons. On one day he pinned a big round target on the wall and left lots of darts on the table beside.

Dr. Thornton told the students to draw a picture of someone they disliked or someone who had made them angry... and he would allow them to throw darts at that person's picture. One drew a picture of a girl who had stolen her boyfriend, another a picture of his little brother. Sally drew a picture of Professor Thornton, putting in a great deal of detail, even drawing pimples on his face, and was pleased at the overall effect.

The class lined up and, with much laughter and hilarity, began throwing darts. Some threw with such force, their targets ripped apart. Then Dr. Thornton called time and Sally was very angry she didn't have a chance to throw darts at her target.

Professor Thornton removed the target from the wall.

Underneath the target was a picture of Jesus . . .

A complete hush fell over the room as each student viewed the mangled picture of Jesus; holes and jagged marks covered His face and His eyes were pierced out.

Dr. Thornton said only these words, When you did what you did to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!' (Matthew 25:45)

No further words were necessary to teach the lesson. Focused on the picture of Christ, tears filled the eyes of each student. They remained in their seats well after the bell rang. When they did leave the classroom, the lesson was deeply entrenched in them.

11



- In GENESIS, Jesus is the Ram at Abraham's altar
- In **EXODUS**, He's the Passover Lamb
- In LEVITICUS, He's the High Priest
- In NUMBERS, He's the Cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night
- In **DEUTERONOMY**, He's the City of our refuge
- In JOSHUA, He's the Scarlet Thread out by Rahab's window
- In JUDGES, He is our King
- In **RUTH**, He is our Kinsman Redeemer
- In 1st and 2nd SAMUEL, He's our Trusted Prophet
- In **KINGS** and **CHRONICLES**, He's our Reigning King
- In **EZRA**, He is our Faithful Scribe
- In **NEHEMIAH**, He's the Rebuilder of everything that is broken
- In **ESTHER**, He is the Mordecai sitting faithful at the gate
- In **JOB**, He's our redeemer that ever liveth
- In **PSALMS**, He is my Shepherd
- In **PROVERBS** and **ECCLESIASTES**, He's our Wisdom
- In the SONG OF SOLOMON, He's the Beautiful Bridegroom



- In ISAIAH, He's the Suffering Servant
- In **JEREMIAH** and **LAMENTATIONS**, Jesus is the Weeping Prophet
- In **EZEKIEL**, He's the Wonderful Four Faced Man
- In **DANIEL**, He is the Fourth Man in the midst of a fiery furnace
- In **HOSEA**, He is my Love that is forever faithful
- In JOEL, He baptises us with the Holy Spirit
- In AMOS, He's our Burden Bearer
- In **OBADIAH**, He's our Savior
- In **JONAH**, He is the Great Foreign Missionary
- In MICAH, He is the Messenger with beautiful feet
- In NAHUM, He is the Avenger
- In HABAKKUK, He is the Watchman that is ever praying for revival
- In **ZEPHANIAH**, He is the Lord mighty to save
- In **HAGGAI**, He is the Restorer of our lost heritage
- In **ZECHARIAH**, He is our Fountain
- In **MALACHI**, He is the Son of Righteousness with healing in His wings
- In MATTHEW, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God
- In MARK, He's the Miracle Worker
- In LUKE, He's the Son of Man
- In **JOHN**, He is the door by which everyone of us must enter

In **ACTS**, He is the Shining Light appearing to Saul on the Damascus road



In ROMANS, He is our Justifier

- In 1st CORINTHIANS, He is our Resurrection
- In 2nd CORINTHIANS, He is our Sin Bearer

In **GALATIANS**, He redeems us from the law

In **EPHESIANS**, He is our Unsearchable Riches

In **PHILIPPIANS**, He supplies our every need

In **COLOSSIANS**, He's the Fullness of the Godhead Bodily

- In 1st and 2nd **THESSALONIANS**, He is our Soon Coming King
- In 1st and 2nd **TIMOTHY**, He is the Mediator between God and man

In **TITUS**, He is our Blessed Hope

- In **PHILEMON**, He is a Friend that sticks closer than a brother
- In HEBREWS, He's the Blood of the everlasting covenant
- In **JAMES**, it is the Lord that heals the sick
- In 1st and 2nd PETER, He is the Chief Shepherd
- In 1st, 2nd, and 3rd JOHN, it is Jesus who has the tenderness of love

In **JUDE**, He is the Lord coming with 10,000 saints

And in **REVELATION**, He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords!!!

JESUS is the Founder and Perfecter of our faith,

who for the joy set before Him, endured the cross, despising the shame,

and is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

AMEN! Come Lord Jesus!

Did Israel in Old Testament Know About Grace?

The *Siddur* (which in Hebrew means "order" and refers to the Jewish prayer book) has been used for centuries by Jewish people to help worshipers offer prayers to God in a way that is consistent with the teachings of the Torah and other sacred Jewish literature.

In one place, the *Siddur* directs every Jew to include in their daily prayers the following words:

"Master of the world! It is not on the basis of our righteousness that we lay our requests before Your presence, but because of Your great mercies."

This prayer (among many others) shows that the Judaism which emerged after the destruction of Temple in 70 CE continued to uphold this basic Jewish teaching – that keeping the commandments of God, although very important, is not the basis for the covenantal relationship between God and His people.

The Apostle Paul, expecting a positive response, reminded Peter that it was common knowledge among the Jews that Torah-keeping was not the basis for right standing before God. In so doing, he challenged Peter to accept Gentile God-fearers who believed in the Jewish Messiah as citizens in the Kingdom of God alongside Jews, without going through a conversion. We read in Galatians 2:15-16:

"We are Jews by birth and not sinners from among the Gentiles. We know that a man is not justified by the works of the Torah but through faith in the Messiah Jesus."

The modern Jewish *Siddur*, therefore, holds this in common with the Jewish Apostle Paul — that the basis for a right relationship with God is not Torah (no matter how wonderful and good it is!), but the grace and mercy of Israel's God.

A proper understanding of grace is essential to understanding how God relates to each of us.

Taken from "The Hidden Story of Jacob: What We Can See in Hebrew That We Cannot See in English", by Eli Lizorkin-Eyzenberg

The Joy of Giving

One of Hollywood's great actresses, Katherine Hepburn, was nominated for an Oscar a dozen times and won the Oscar four times, but was never present at the grand ceremony to receive it. The affection and love of the people who enjoyed her acting and cinema, was her greatest reward.

Katherine Hepburn was brought up in a middle class family with a modest upbringing and instilled with strong values, which she best narrates in her own words.

As a teenager, my father and I were standing in line to buy tickets for the circus. The line moved slowly, Finally, there was one other family between us and the ticket counter.

This family made a big impression on me. There were eight children, all probably under the age of 12.



The way they were dressed, you could tell they didn't have a lot of money, but their clothes were neat and clean. The children were well behaved. All of them standing in line, two-by-two behind their parents, holding hands.

They were excitedly jabbering about the clowns, animals, and all the acts they would be seeing that night. By their excitement, you could sense they had never been to the circus before. It would be the highlight of their lives.

The father and mother were at the head of the pack standing proud as could be. The mother was holding her husband's hand, looking up at him as if to say, "You're my knight in shining armour." He was smiling and enjoying seeing his family happy.

The ticket lady asked the man how many tickets he wanted?

He proudly responded, "I'd like to buy eight children's tickets and two adult tickets, so I can take my family to the circus."

The ticket lady stated the price. The man's wife let go of his hand, her head dropped, the man's lip began to quiver.

Then he leaned a little closer and asked, "How much did you say?"

The ticket lady again stated the price.

The man didn't have enough money.

How was he supposed to turn and tell his eight kids that he didn't have enough money to take them to the circus?

Seeing what was going on, my dad reached into his pocket, pulled out a \$20 bill and dropped it on the ground. (We were not wealthy in any sense of the word!). My father bent down, picked up the \$20 bill, tapped the man on the shoulder and said, "Excuse me, sir, this fell out of your pocket."

The man understood what was going on. He wasn't begging for a handout but certainly appreciated the help in a desperate, heartbreaking and embarrassing situation.

He looked straight into my dad's eyes, took my dad's hand in both of his, squeezed tightly onto the \$20 bill, and with his lip quivering and a tear streaming down his cheek, he replied; "Thank you, thank you, sir. This really means a lot to me and my family."

My father and I went back to our car and drove home. The \$20 that my dad gave away is what we were going to buy our own tickets with.

Although we didn't get to see the circus that night, we both felt a joy inside us that was far greater than seeing the circus could ever provide.



That day I learnt the value of Giving:

If you want to be large... larger than life, learn to Give.

The Giver is bigger than the Receiver.

Love has nothing to do with what you are expecting to get - it is only concerned with what you are willing to give, which is everything.

