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*NOTE: there is still time to sign up for Via Dolorosa!

www.immanuelchurch.us to the **Via Dolorosa** link. Our 14th year.

Admission is free but you must sign up. Performances are every 15 min. Tues-Fri, April 11-14, anytime between 6-9 p.m.

April 2017

"ALL'S WELL THAT BEGINS 'WELL'"

Dear Friends & Family,



[3/27] I returned home yesterday afternoon from a full weekend of ministry at a local church in PA. It included a men's retreat & Sunday a.m. service. The men's group was small but they were hungry, which is the "key to success" [on the human side] for good meetings. The Lord didn't disappoint us. I had entreated the Lord that I might stuff them with His Word & truth as if it were a spiritual Thanksgiving meal. "The life is in the text"-of Scripture, that is. The doctrines of God are the stones that comprise the "well" of God, from which His Spirit's living water erupts. In all of life, few things are more gratifying & satisfying to the saint of God than when God's Spirit suddenly illuminates a text of Scripture & he sees the Holy Spirit's, i.e., the "Great Luminary's" intended meaning in the written word. From deep within worship & awe erupt. I saw this happening in the men's hearts & my own as I expounded to them "The Value of the Soul" & "God, His Nature, His Word, & Getting It to Man". **"GRACE 4 GRACE"** At this same church I was scheduled to preach their Sunday a.m. service. Before the service I was sitting off to the side, feeling once again deep wounds from various people from days gone by. In addition, I felt very dry spiritually. As worship in song continued I sat there entreating God for His help & mercy. My subject that morning? Sovereign

grace. Is it any wonder our God would have ME be my biggest “object lesson” of the many I used to illustrate the message?

“THY WORD IS A [LAVA] LAMP UNTO MY FEET...”



My first visual aid for the morning was a yellow lava lamp to illustrate the nature of grace towards a Christian. When I first plugged the lamp in it was “off”, & cold. And yet, despite the appearance of “no light” & coldness to the touch, the yellow wax, symbolizing the Holy Spirit [yellow, viz “sunshine”, glory, etc.] was *still in the lamp!* I explained to the church that Christians can often be like the darkened, cold lava lamp via the various stages, trials, downturns, etc. in life. Well-meaning preachers will hammer the saints trying to get them to “step it up”, get “sold out”, etc. One of my best friends said years ago when he was “enduring” a sermon re: the need to be “sold out” for the Lord, that “there was only One Person Who was ever 'sold out' {completely} & that was Jesus Christ.” I love it. Just ruminating on that truth makes me want to be sold out! I then told the saints that what makes the lava lamp hot again & the lava, viz, The Holy Spirit, rise “up & out” of the Christian is the knowledge of *grace*.

“THE BLEND THAT BENDS {THE HEART}”



No Christian at the time of their regeneration has any idea of what it took to get them there, just like a newborn infant has no idea how he “got here”. This is why Peter wrote to “grow in the grace & knowledge of our Lord & Savior Jesus Christ” [II Pet.3:18]. You will notice Paul would explain to Christians long after they were converted “how it happened” on the Divine side. This I attempted to do at this church. To truly understand Divine grace one must first understand human depravity & resultant inability. Rarely are these two expounded upon, much to the loss of Christ's people, & especially to His glory. One wisely said years ago that “true worship is a response to grace”. Grace is not truly understood until it is seen how desperately it is needed. I told the church that Paul told the Ephesian Christians what they were before the Godhead came to rescue them, whether these saints knew or believed it! I earnestly expounded on man's deadness in sin [Eph.2:1], his hostility to God [Col.1:21], the slavery of his unregenerate will to sin & Satan [Rom.6,7; Eph. 2:2; I Jn.5:19; II Tim.2:26; Jn.8:43], only being “free” to will according to his fallen nature [Eph.2:3], etc. & that because of it, he is unwilling & unable to submit himself to the Law of God [Rom.8:7] & unable to please Him [Rom.8:8], unable to receive the Holy Spirit [Jn.14:17], & unable to receive the things of the Spirit [I Cor.2:14], unable to come to Jesus [Jn.6:44, 65], unable without the Spirit's enabling [*Whom he can't receive*] to confess Jesus as Lord [I Cor.12:3], which is required for salvation [Rom.10:9]. “While we were still *helpless* Christ died for us.” The Spirit through Paul stressed that *even when we were dead* [lifeless; senseless; doing nothing but lying in a spiritual grave] God the Father made us alive [Eph.2:6]. Just like Jesus did with Lazarus. The one whom Jesus loved was not calling out from the tomb for Jesus to rescue & resurrect him. And yet, the Lord commands us to repent & believe & without such there is no hope of

salvation. But the Scripture also says God *grants* repentance [Phil.1:29], & His goodness leads us there [Rom.2:4]. And, faith is the only virtue that is listed in both the fruits & the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Surely His presence is what generates it in us! I asked the church, “When was the last time you trusted someone you didn't like?” And yet, as hostile-to-God enemies of God we're called & commanded to place sincere, loving trust in Him! Impossible! -without His Spirit's enabling.

