

...from the Heart

Published quarterly by the Patchogue Church of the Nazarene Winter 2021 | 2022



Greeting,

or as some would say, what's up or, hey! Once again, we have entered the season of *Advent*. A time to remember, the Lord chose to approach us; an appointed time to appear. His arrival, His coming on the scene, is God's pure Light, pure Love, a Gift!

Jesus is the perfect gift of God. Think about it. What do you get for the person who has everything or thinks they have all that they need? What is that one size fits all garment, regardless of the shape and size of every soul, that will be a perfect fit? What is the gift; no matter how old it gets, it never loses its form, meaning, or significance? It's the gift that keeps on giving; and saving!

There is no more exceptional gift under heaven than the presence of God's only son. To think the Lord who was there, in the beginning, would dress for the occasion and come knocking. The Almighty has been knocking on the hearts of men and women from the beginning of time. He's always visiting us and will do so till we meet Him face to face.

Know this; nothing deters the God of heaven and earth. He needs no passport or permission from any man to dwell among us. Yet, He is no rebel. He is a perfect gentleman. He goes out of His way to invite us to join Him. The angels invited the shepherds to the barn. Jesus requested the presence of those who would later become His disciples. And we are told that *this* Jesus is the same now, as He was then, and that He will never change!

Continued on back cover

So when it comes down to visiting you and me, today, tomorrow, next year, He does not come dictating or mandating; He comes knocking. Many if not all of you are familiar with the painting of Jesus knocking at the door. If you look very closely, there is no doorknob to turn. He taps, and He waits. The question has been and always will be; will we open the door?

During this precious time of the year, as we enter into a New Year, and in whatever days lay ahead of us, will we open the door when He applies His gentle beat at the entrance of our souls? Whether you know Him or not, whether we realize it or not. Jesus always comes a calling.

Love always knocks.

Pastor Vin



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For our weekly schedule of meetings, check
out our website at www.patchnaz.net

Sermons live stream on Facebook. Find us on You Tube.

FOOD PANTRY - MON, WED, FRI - 10am - 2pm 65 Franklin St. (Rear Entrance)

Give Thanks, With a Grateful Heart.



I needed a mason. For several weeks as I drove to work, I jotted down the phone number of vehicles advertising masonry services. One day, I even used a cardboard coffee cup sleeve to write a phone number. Unlike several scraps of paper with phone numbers on them, that sleeve made it into my house where it sat on my dining room table for a few weeks.

Eventually, I called the number and a soft-spoken man answered. I described what was needed, and he agreed to stop by to do an estimate. He asked me how I had gotten his number, so I explained that I'd seen his truck on the road. "Ohhhhh", he said. He then thanked me for calling and we said goodbye.

Almost immediately, I wondered if I had just made a mistake. I knew nothing about this man or his business. What if his work was substandard? What if there were complaints against him? What if he started but didn't finish? What if, what if? As it turned out, worrying was needless. During the two-and-a-half days Juan worked I had the opportunity to talk with him. I was struck by his peaceful and patient demeanor and I wondered if he had faith in the Lord, so I asked him if he went to church. He smiled and told me his family attended a Spanish church where he is studying to be a Deacon. He and his wife teach pre-Cana courses. I smiled in return and said, "See that? Out of all the phone numbers I wrote down, the Lord led me to call you. I'm so glad I did!"

He then said something poignant. "I came here in 2001. I love America. This is my country. I work hard, but I don't want to get rich. I work enough to support my business and my family. Here, if you work hard, you can do well."

What refreshing words from a grateful and contented heart!

I think gratitude is a trait sorely missing in many of us, while grumbling seems much more prevalent these days.

A grateful heart is a humble heart. It doesn't have an ego or attitude problem.

A grateful heart can give thanks without making selfish demands or being jealous of others.

A grateful heart can approach its Sovereign God with the respect His name and nature deserves and commands.

A grateful heart opens itself to everything its Lord ordained it should experience in this life as it's being prepared for the next.

It is comforting to know that no matter what He ordains for us today, whether we enjoy it or not, He is equipping us for all our earthly tomorrows and our eternal home.

If it isn't too early to make resolutions, I'd like to live unreservedly and unconditionally grateful to God. Would you like to join me?



Sue Cerruto, Hospitality.

Romans 12, Hebrews 13:5, I Peter 5:1-11

Courage to Face the Day

Our church recently wrapped up a Fall Bible Study on the book of Joshua. For six weeks we looked at the life and events of Joshua, and I was struck by how applicable this often-overlooked book of the Bible is to our lives today. I'd just like to share a couple of general takeaways from our study, and I'd encourage you to consider going to the Chosen series next year - it is good to learn and study and pray with our friends and fellow believers!



First, the theme of courage is introduced in chapter 1 of Joshua, and we see this idea of courage play out in the rest of the book, from Israel outmatched fighting the Canaanites, to Joshua trying to keep together the fractious Israelite clans. But this courage is not what we would generally think of as a classic definition of courage, either standing up to adversity, or throwing oneself into an ongoing battle. The courage in Joshua 1 is linked to remembering God's law. "Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses My servant commanded you. Do not turn from it . . . that you may have good success wherever you go." This idea of courage yoked with obedience plays out in the rest of the book. When the Israelites capture Jericho it is not because they outmaneuvered or outsmarted their opponents; it is because they obeyed the commands of the Lord's Captain-of-Armies. Indeed, the capture of Jericho is more similar to a religious ceremony than it is to a military campaign. Similarly, when the Israelites fail to capture the city of Ai, it is because of disobedience, failing to heed the instructions concerning the conquest.

True enough, our spiritual lives are not contingent upon obedience to the Law; Paul writes that "apart from the Law, the righteousness of God has been disclosed" (Romans 3). But on the other hand, Jesus has promised courage to all who believe in Him, and who follow Him. "If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask my Father and He will give you another Advocate, to be with you forever. This is the Spirit of Truth . . . When the Spirit of Truth comes, he will guide you into all truth . . . In this world you will face persecution. But take courage; I have conquered the world!" The Lord has given us courage in the form of the Holy Spirit, who is our guide through this dangerous and broken world.

Which leads to the second, and arguably most important topic of the book of Joshua: the reliability of God's promises to Israel. Chapter 21 has the key verse to the book of Joshua, after all of the action of the conquest and drudgery of the land allotments: "Not a word failed of any good thing which the Lord had spoken to the house of Israel. All came to pass." What underlies the courage of the Israelites is the supreme steadfastness of the Lord. Israel entered into a covenant with God, and He keeps all of His promises. When Israel entered the land of Canaan, it is written that "the Lord fought for Israel." With that kind of backing, what fear remains? Dependability on God is not a kind of crutch or a weakness on our part; it is our source of strength to face the many challenges of our day. We should not lose heart: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!"

Jon Ollett

Prepare the Way For the Lord

It's hard to think about Winter when we are here in Florida in 80 degree weather, but when I think of Winter, no matter what the temperature, I think of Christmas, and when I think of Christmas, I think of Advent. Advent is a time of preparation. John the Baptist was sent to prepare the way for the Lord.



Matt. 3:3 - "This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: 'A voice of one calling in the wilderness, "Prepare the way for the Lord; make straight paths for Him."'

Advent should be a time when we prepare for the way for the Lord in our own lives. What does that actually mean? It means reestablishing my connection with God. I pray, and read the Word, but just being still and listening for the voice of God sometimes alludes me.

I know God speaks to us in various forms. Sometimes He places a thought in my mind, sometimes I hear from the Bible (usually), sometimes others confirm the answer I am awaiting, and sometimes it is a combination of several ways. Rarely He speaks to me directly.

My desire for this advent time, not just for me but for our entire church, is to prepare ourselves to hear from God regarding the direction for us and what we have to do to hear the voice of God together.

Over a century ago people got together to pray and seek God's will. The result? This church was formed and organized as a church of the Nazarene. These are our roots. All serious moves of God seem to revolve around prayer. This is the key ingredient.

James 4:8 - "Come near to God and He will come near to you." (NIV)

Did you get that? I want God to come near to me, but there is a responsibility on me to first come near to Him. This is something we can all do individually and collectively as a church.

Let us all prepare the way for the Lord to speak to us and give us Direction - not just now during Advent, but we can use this season as a kick-off point in our journey right now and going forward in our lives. Think of giving God and our church a Christmas present this year. Give Him the gift of more of yourself!

MerryChristmas and God Bless us everyone.

Blessings,
Pastor Nick and Corinne



WOMENS MINISTRY

As I write this article, Thanksgiving is only a few weeks away and Christmas exactly a month after that!

It is a busy time of year but that doesn't deter our Thursday Ladies group from meeting each week. What a blessing it is to gather together in prayer, study, worship and fellowship. There is much laughter and some tears as we share requests and encourage one another.

