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Even if you didn't stay up to celebrate the passing of 2020, I'm sure we're all relieved it's behind us. We may not have all actually shouted "Happy New Year", but we're all looking forward to a happier 2021.

To say it's been a challenging year is a massive understatement. Not only did we endure a stressful political season, but we were all stressed by a virus that invaded our lives. Some were obviously effected more than others, but it certainly touched every one of us. There is no need to document all the hardships, we all know what they were and continue to be. But the promise of Romans 8:28 gives us more hope for the future than an annual cry of "Happy New Year!"

God has promised to bring good out of everything that happens to us, if we love Him and are called according to His purpose. Not only does that give us courage to face the future, it invites us to look back at what God has already done.

When we were mandated to close our doors, we cancelled our services as if it were a snow storm. By the next week, however, we were offering online videos of praise, a sermon, and a communion meditation. And after the mandate was loosened, and thirteen weeks with our doors closed, we opened to in-house worship. We have been able to continue doing so ever since, even adding nurseries, Sunday School classes, youth groups, and Bible studies.

As to be expected, our worship attendance dropped to record lows. But we still averaged seventy-four over the last seven months, averaging eighty-eight during the month of December. And gratefully, our giving continued to exceed our projected needs. A couple of very generous gifts even enabled us to meet special needs on the mission field, and to repave our parking lot.

The greatest blessing to come during the last ten months, no doubt, is the number of new families that have begun worshipping with us. I pray those who have been unable to attend in person will soon be able to return and get to know their new brothers and sisters.

God Bless, Rick



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Christmas Past, Present, and Future

Communion Meditation
by Rick Polley

Charles Dickens wrote 'A Christmas Carol' back in 1843--which is now a popular TV movie during the Christmas season. Today as we meet around this communion table, I'd like to borrow from that movie the three themes of Christmas Past, Christmas Present, and Christmas Yet to Come--and talk about special gifts for us from God.

We remember the story of the first Christmas--of how Mary and Joseph traveled to Bethlehem, how there was no room for them at the inn, how Mary gave birth to Jesus and wrapped him in swaddling clothes and laid him in a manger. And then how angels appeared to shepherds and told them that a Savior had been born.

As beautiful as this story is, there is one thing that prevails throughout this very first Christmas--Jesus was born to die. His whole purpose for being born was the cross--to die to pay the penalty for our sins. *Matthew 20:28 The Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.* It was Christmas Past when God gave that tiny gift of redemption to the world.

We now move into Christmas Present which takes us to this communion table. This weekly observance is not to keep a dead memory alive. We serve a risen Savior who has conquered death and the grave. More importantly, Jesus has conquered sin--sin no longer has dominion over us. We have been given a brand new life in Christ. *Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Lastly, we come to Christmas Yet to Come--where we anticipate Jesus' second coming to earth to gather the faithful. *I Cor. 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.* When that day arrives, we will receive another special gift from God--an invitation to attend the Marriage Feast of the Lamb in heaven. Can you imagine the incredible family celebration that will be? And then gifts from God will just keep on coming for eternity! *Romans 8:18 In my opinion whatever we may have to go through now is less than nothing compared with the magnificent future God has planned for us.*

Close to the end of the movie, Ebenezer Scrooge sums it all up by giving us the moral of the story: "I will honor Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future... I will not shut out the lessons that they teach!" Although Ebenezer was referring to the three Christmas spirits that had visited him, may we try to keep all year long--the true story of Christmas Past, Christmas Present and Christmas Yet to Come--of how Jesus went from the stable to the table--and how he is now preparing for us a future too glorious to even try to describe.

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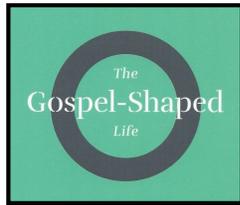
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Sunday Worship Service 9:15 AM
Bible School 10:45 AM

STATISTICS

Worship Offering	12/13	90
		\$6,418.04
Worship Offering	12/20	89
		\$5,699.04
Worship Offering	12/27	80
		\$6,244.68
Worship Offering	1/3	56
		\$2,985.68



Next Sunday night we will resume our study of *The Gospel-Shaped Life* at 6:30. We will be looking at the Lord's Supper and discussing the ways it has historically been viewed as either an ordinance or a sacrament.

