



Here and There: ... Join us on Sunday mornings at ten o'clock for our "**The Story We Find Ourselves In**" class, tracing the biblical story from Genesis through Revelation, highlighting those passages that help us identify and understand the big story of which our life stories are a part. Currently we're focusing on a discussion of "Saving the World" drawn from the very familiar text, John 3:16-17. What does it mean that God sent Jesus to save the world, and how are we meant to participate in this? ... **The Jesus Class** this Wednesday evening, May 13th, focuses on Jesus' Transfiguration in Luke 9:28-45. Join us at mid-week for fascinating discussion and deep insight into the way that is Jesus. ... The **Special Contribution for Shiloh** so far totals \$6,646. ... Welcome back to **Naomi** who last week made a quick trip to the **Pepperdine Lectureships** where she was again on the program. ... **NOTE:** This year with the big wedding on Sunday, May 24th there will be **no Memorial Day Picnic**. There will, however, be a Fourth of July Picnic, likely on Sunday, July 5th. ... The **Church Book Club** will meet on Friday, June 12th at 7:30 to discuss the book *Calling Me Home: A Novel by Julie Kibler*. ... After seven-and-a-half years the **Interfaith Book Club** that meets here is ending. Its final gathering will be Thursday evening, June 4th, 7:00 – 8:30 PM. It's been a great run with a fascinating group of people from very diverse backgrounds who learned to have interfaith discussions at a very high level. Its regular participants have been very committed and loyal; one of its charter members who moved some years ago to Pennsylvania is returning for the June book discussion. ... Susan Ernst has just started a **Church Photography Club**, taking the themes from sermons or elsewhere and taking pictures that reflect that theme. To be part of it, contact Susan at susan@susan-ernst.com or 203/767-7743. Susan also asks for our magazines whenever we are finished with them. ... *Also, it always seems that someone in the church needs a used car. So whenever you have a car you're not using, check with Dale.* ... And we're always looking for people willing to learn how to run the **Sound Board** on Sunday mornings. On this, see Aaron Andrews. ... **Financial Update:** There were three or four snow-affected Sundays in January and February and naturally this affected our first-quarter contributions. Let's try to make it up as we can.



This Week at Stamford Church of Christ

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"The power of God for salvation" (Part Two)

Reflection 20 in the series "Salvation: The Quest"

The power of God for salvation is found in trusting God no matter what. This is critical. "Faith" over the centuries has come to mean essentially doctrine, the acknowledgment that something is true, or at least probably true. And in some Scriptures it is used that way. But primarily when Jesus or Paul speak of faith, they mean trust. It has less to do with beliefs and dogma than with openness, receptivity, trust and love.

Accordingly in early English, I am told, "to believe" was "to love," that is, to prize, to cherish, to treasure, to entrust your heart and soul to. So just imagine the difference between, "Do you believe in the resurrection?" and "Do you trust in the resurrection?" Do you prize it? Do you cherish it? Do you entrust your heart and soul to it? So credal statements shift from "We believe in one God, creator of heaven and earth" to "We trust in one God, creator of heaven and earth," and with this creeds, dry and doctrinal, become prayer, living prayer. Imagine how statements of dogma once again become experiences of God. Imagine. Imagine the power of salvation.

So Paul writes, "For in the gospel a righteousness from God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: 'The righteous will live by faith.'" And he reaches back across the centuries to the Hebrew prophet Habakkuk (in 2:4) and in so doing he tells us that it was always this way. This is timeless, universal truth. It's always a matter of trusting, loving God from first to last. It's a matter of affirming life and its goodness despite doubts and difficulties and suffering. And it makes all the difference in our lives. Without it, depression and anxiety are inevitable. But with it, we find the way to happiness, the way to courage, and the way to love. It's trusting, in the words of Susan Jeffers in *End the Struggle and Dance with Life* that no matter what happens in my life it is for my highest good; that no matter what happens in the lives of those I love it is for their highest good; and that from all things that are put before us we shall become stronger and more loving people. Even when it's very, very hard to do this.

It's being able to pull back and look at the very

PEOPLE GROWING THROUGH THE LOVE OF JESUS.

real difficulties, even tragedies, we face, sickness in the family, the breakup of a marriage, a setback at work, a sudden loss of one kind or another, a recognition that things are not working out as you once wanted them to, and ask, "What if this were all alright?" What if all this were calling you to a higher purpose, a larger calling, a greater destiny? Or as a wise person once said, "When it starts to rain, let it." And from this kind of trust come courage, and joy, and unshakeable confidence, and saving power. It's always faith from first to last. Those who make it, those who are saved, do so by faith.

When your husband or wife seems lunatic, it's still faith from first to last. Let go and trust God. When you're struggling with a chronic, life-threatening disease, it's still faith from first to last. When you've just lost the love of your life, when you find yourself day by day doing things you never imagined you would ever have to do, when a troubled teenage child takes his or her own life or dies in an accident that seems senseless, it's still faith from first to last. When you're out of work and the door you were counting on opening stays closed, and the bills start to pile up, when you're not sure if your business is going to make it or how long you'll be able to afford the house you live in, when someone you love sinks into such depths of depression you can scarcely recognize her anymore, it's still faith from first to last. When you're a young Muslim man in the Middle East unemployed and so with no marriage prospects, feeling that life is passing you by, when we as a nation face our darkest days and terrorists fly planes filled with people into the World Trade Towers and the skyline of lower Manhattan is shrouded in clouds of dust and ash, when banks go bankrupt, and the stock market crashes, and the housing market tanks, it's still faith from first to last. And for sure when that moment comes – and it does come, and it comes over and over – to

follow Jesus, to deny yourself, to take up your cross and follow him, it's still faith from first to last. Even when God utterly confounds you, it's still faith from first to last.