“GET IT? GOT IT? GOOD!”



It is this preacher's dream-come-true when you see God's people, for the very first time, see how gracious grace is! When they “get it”. When they see it is because of Him [God the Father] that they are in Christ Jesus [I Cor. 1:30]. They begin to weep. Many did yesterday. This happens when one's heart is bent low by deep humility & gratitude when they see their extreme sinfulness met by God's super-abundant grace. I've often likened it to Dorothy in The Wizard of Oz when she first steps out of her farmhouse that was dropped in Munchkin Land. Up till that point the movie was in **black & white**. When she opens the door & steps into Munchkin Land, it suddenly turns into **color**.

“THE BISHOP'S [PASTOR'S] WIFE”



One of Kim & mine's favorite movies that we watch every Christmas season is *The Bishop's Wife* from 1947. I even own & love the soundtrack. Speaking of which, a couple of times while preaching yesterday, I noticed the pastor's wife's face seemed very troubled. It flashed through my mind that, “Oh boy-she's struggling with this message. Jesus. Help.” On the contrary, when she came up to speak with me afterwards as I was packing up my object lessons, she said two striking things to me I shall never forget: “I haven't heard a message like this in 35 years.” [She was not only referring to the message content cited above but my repeated assertions that seeker-sensitive churches do God & themselves a huge disservice when they avoid &/or tone down the severity of God & expound only the love & grace of God. The latter are not understood nor appreciated without the former! I repeatedly & emphatically told the church that the love of God is NOT unconditional. It is-to *His people!* If they go astray He will spank them. But if an unbeliever persists in their stubborn rejection of the gospel of grace, they will die in their sin & be eternally under His wrath. In fact, those who are outside of Christ have the wrath of God abiding on them presently [Jn. 3:36]. She then told me something else: “This message will be hated.” [Hated-because it leaves no room for human pride, effort, or endeavor, as grace is intended to do.] Wow. She too, like many others that morning, wept. **“SAW-SEE”** “Hey Michael? Isn't it supposed to be “See-Saw”? Yes. Typically. But in this case, No. In the 30+ years I have been using object lessons & visual aids, I cannot recollect of a ministry site where I received more expressions of gratitude for doing so than this local church. One parent marveled how the kids in the front row paid attention throughout the entire presentation. The men at the retreat, a middle-aged woman on Sunday, &

an elderly woman as well said how much they appreciated the visuals-that they were visual learners. Because they “saw” them, they “see” the point.

WOUNDED WARRIOR



Remember how I wrote above re: the struggles of wounded-ness & dryness I felt right before standing up to preach? Talk about the grace of God! Here is a quote from one of the worship team members re: the service [emailed to me]: ***“By the way, your message Sunday was SOOOO on the mark. Clear, concise, full of passion. Maybe the best I heard from you! Well done good and faithful servant.”*** I agree wholeheartedly with St. Paul-“by the grace of God I am what I am.” Period. Amen.

Kim & I pray you have a blessed **Easter/Resurrection Day Season**. As the world becomes more & more hostile to God, His Word, & His people, praise Him we've got His trump card-the resurrection!

Sincerely,

Michael & Kim



Caboose! On the Loose:

Ministry/Events for APRIL & those not listed in last month's newsletter:

April 1-10, 15-18: IC, Wilmington, DE: VIA DOLOROSA SETUP & tear down

April 4: Petra Church, New Holland, PA: hsc board mtg.//Network pastors' mtg.

April 10-14: IC, Wilmington, DE: VIA DOLOROSA PERFORMANCES

April 23: Maranatha Christian Fellowship, Berlin Campus, West Berlin, NJ: Sun. a.m. service

April 25-30: Bay Village, OH: visiting our oldest son & his family

***Michael is an ordained Elim Fellowship itinerant Stateside missionary & is also licensed to preach the gospel by the local church he attends, Immanuel Church. Caboose! is also an affiliate ministry of The Hopewell Network of Churches. For 14 years he served on various local church staffs as their children's pastor. Since 2000 Kim & he have lived by faith, having no set salary, retirement, etc. to speak of. Yet-this is their calling at this season of their lives. Michael preaches God's Word & systematic theology, using both drama & visual aids, to all age groups, from children to senior citizens, either separately or combined. To help support this work, please make all tax-deductible gifts payable to: Elim Fellowship, c/o 1703 Dalton Rd., Lima, NY 14485, marking it "Preferred-Michael Robert Guertin" or you may click on the link below to give directly.**

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