Paul's Christmas Poem

God had a plan from the very start,
And went ahead knowing it would break
His heart.

Adam and Eve surrounded by paradise,
But still that fruit would prove to entice.
They thought they wanted to have the
knowledge of God,
And that snake made it seem like God was
a fraud.

But as soon as they ate from the fruit of the
tree,
They both shrieked, "I'm naked. Don't look
at me."

Fig leaves would be the covering they
chose,
Until God killed an animal and made them
some clothes.

(Continued next column)

Christmas Poem Continued

There would be great pain in childbirth. It
would not be a breeze.
This was Eve's punishment. God was not
pleased.

Adam would know struggle to work the
land.
Thorns and thistles would grow, and that is
not grand.

Out of the garden they quickly were cast.
The bite of that fruit would be their last.

And angel with a flaming sword stood
guard.
So if they returned, they would be charred.

Eve gave birth to a son named Cain.
Little did she know he would cause such
pain.

Cain like his father was a tiller of ground,
Speaking from experience, no harder work
could be found.

Then along came another son. They called
him Abel,

And his demeanor seemed to be much
more stable.

The time came to bring offerings, Abel
brought the best that he had,
Cain's offering fell short; he became
jealous and mad.

Sin built up and was crouching at Cain's
door,

After killing his brother, he was in God's
presence no more.

The first family to whom God gave the
breath of life,

Was engulfed by sin and caused much
strife.

But before God even created man,
He knew death would be a huge part of His
plan.

Death on a cross, the sacrifice to make us
right,
Was the only thing that could get us into
His sight.

We are holding the emblems that
represent Christ's death on a tree.
It is the greatest gift He could ever give
you and me.

This Christmas season we remember the
boy,
Born in a stable to bring us great joy.



Junior & Senior High School

We all have goals! Whether your goal is
to get straight A's, learn a new skill, get
TikTok famous, or all of the above, there
are things you want to do, accomplish and
become. But sometimes it is hard to know
where to start. For the next 4 weeks, we
are going to be studying from Nehemiah to
learn from his seemingly impossible goal
and the steps he took to make it a reality.
We will see that God has designed us for
God-sized goals, gives us the strength to
pursue those goals and that God-sized
goals require God-sized gratitude.



Summit Seekers Youth Group Grades 1-5

As we move through Winter and into the
Spring, Otto and Rhonda are going to lead
you on some adventures to the top of the
mountain! Along our way to the summit,
there will be some fun, interactive lessons
combining the great outdoors with the
discovery of God's great love and
promises He has given to us.

Our guide to the summit will be Joshua!
God's promises to us will become evident
along our journey as we study passages
from Joshua, Exodus and Deuteronomy,
especially God's faithfulness and the
salvation He provides. Have fun as you
embark on your journey this Sunday!

FATHER of the BRIDE

As I am writing this quick recap of the
wedding for those who could not attend,
here come the tears again. What is wrong
with me? The first tears that welled up in
my eyes on Friday were understandable,
but now here they come again five days
later. I have never been one to cry much,
but I certainly made up for it this past
weekend! In fact, if an alien was looking
down from outer space and had to
describe me over the weekend, he/she/it
would probably just say "tears." Some of
the tears I expected, but some that showed
up surprised me.

First, there were tears of absolute joy. I
am so happy God has brought these two
servants together to build a family around
Christ. Olivia was patient, waited for the
right man to pursue her, and fell in love
with Aaron. They both love the Lord and
each other, what more could a father ask
for? The next set of tears were the
surprising ones. I never expected it, but
the emotion behind those tears was
sadness. I thought of all our experiences
together, from the time the doctor looked
up and said "it's a girl" to the last two
months that she moved back home prior to
the wedding. The sadness of realizing our
time will be limited moving forward
prompted a tear or two that day. But, as
expected with such a wonderful celebration
feelings of gladness and happiness soon
returned with a vengeance. And so did
more of those joyful tears.

Back to the wedding. It was beautiful,
Olivia was beautiful, Tina was beautiful, the
place was beautiful, the ceremony was
beautiful and it was beautiful having our
friends there with us. God was honored
and acknowledged throughout the day.
Many of you poured into Olivia over the
years and for that I am most grateful.
Please continue to pray for the newlyweds
as they begin their marriage together!