

Kirkspire

Lent

The word "Lent" is written in a purple, serif font. It is surrounded by several green palm fronds, with some fronds overlapping the letters. The fronds are arranged in a fan-like pattern behind the text.

MARCH 2017

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Editor : Mrs. R. Chandy



Word From the Pastor

DIED FOR A CAUSE

*God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that
in him we might become the righteousness of God.
(2 Corinthians 5:21)*

Another year, another lent season!! Is that how we are going to *celebrate* the season or are we going to desire a more biblical approach or a Christ-like approach in living our lives. Read the above verse one more time and ask yourself these questions? What was the *selfish* reason for Jesus to die on the Cross? What was the *purpose* for His death on the Cross? In a world that has moved into selfish, self-centred plans and dreams, the Cross stands as a dilemma that cannot be easily explained or brushed aside. As someone said so beautifully, Cross is the only place where '*the Hero died for the villain*' I want to remind all of us of some key features about the Cross that will help us *celebrate* Jesus more and more even as the world rejects Him more and more.

1. Jesus embraced the Cross *because* it was the will of the Father. God the Father had a purpose in sending His only begotten into the world so that we might live through Him (1 John 4:9). The prayer at the garden of Gethsemane is such a heart-wrenching moment where Jesus who is God, knew about the impending events, yet prayed for the will of His Father. A Cross that had a Cause

2. The Cause was not just a philosophical concept or a theological position that can be explained and discussed. The Cause was the '*Salvation of Mankind*'. The word 'we' in the above verse includes all mankind from the pauper to the Pope, from the pastor to the pew member. All are lost and all have sinned. All are without a possibility of redemption but for the blood of Jesus. The criminal on the cross is a sinner just as the high priest in his priestly robes is. All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23).

3. The Cause is a destiny – the righteousness of God. Galatians 5:17 says 'Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory'. From hell-bound to being heaven-bound, we needed a Saviour and His name is JESUS.

Jesus died for a cause. He came, lived and died for a cause outside Himself. I thank God for raising martyrs who followed in the footsteps of Jesus to die for a cause beyond themselves. The question is, all of us may not die as martyrs for the gospel of Jesus Christ. Can we at least resolve to '**live for a cause**'. Seek God's will, seek God's guidance, seek God's strength, seek that through your life God should be glorified.

Rev. Isaac Johnson

What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us.

Ash Wednesday



The church commences the journey to Calvary and the Easter garden with the observance of Ash Wednesday. Many churches particularly Catholic, burn the palms used on the previous Palm Sunday and super impose the ashes on the foreheads of worshippers, tracing the sign of the cross and saying, "Remember that thou art dust and to dust, thou wilt return."

It may be of interest to know how the early Christian churches especially in Latin America observed the beginning of Lent, how they finished off what was left in the larder. They indulged in throwing bucket fuls of water or exploding plastic bags of water on the streets - a relic of the sprinkling with holy water. This was more of a frolic known as Mardi Gras. In England they had the pancake throwing races, ensuring fasting from rich foods. These are inherited religious customs, to show the need to set aside the frailites and trivialities which fill our lives before a new beginning can take place on Ash Wednesday.

Today, the Christian Church calls upon its members to repent of their ways as a preparation for Easter. The Messiah who rode the donkey on Palm Sunday died for our sins in a most horrific manner on the Cross. He had spent 40 days of fasting in the desert to know the path he had to tread, to save man from his inevitable extinction. The devil placed before him temptations to swerve from God's mission for him. He dangled before him the power to perform miracles which would glorify only his own superior gift-the ability to turn stones into bread.

The devil then enticed him to test God to ascertain for himself the protection of his Father. He answered the devil that one should not tempt God. The devil then showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, he could have them all if only he worshipped the evil powers and gave into sin. