

ST. JOHN

UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST
MAEYSTOWN, ILLINOIS

October 2020

Pastor's Reflection

Surviving COVID!

I know I am always sunshine and happy thoughts, and I hope I get there again before this article is over. The COVID challenges are so wide and deep I hardly know where to start.

Hospitals locked down again. Nursing homes locked down. Stay away, stay apart, stay six feet apart. Wear a mask if you must get near someone. We are not built this way. I never knew just how much we are social creatures. We have never experienced the absence for this long of touch and connectedness. We all have heard of studies that show the necessity for human contact through touch. Some reports say we should have some crazy number of hugs a day. We know the devastating effects of children that do not experience connecting through touch. Babies need to be held and so do adults!

The impact on our most vulnerable due to the lack of human connectedness may well turn out to be a greater threat than the virus itself. The setbacks for students staying isolated will be studied for years to come. Even the strongest members of our society are feeling the strain. Parents working from home, caring for the children and being teachers.... it is all too much, and as if all that was not enough, there seems to be a dark cloud over our heads! We are living under the threat of a potentially deadly virus and it is draining! Can I have an Amen!?!

Let me go on the record and say that I do applaud our hospitals, nursing homes and schools for their work to keep us safe. I appreciate the politicians making impossible decisions trying to balance health, commerce and all the many aspects of minimizing the impact of the pandemic. However, as people of faith what are we going to do?

As people of Hope and Faith we are going to be a Beacon of Light! I see things that say faith is stronger than fear and I love them! Let's take a moment and think about the words we use to express our faith. Hope and faith get used as interchangeable, but for me they are distinctly different. The definition of hope according the Wikipedia,

*"**Hope** is an optimistic state of mind that is based on an expectation of positive outcomes with respect to events and circumstances in one's life or the world at large.^[1] As a verb, its definitions include: "expect with confidence" and "to cherish a desire with anticipation."^[2]*

Hope according to Paul in Romans is what I believe is behind our optimism.

Romans 8:24-25

²⁴For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? ²⁵But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience.

Hope is the blessings promised in scripture. Hope gives us our lens to see God working in our lives and the blessing in our past, present and future. Now let's talk about faith.

Faith translates into trusting and in the context of our faith it means living in trust. It is a powerful action of being with God and God being with you. You feel God and put your trust in God. Now combine that with Hope and what you have is clarity and power in the midst of any storm. You can see a future based in Hope and have the faith that sustains you. Now using the power of our Faith and Hope let's look anew at the world of COVID.

Now with fresh eyes we see newly what we perhaps took for granted before. We see the blessing/hope of the children playing together on the way to Sunday School; we see them dressed up in their Sunday best. We see the blessing/hope of all of us hanging out in front of the church for those few precious moments connecting before heading off to enjoy the rest of our Sunday. We see in hope the future that is sure to come of weddings, baptisms, celebrations of life and all the meaningful ways we walk with God. In hope, we see the blessings even in the midst of this virus. Someday we will look back and remember when we worshipped under the shade of the trees and how we managed to stay faithful through it all. We will remember Chrissy keeping us all connected online, in your living room with a cup of coffee, in your pajamas. We will remember the special efforts each of you made to make sure neighbors were doing alright. We will see clearly the blessing of hope that we lived. We will be able to say for the past, present and future that we never lost our faith. God was with us! We trusted, and we continue to trust in our Lord!

So let us not shrink back but lean into it! With our Hope and Faith in tact let us proclaim our Hope and Faith!

Bless you all!
Pastor

Dear Congregation,

Faye resigned a week ago as our church administrative assistant.

We are thankful for Faye's dedication and excellent work over the past five years as our church administrative assistant. Her many hours of work every week went mostly unrecognized and many of those hours were uncompensated but given freely.

We cannot thank her enough for her contribution to our church. It will take many of us to fill her roll and time to train someone new. But Faye remains dedicated to our church and stands by our side as we go through this process. Let us share our gratitude with Faye for a job well done!

Pastor

.....