Each week we put a dollar or so in our little fund and it has grown quite nicely. We use this money to purchase gifts through Samaritan's Purse and will also be buying gifts for a couple of people attending Teen Challenge. It brings joy to our hearts that with so little we can bless so many.

Operation Christmas Child is in full swing as we have already started collecting filled shoeboxes. Through previous donated items we will be able to fill 50+ shoeboxes from our church. (A total of 128 shoeboxes were donated.) Thank you to all those who gave items and to my grandchildren who helped pack the boxes.



As our families gather for the holidays, it seems that the focus is so often on an over-abundance of food and finding the right gift for the person who has everything. With all the shopping, baking and cooking, we can find ourselves wishing it was over. It is a season that should be filled with peace and joy yet often brings stress and anxiety. Sometimes it is a struggle to keep the right balance between giving gifts and The Giver of Gifts...Jesus.

My prayer this holiday season for each of us to take time often as we remember just what the birth of Christ in Bethlehem over 2,000 years ago means for us. Let us bring to Him the gifts of a surrendered heart, mind and spirit and receive the grace, mercy and forgiveness that He offered to us as He gave His life on the Cross.

May each of you have a wonderful Thanksgiving, a joy-filled Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

In Christ,
Mary Ann



Welcome
Baby

Congratulations to Stephen & Toni Cerruto on the birth of their daughter Ava Virginia on September 7, 2021, at 8lbs and 20.5 inches long.



Signs of the Times

If you're anything like me you shake your head in disbelief as we grasp the realization that we're nearing the end of the autumn season. It seems like only yesterday that we were celebrating Memorial Day, the official kickoff of summer? But you can't argue with the evidence: falling leaves, bright pumpkins, cooling temperatures and fading sunlight. Now more than ever, it seems like time is in a hurry, rushing to arrive at a designated point of history.

The passage of time affords us a memory bank of past seasons, and their corresponding celebrations. Every season has its own cultural and traditional markers: Fourth of July BBQs, Thanksgiving turkey, fixings and family, Christmas decorations and hot chocolate, the bursting forth of the first flowers of spring. These signs are not only predictable, they're both familiar and uplifting. However, the events of recent "times," have shifted our focus to unfamiliar markers, the nature of which we have never witnessed before. We've been gripped by uncertainty and fear from things like Covid-19, governmental demands, challenge to parental authority, forced closing of churches, isolation of masks. A recent prayer request brought during our Wednesday bible study, was for an eleven year old child who was refused medical treatment because she wasn't vaccinated.

Jesus was clear on His instruction regarding the signs of the times we live in. In Matthew chapter 16 he remarked, *"You know the saying, 'Red sky at night means fair weather tomorrow; ³ red sky in the morning means foul weather all day.' You know how to interpret the weather signs in the sky, but you don't know how to interpret the signs of the times!"* Matthew 16:2,3 (NLT)

Jesus elaborated further on signs of end times in the 24th chapter of Matthew, speaking of the fig tree. ³² *"From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts out its leaves, you know that summer is near. ³³ So also, when you see all these things, you know that he is near, at the very gates. ³⁴ Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place. ³⁵ Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away."* Matthew 24: 32-35 (NLT). The fig tree in scripture is symbolic of the nation of Israel and Israel is God's prophetic time piece.

On May 14, 1948, David Ben-Gurion, Israel's first prime minister, proclaimed the establishment of the state of Israel to the world. United States President, Harry Truman, formally recognized Israel as an independent nation that same day. Isaiah's 2,500 year old prophecy, "a nation born in a moment." was literally fulfilled that day. Isaiah 66:8 (ESV)

For those who are paying attention, current signs have people asking the question, are we living in those end times that Jesus spoke of? The short answer to that question is yes. Israel's 1948 nationhood was the starting sign marker. Jesus stated that this generation would not pass away until all of the things, mentioned in Matthew 24 were fulfilled. Is time really rushing by? Are the prophetic events described in the Bible really about to happen? God's Word is full of hidden surprises and no one knows or understands all of these coming events, but we can recognize the signs as Jesus charged us to. Are we in the opening, middle or final phases of the last days? Only time will prove that out, but God's promises are sure for the world in general and you specifically. Are you ready for what's ahead? Have you surrendered your heart and life to Jesus Christ who gave His life to save you? If not there is no "time" like the present.

Serving Him together,

Pastor John Mercurio



Pray for our families who have lost loved ones

MaryAnn Mavridis , on the passing of her nephew Vinnie, her brother, Vinnie and sister in law Janice.

Lou Bastone, on the passing of his brother Anthony.