It's realizing that every moment is precious, that all the people in your life are precious, that the real joy in life is in the simple things, the simple gifts, that are already all around us, that even those things that at first seem horrifying and scary may turn into blessings, that things are always falling apart – well, coming together and falling apart – but often it's in their falling apart that space is made for what is new and better. It's leaning into the pain, embracing it, learning its deep, deep wisdom. Everything that is, it turns out, is there for our good. We live sacred lives in a sacred universe where all things can work for our good. As Habakkuk says, as Paul says, its faith from first to last. It's timeless, universal truth, always true, everywhere. It's the deep wisdom at the heart of the universe. It's the truth at the center of the story we find ourselves in. Those who make it do so by faith. Always. Everywhere.

The challenge then is always to let go and trust God. Whatever the circumstances of your life, whatever you're up against, whatever, whatever, those who make it do so by trusting God. And it's not just a matter of reciting a creed. It's not a point of doctrine. It's understanding that faith works and only faith works. It's a matter of deep down inside trusting God – trusting that whether or not it is clear to us things are no doubt working out as they should. More than that, it's sensing God's presence in us and all around us, creating connections everywhere, no matter what happens. It's realizing that in God we live and move and have our being, no matter what happens. It's seeing that God is as close as the air that we breathe, that God moves through the higher dimensions all around us, empowering us to

Sunday Mornings Coming Up! 11:00 AM

May 17 LIFE TO THE FULL: "If anyone is thirsty" (John 7:37-39)
 May 24 THE SPIRIT: "Suddenly a sound like the blowing of a violent wind" (Acts 2:1-4) (Naomi)
 May 31 THE WAY: "I am the way and the truth and the life" (John 14:5-14)

Calendar of Events

- Sat., May 16 **Spring Cleanup Work Day.** Spring cleanup and repairs from 9:00 AM till 1:00 PM.
 - Sun., May 24 **The Wedding of Jeffary Collins and Karina Robalino.** All are invited to join with them in the joy of their ceremony at three o'clock and to a cake reception afterwards.
 - Sun., June 7 **Buddy/Mentor Finale.**
 - Sun., June 14 **Special Contribution for Hope for Haiti's Children.**
- D. Min. Research Session.** 1:00 PM - 4:00PM. Lunch provided for research participants, starting after worship service. Research will begin after lunch (approximately 1:00 PM), and the session will end by 4:00 PM at the latest. All this contributes not only to Naomi's D. Min. Project Thesis, but also to a deeper understanding of Stamford's identity.

meet the challenges we face, giving us "gifts" as we need them, filling us, healing us in our broken places, no matter what happens. And it's knowing that we can trust God and we can trust the life that God is giving us, no matter what happens. But it all begins with the story, the good news of God, and cherishing

this story, for this story is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes.

– Dale Pauls

¹Diana Butler Bass, *Christianity After Religion*, 117.

Prayer Concerns ... The Nation of Nepal, those bereaved by the earthquake and the many now facing difficult struggles for survival; Robert Stenger's niece and her husband are (they survived) missionaries there ... **Laura Harvey**, hospitalized in Alabama with as yet undiagnosed cognitive and balance problems ... **George Murray Sr.**, Sandy's stepdad, with stage 3 kidney failure and awaiting treatment options ... **Jean-Pierre Aurelien**, still off work recovering from knee surgery ... **Aaron Andrews**, suffering after effects of a concussion, on half days at work until symptoms resolve ... **Frank Zuzola**, in St. Camillus Center on Elm Street, here in Stamford ... **Meghann Starson**, Dale and Debbie's neighbor, seriously ill with cancer ... **Jim Schlegel**, Laconia's dear friend, in Cary, NC diagnosed with mantle cell lymphoma and now on an aggressive course of chemotherapy and now his wife, **Pam**, with a mass discovered in her breast ... **Nona Fazekas**, struggling with breathing problems caused by congestive heart failure ... **Jan Bennington**, in a nursing home but in poor spirits and in a wheelchair all the time, refusing any further physical therapy ... **Stephen Snyder**, a friend of Aaron, undergoing treatment for cancer spread to his brain and lymph nodes ... a **friend of Scott Keating**, seriously struggling with depression ... **Marggie's sister Nancy**, recovering at home from recent surgery ... **Antoinette Fraioli**, Jeanne Fraioli's mother-in-law, suffering from long-term congestive heart-failure ... **Veronica's sister, Beverly**, undergoing chemo for breast cancer ... a number of friends of **Chris Edwards**, suffering various losses .. **Judy Dante**, a friend of Gillian Green, 31-years-old, who suffered a heart episode, and now is on a pacemaker and a heart transplant list; Judy has two young daughters ... **Doreen Casseley**, Veronica's mother in Jamaica with difficulty breathing ... **Tom Konobeev**, Aaron Andrew's friend, having suffered kidney failure and on dialysis, making progress in his weight loss in order to have transplant surgery. ... ALSO continue to pray for: **communities struggling with violence in America, the peoples of Haiti and throughout the Muslim world, especially those in Syria and Iraq and at risk from ISIS, also those in West Africa still suffering from the Ebola virus and those who are treating them.**

As for Sunday Morning Prayer Requests, please e-mail those on to Dale at DalePauls@att.net if you wish them included in the newsletter.