*I will walk by faith
even when I cannot see
2 Corinthians 5:7*

St. John's UCC Church Council Minutes - August 3, 2020

President Charlie Eckerty called the meeting to order. Those attending were Linda Schmidt, Michelle Coats, Judy Edler, Freeman Borcharding, Pat Brandt, Susie Brinkmann, Adam Tyberendt and Pastor Poole. Pastor opened with a prayer.

July 6th Meeting Minutes: Judy Edler made a motion to accept the minutes and Michelle Coats seconded the motion. Motion carried.

July 26th Congregational Meeting Minutes: Freeman Borcharding made a motion to accept the minutes and Adam Tyberendt seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Treasurer's Report: After reviewing the report, Adam Tyberendt made a motion to accept the report as presented. Linda Schmidt seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Bills/Timecard: Adam Tyberendt made a motion to accept the bills and timecard as presented. Judy Edler seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Pastor's Expenses: Linda Schmidt made a motion to accept the expenses presented. Pat Brandt seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Illinois South Conference and the churches are doing better than was feared. Many continue to work from home and are doing a great job. Many churches in the region have started services back up, with most reporting attendance being lower than normal, which is expected.

Pastor's Report: He continues to be inspired by our church – having an average of 90 in attendance at our outdoor service. The financial support of our members has been impressive, as we all struggle with this new normal. The August Visitor will feature Pastor's article "Is Church Essential?". In a world where COVID has broken down the "ESSENTIAL" and "NON-ESSENTIAL" businesses or organizations, we need to stop and prioritize church in our lives.

Charlie Eckerty reported that the Maintenance Committee is having a workday on Saturday, 9/12 from 8-Noon. There are a few small projects that need to be taken care of. The Punctual Painter will be coming out this month to do the painting at the sanctuary, parsonage & church hall, following the accepted bid.

OLD BUSINESS

St. Joe Zion Update: They are considering moving inside with services. Normally 20-30 are attending their outdoor services and they remain strong. They are so appreciative of the support shown their church by Chrissy, Marcia, the soloist, organists from the community and members. It has made them stronger during this time.

Outdoor Services: A discussion regarding any suggestions to enhance our current services followed. The sound system has been a challenge, and we will continue to work with the speakers and microphone set up to remove any interference.

Church Hall Stove/Kitchen: Jennifer Johnson, Women's Fellowship President, provided the Ford Hotel Supply Co. Sales Order for the selected new commercial stove. The order is ready to be placed and the required deposit paid. Good news! All funds for the stove have been raised and additional funds raised will go towards the ceiling. Elms Home Improvements will be installing the ceiling tile. A huge THANK YOU to our members who have stepped up to share their skills on this project.

NEW BUSINESS

Memorial Fund Treasurer: Nancy Schilling has resigned as the Memorial Fund Treasurer due to health reasons. Thanks Nancy, for your years of dedication. Following a brief discussion, Michelle Coats made a motion to appoint Cathy Hoffmann as the new Memorial Fund Treasurer. Judy Edler seconded the motion. Motion carried.

CCLI copyright license: Charlie Eckerty relayed information provided by Marcia Braswell regarding copyright laws/licensing of music. A discussion followed regarding what is needed and the fees involved. The total annual fee of \$595.00 would cover the needed basic licensing, live posts/streaming, sharing of music via email, etc. Adam Tyberendt made a motion for the church to pay the \$595.00 fee to attain the Copyright Licenses required. Susie Brinkmann seconded the motion. Motion carried.

Copier Maintenance Agreement: A Maintenance Agreement from Coast to Coast Equipment & Supplies was reviewed and a discussion followed regarding the Sunday School copier. A motion was made by Adam Tyberendt and seconded by Freeman Borcharding to decline the maintenance agreement on this copier due to its low usage. Motion carried.

Winter Service Plans: As the months pass by, we are beginning to make plans on how to continue worship during the winter months. During this Phase, we are allowed 50 people inside the sanctuary at a time. This would possibly require an additional service, reservations or live streaming of the service to our Fellowship Hall. Sending a survey was discussed and it was decided that would be the best way to proceed, knowing the needs and preferences of our members. A survey will be provided to each of our members soon.

September Council Meeting: Due to our next meeting date falling on Labor Day, it was decided we would meet on September 1, 2020 at 7:00 in the Fellowship Hall.

The church has several CDs that are coming due and Kathy Asselmeier is looking into the best way to proceed with them.

One of the Air Conditioning units at the church has stopped working and needs to be replaced. Pastor is in the process of requesting bids for a new unit.

Michelle Coats distributed an article from the Center of Disease Control and Prevention on COVID 19- Cleaning and Disinfecting Your Facility.

Freeman Borcharding made a motion to adjourn the meeting and Adam Tyberendt seconded the motion. Motion carried. The meeting closed with the Lord's Prayer.

Pat Brandt, Secretary

St. John United Church of Christ Congregational Meeting September 13, 2020

President Charlie Eckerty called the meeting to order. Pastor Poole opened with a prayer.

One of the air conditioning units in the sanctuary has quit working and is needing to be replaced. Two bids were received, with Branson Heating and Cooling submitting the lowest bid of \$2800.00 for a more efficient unit. The council recommended the congregation accept this bid.

Morris Brandt made a motion to accept the bid of \$2800.00 from Branson Heating and Cooling, with Scott Johnson seconding the motion. The motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned. Thank you to all that stayed to attend the meeting and continue to care for our church during this time.

Women's Fellowship – September 3, 2020

I wanted to touch base with you all. We had a lovely meeting on September 3rd. We discussed the kitchen. FYI...The new Stove is ready to be delivered! We just have to let them know when we are ready for it. Yeah!!

We also discussed selling pies at Thanksgiving, since we won't have a pie stand this year. I attached a flyer I made up, let me know if everything looks good.

Our next meeting is getting close, October 1, 2020, is next Thursday already! Our hosts for the evening will be Connie and Anna. Our dear Sue is off on vacation, Enjoy!

I also wanted to make sure everyone could connect since we just don't get to see each other as much. I listed Everyone's name below and the phone number I have. If anyone wants to change what I have let me know and I'll send out a final list. Thanks!

Sharon Bergheger: 618-719-6107
Faye Birk: 618-719-6214
Patty Brandt: 618-340-3723
Michelle Coats: 618-458-7086
Ellen Edler: 618-806-2591
Sharon Glessner: 618-939-3137
Cathy Hoffmann: 618-939-8322
Brenda Johnson: 618-977-1471
Jennifer Johnson: 618-410-7499
Joyce Kuergeleis: 618-910-9775
Anna Massie: _____
Linda Schmidt: 618-210-5557
Linda Sutter: 618-458-6820
Sue Taylor: 618-935-7471
Connie Turner: 618-420-1967
Sandy Tutka: 618-806-8346
Nancy Voelker: 618-978-7746
Barb Wischmeyer: 636-227-8645

Your Sister in Christ, Jennifer Johnson

General Fund Financial

Beginning Balance 8-1-2020	\$17,903.26
Receipts August	32,090.32
Expenses August	17,473.89
Balance on Hand 8-31-2020	\$32,519.69

Visitor Financial Report

Beginning Balance -	\$107.68
<i>Income: \$110.00</i>	
Carla Feldmeier -	\$30.00
Florence Feldmeier -	\$30.00
Eileen Hoffmann -	\$50.00
<i>Expenses: \$53.59</i>	
US Postmaster -	\$53.59
<i>Ending Balance -</i>	<i>\$164.09</i>

Your generous donations do not go unnoticed. Thank you so very much!!!!
Faye Birk, Treasurer

Sunday School News

Since we will not be able to gather together for Sunday School until after the holidays, let's start thinking of ways to help our kids learn about what it means to be a Christian in the holiday season! If you have any ideas to add to this list, please share them with us so we can share them with the rest of our families.

1. Make a list of all the things we are thankful for each day during the month of November. Save them to look back on next year!
2. Take time to give back to your community - volunteer work, donating clothing, helping out with a food pantry. Nothing can better help to remind us of Jesus than serving others just like He did.
3. Do a Bible study for Christmas. We are going to do this one at our house, but there are so many to choose from! For this freebie you will have to provide your email address, but I promise it is worth it!
<https://www.faithgateway.com/jesus-storybook-bible-advent-calendar-printable/>

While we don't know yet when Sunday School will resume, please know that all of your Sunday School teachers miss you so much! We cannot wait for the morning when we are able to all gather together again in our classrooms to learn about God together.

Michelle, Sunday School Superintendent

Sunday School Financial Report

Balance Forward 8-23-20	\$2,069.16
Receipts:	
Garage sale	50.00
Expenses:	
None	
Balance 9-25-20	\$2,119.16

Dorothy Mueller, Secretary

YPL Report

The YPL recently took an outing down to Giant City in Carbondale. While there, we went hiking, toured a hippie town, and made delicious campfire meals! Aside from that, we are currently collecting change for this quarter's charity: Heifer Ranch. Heifer Ranch is a wonderful community service organization dedicated to providing poverty-stricken families with livestock around the world, so please make sure to donate what you can.

Furthermore, we plan to host another Take a Pan, Make a Pan for this upcoming November; we want it to be Thanksgiving-themed. Hopefully, we will be able to pull this off, provided we are not prohibited by COVID-19 restrictions.

Lastly, we are in the process of gathering supplies for The Covering House, a shelter designed to help sex-trafficked young women back on their feet. In the upcoming weeks, the YPL will most likely ask the congregation for donations/contributions to this cause.

St. John's News & Notes

In the Nursing Home or Assisted Living:

Oak Hill - Waterloo

Elaine Hoerr

Wilma Johnson

Elveria Miller

Garden Place - Waterloo

Marvin & Catherine Hoffmann

Ellen Kuergeleis

Carmelita Sensel

Military:

Caleb Buchanan, Jacob Rey, Andrew Schaefer, Austin & Dillon Scheibe & Krista Wandro. Once again and always....*thank you all for your service!*

Sympathy:

Our sympathy to the family and friends of Ronnie Rohlring on his recent passing. Ron 69, died September 16, 2020, in St. Louis, MO. He was born December 18, 1950, in Red Bud, IL.

He is survived by his wife Cathy Rohlring, nee Jagels; children Chris (Elise) Rohlring and Alex Rohlring; brothers Allyn (Trudi) Rohlring, Wayne Rohlring, and Gene (Amy) Rohlring; nieces; nephews; and cousins.

Ron is preceded in death by his parents Alois A. and Lavern E. (nee Brandt) Rohlring.

He was a long-time player and supporter of the Valmeyer Lakers and an SIUE Baseball Player. As an expression of sympathy the family prefers memorial contributions to: St. John Cemetery - Maeystown, IL.

Prayer List:

- Nancy Schilling is healing from extensive back surgery.
- Dorothy Brandt is undergoing tests to determine her condition.
- Pat Brandt is recovering from surgery.
- Kaylee Muertz is doing okay but appreciates continued prayers.
- Tim Branson's new cancer treatment is working. Please keep prayers coming!
- Adrian Crook, Sheriff Rohlring, Eleanor Mary Krebel and Elsa Wiemerslage are in need of our prayers,

Special Birthdays:

- Carmelita Sensel will celebrate her 93rd birthday on October 6
- Ellen Kuergeleis will turn 95 on October 19
- Marvin Hoffmann is celebrating 85 on November 4.

Special Wedding Anniversaries:

- Wallace and Jane Altes will celebrate 54 years of marriage on October 8
- John and Phyllis Hoefft's 50th anniversary is October 10
- Glenn and Nancy Voelker will celebrate 48 years on October 21.

Grace in the Past, Faith in the Future Books

are still available at \$10.00 each. This book is full of knowledge of our Church. Everyone should pick one up at the back of Church. Put your money in the offering tray labeled Grace in the Past Book!!

Old Hymnals for sale at \$10.00.

You will find them at the back of Church! Place your money in the offering tray marked Hymnals!!!

YPL – Collecting change for Heifer Ranch!!!!

The canister is by the programs!!! Please support them!

Upper Room –

September-October Upper Rooms are under the Porch at the Church Hall or by the Programs. Please be sure to pick yours up for your daily devotional.

Holy Communion:

**October 4 – Holy Communion
Sunday BYBW**

Work Day Report

Yes, we did have a work day on Sept 12th and surprisingly we had a long list of chores to complete. I know you say, *“Why is there a long list? We’re hardly around for things to need work done.”* Covid or no Covid.....the gutters still fill with leaves and things need painting and cleaning. So there we all were Saturday morning to Get-R-Done. And that is just what we did.

First off, there was a stop made at Ahne’s to get the fuel (aka donuts) that we needed to accomplish the task-at-hand.

We had a good number of folks attending work-day this year and as the saying goes ‘many hands make light work’ and that it did. We mainly worked in the yard this year. Covid-Conscious folks that we are.

We:

- Cleaned and painted the swing set
- Washed dirt off the big slide
- Replaced all the landscaping timbers around the playground/gravel area
- Cleaned the gutters on the outside and removed the leaves from the inside
- Finished painting the red shed
- Added more sand to the sandbox
- Painted the metal brackets on the Ga-Ga pit
- Charlie worked on wiring updates in the kitchen
- Robert and Dwight put together the new gas grill that has been in the box for months.

After the gas grill was assembled it was put to use by making burgers for some of the crew that remained to finish the landscape timbers around the playground.

All-in-all it was a very productive work-day.

Joyce Kuergeleis
Chairman, Maintenance Team

The Mission Team

With the new school year well under way the Backpack Program is in full swing. We have made a change this year and will be putting the food together every two weeks, instead of weekly, to limit our exposure. Food is being purchased on a monthly basis so we don't have to go to the stores too often and all purchased items are coming from the Aldi's in South County and Waterloo Schnucks. If you would like to donate food or money to help us purchase food please contact Laurie Knoll at 248-798-5535.

The mission team has been able to help a few families during the past few months with various financial assistance. If you know of someone who is in need of financial help or with things around the house please let us know. We are here to help in whatever way we can. We will all continue to pray for those affected by this pandemic and those who are in need of a hand up.

Laurie Knoll - Mission Team Leader

HAPPY BIRTHDAY TO.... 🎵 🎵 🎵

Robert Taylor	Oct. 1	Colten Huddleston	Oct. 27
Bradley Koesterer	Oct. 1	Andrea Kay Kennedy	Oct. 28
Adam Eckart	Oct. 2	Wendy Hill	Oct. 29
Kelsey Schmitz	Oct. 2	Amy Rohlffing	Oct. 29
Vanessa Stitzel	Oct. 3	Payton Dilley	Oct. 29
Whitney Stitzel	Oct. 3	Sydney Kuergeleis	Oct. 30
Wyatt Aaron Schreder	Oct. 3	Brian Eckart	Oct. 31
Alex Knoll	Oct. 5	Candy Eckart	Oct. 31
Matthew Brandt	Oct. 5		
Dallen Edler	Oct. 5	Jennifer Rosenkranz	Nov. 1
Levi Michael Wittenbrink	Oct. 5	Susan Hoffmann	Nov. 2
Carmelita Sensel	Oct. 6	Justin Knobloch	Nov. 3
Nancy Voelker	Oct. 6	Kathy Goldschmidt	Nov. 4
Sheri Dilley	Oct. 6	Dawn Burns	Nov. 4
Mike Krebel	Oct. 6	Marvin Hoffmann	Nov. 4
Linda Sutter	Oct. 7	Pat Brandt	Nov. 4
Janey Watson	Oct. 7	Renee Steibel	Nov. 4
Jennifer Coats	Oct. 8	Garrett Rohlffing	Nov. 4
Graham Knobloch	Oct. 8	Lauren LaFollette	Nov. 5
Connie Esker	Oct. 9	Josh Libory Reinhardt	Nov. 5
Ross Mueller	Oct. 9	Maclain Christian Naumann	Nov. 5
Trey Rohlffing	Oct. 13	Raymond Reed II	Nov. 6
Owen Carron	Oct. 14	Connie Turner	Nov. 6
Olivia Burns	Oct. 14	Ethan Russell	Nov. 7
Kaiden Wilson	Oct. 14	Marlene Wild	Nov. 8
Ronald Upchurch	Oct. 15	Fay Ross	Nov. 8
Linda Schmidt	Oct. 15	Riley Skaggs	Nov. 8
Jane Houston	Oct. 16	Ryan Nolan	Nov. 8
Ben Hoefft	Oct. 16	Markee Voelker	Nov. 9
Kristin Busch	Oct. 17	Mark T. Rey	Nov. 9
Carol Roseman	Oct. 17	Donald Muertz, Jr.	Nov. 11
Jim Bundy	Oct. 18	Cheri Langsdorf	Nov. 12
Judy Schmuck	Oct. 18	Lisa Schwarze	Nov. 12
Andrew Watts	Oct. 18	Nathan Birk	Nov. 13
Ellen Kuergeleis	Oct. 19	Jake Coats	Nov. 15
Lauren Brigance	Oct. 19	Katie Marie Ries	Nov. 15
Bonnie Ann Schwarze	Oct. 19	Knox Brian Tyberendt	Nov. 15
Anna Massie	Oct. 19		
Alexandra Rippelmeyer	Oct. 21		
Tyler Barnes	Oct. 22		
Gwendlyn Panzau	Oct. 22		
Johnathan J. K. Ziegler	Oct. 23		
Mary Branson	Oct. 24		
Megan Beth Schaefer	Oct. 24		
Jolene Ann Keller	Oct. 24		
Derek Hoffmann	Oct. 24		
Sydney Finch	Oct. 25		
Dana Hicks	Oct. 26		
Rosemarie Upchurch	Oct. 26		
Annette Morwick	Oct. 26		
Adalynn Huddleston	Oct. 26		
Jennifer Marie Berg	Oct. 27		
Krista Wandro	Oct. 27		

happy
birthday!

HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO:

Wayne & Sherry Stitzel	Oct. 3
Alan & Debbie Wischmeyer	Oct. 4
Brandon & Emily Kruse	Oct. 4
Jon & Becky Matzenbacher	Oct. 6
Justin & Kristin Knobloch	Oct. 6
Todd & Betty Levin	Oct. 6
Wallace & Jane Altes	Oct. 8
John & Phyllis Hoefft	Oct. 10
Jared & Rebecca Coats	Oct. 10
Brian & Shannon Eckart	Oct. 10
David & Anita Muertz	Oct. 12
Grant & Jennifer Coats	Oct. 13
Tim & Leah Ziegler	Oct. 16
Colby & Lauren Jensen	Oct. 18
Scott & Jennifer Johnson	Oct. 19
Frank & Mary Graham	Oct. 20
Tony & Amy Stirnaman	Oct. 20
Glenn & Nancy Voelker	Oct. 21
Christine & Charles Eckerty	Oct. 21
Jeffrey & Angela Finch	Oct. 22
Gregory & Jessica Floarke	Oct. 24
Paul & Emilie Nilges	Oct. 24
Nathan & Julie Birk	Oct. 25
Ben & Lindsey Hoefft	Oct. 25
Matthew & Lauren Schellhardt	Oct. 25
Bill & Laurie Manning	Oct. 27
Jeff & Ashley Melvin	Oct. 30
Matt & Victoria Rippelmeyer	Oct. 30
Charles & Becky Schaefer	Nov. 1
Brad & Kate Edler	Nov. 1
Tim & Mary Headrick	Nov. 3
Toni & John Michels	Nov. 3
Ben & Darlene Yancey	Nov. 8
Jeremy & Renee Marie Steibel	Nov. 8
Charles & Faye Birk	Nov. 13
Jeremy & Katie Ries	Nov. 14