- Katherine Hepburn

Wever be afraid to try something new. Remember, amateurs built the Ark; professionals built the Titanic.

God Is Still In Control

You might be surprised to learn that I am about to predict the future of the world. I can predict with 100% accuracy what will happen by the end of today, tomorrow, next week, next month and the last day of 2021. Tell me if I am right or wrong. This is my prediction which will be 100% accurate:

- 1. The Bible will still have all the answers. You need to find it!
- 2. Prayer will still work. You need to try it!
- 3. The Holy Spirit will still move. You need to discern it
- 4. God will still inhabit the praise of His people. Act on it.
- 5. God will still pour out His blessings upon His people. *Open your hands wide to receive them*
- 6. There will still be God-anointed teaching and preaching. Locate it, listen to it, learn from it and apply it.
- 7. There will still be singing of praise to God. Join the chorus!
- 8. There will still be room at the Cross. Get there and occupy it!
- 9. Jesus will still love His own. Make yourself His own
- 10. Jesus will still save the lost. Join Him in His quest!

Whatever the outcome of this pandemic, remember this:

God will be in control Today, tomorrow and forever... God will **always** be in control.

- Contributed by a Member

HEARD & QUOTED DURING THE LOCKDOWN

- * "My Grandpa is the smartest man on earth! He teaches me good things, but I don't get to see him enough to get as smart as him!" - *Homeschooled 6year old*
- * "Be careful about reading health books. You may die of a misprint". *Mark Twain*
- * "Only Irish coffee provides, in a single glass, all four essential food groups: alcohol, caffeine, sugar, and fat." *Alex Levine (film producer)*
- * My wife has a slight impediment in her speech. Every now and then she stops to breathe *Jimmy Durante*

REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

One day in America, a man sees a tiger attacking a girl. He jumps in, fights the tiger and the tiger dies.

The next day, newspapers ran this headline:

"LOCAL HERO SAVES LADY FROM FEROCIOUS TIGER!"

At the interview after the incident, the man says: *Actually, I'm not American* The next day, Newspaper scribes changed the headline,

"FOREIGN HERO SAVES GIRL FROM TIGER"

Later, during a talk show, the man informed the host, "Let me clear the air, I'm from Pakistan"

The evening news on all networks carried this "Breaking News" headline:

"TERRORIST KILLED INNOCENT TIGER PLAYING WITH LITTLE GIRL

Reputation matters!!



The Baptist Historical Society has completed a series of webinars under the general title "Uncovering our Baptist Stories"

Webinars around the theme was prompted by a suggestion from General Secretary, the Revd Lynn Green, that the Society should make efforts to share reflection on Baptist history and identity with a wider audience. This is in addition to the Society's work in publishing a world-class academic journal, *The Baptist Quarterly*, running conferences and co-operating with the Centre for Baptist Studies (Oxford) on thematic day conferences.

Commenting on the webinars, Society President, the Revd Dr Keith G Jones, said, 'These events have been stimulating and provoked a whole series of reactions. What is clear is that there are many more stories to be uncovered and reflected on. As a Society we intend more similar events to look at other aspects of our Baptist history and identity, and hopefully provide a platform for a new generation of scholars and thinkers to engage in communal reflection.'

Four Thursday evening events looked at:

- 1. A story of dissent
- 2. A story of fellowship and connection
- 3. A story of communal discernment
- 4. Theology that leads to mission

Each evening included a keynote address by a United Kingdom Baptist historian with two respondents reflecting on the theme in a contemporary way. The foundational point is that theology matters – a bad theology leads to no mission; a biblical renewal of theology leads to vigorous mission. We need to look at the theology that underpins our approach.

The webinars are still available to view on the Society's website <u>baptisthistory.org.uk</u>

A Baptist Church in Botley

Minister
Treasurer
Editor & Accounts
Administrator
Deacons

Kalyan Das Agnes Stanmore Gillian Guest Elisabeth Cretan Sarah Singh

Phone 07742 662 668

Email

botleybaptistchurch@gmail.com

Website

www.botleybapstistchurch.org

Address

One Church Way, Oxford, OX2 9TH

The Grapevine is a monthly magazine of the Botley Baptist Church Submissions are welcome from members; credit is given when due and where available. The Church does not take responsibility of the opinions, beliefs, views and convictions of authors and contributors.

Recollections, Reflections, Observations, Yesteryear, Newsworthy Items etc. are welcome and can be emailed above, or submit in person Editor's discretion/decision is final.

> Thank you. Editor: Gillian Guest