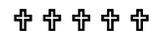


Happy Anniversary

ANNIVERSARY POEM

*How both of you are voices of one song!
As counterpoint makes one soul out of two,
Pleasing to the heart in all you do:
Praising love with music clear and strong.
Your harmonies our faith and hope renew
As beauty like a wave sweeps over wrong:
No act of love can fail to touch us long,
Nor cold, dark anger fail to undo.
In coming years your love will only grow.
Vistas shared will open up behind.
Each kiss will glisten in the early dawn,
Reminding you of stars long tucked away.
So may your years of happiness bestow
A gift of sunlight warm, serene, and kind,
Revealing love of pride and passion shorn,
Yet basking in the glow of golden day.*

(Copied)



*O God of Creation, you have blessed us with the
changing of the seasons.*

*As we welcome the autumn months, may the earlier
setting of the sun remind us to take time to rest.*

*May the brilliant colors of the leaves remind us of
the wonder of your creation.*

*May the steam of our breath in the cool air remind
us that it is You who gives us the breath of life.*

*May the harvest from the fields remind us of the
abundance we have been given and bounty we are
to share with others.*

*May the dying of summer's spirit remind us of Your
great promise that death is temporary and life is
eternal.*

We praise You for Your goodness forever and ever.

(Author unknown)

The Discriminating Gospel of Inclusion

MONTY JACKSON (Author)

Around the late first-century of the common era, almost surely 15 years after Mark's Gospel found its way circulating among the growing number of Jesus' disciples, the gospel, according to Matthew, breaks onto the scene in the third largest city of the ancient world: Antioch. The grandeur of city planning, captured the Roman empire's vision of status, power, and wealth. Did I mention that this all belonged to a small ruling elite? This elite espoused Rome's greatness and attributed it to the will of the gods. You see, Greco-Roman religion was polytheistic; if you wanted to win a war, you prayed to Mars, the war god. When you wish for fertile soil, you pray to Cybele; she was the goddess of Earth, nature, fertility, mountains, and wild animals. If you wanted your wedding blessed with love and marriage, you prayed to Juno.¹

And suppose you did not get the results you wanted. In that case, if you had exceptional political influence and riches enough to build and donate public buildings, you could put your statue in front, displaying your generosity. You could become a god or at least a son of god. The political, social, economic, and theological merged in support of the *Pax Romana*, which in Latin means "*Roman Peace*." Anyone who would dare to stand against Rome was standing against the gods. The Roman empire did not have a separation of church and state like we do here in America, and due to this convergence, one could consider the priest a government worker.

50% of the Roman population lived in poverty and at subsistence levels, and another 40% were slaves. 85% of Rome's Gross domestic product was agricultural. So, Rome had an economic interest in Judea. It was an excellent place for crop production. Galilee had rich fertile soil with plenty of water and a prime location for a trade route that made the occupation of Judea great for produce and export. Rome acquired farmland by raising taxes forcing the farmers into debt over their heads, and at foreclosure, the farmers' property seized.²

Adding insult to injury, the former occupants would barter their services to stay on the farm with no place to go. In other words, they would become sharecroppers and indentured servants. Now we get a picture of the context of Jesus' parable, is he on the side of the exploitative, unjust system where charity looks like you care. However, a radical unfair abiding system hovers, letting them know you really do not care.

Continue reading at St. John UCC Webpage at <https://www.maeystownucc.org/news.html>

¹ Woff, Richard. *A Pocket Dictionary of Greek and Roman Gods and Goddesses*. United States: Getty Publications, 2003.

² Lettsome, Dr. Raquel S. "*The Gospel of Matthew*." New Testament Lecture. Fall Semester © 2020. Eden Theological Seminary



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Pastor's Cell Phone: 618-340-2372

Website: www.maeystownucc.org

pastorpoole123@gmail.com

“Like” us on Facebook @ <https://www.facebook.com/maeystownucc>

Thought for the day:

On Christ the solid rock I stand. All other ground is sinking sand!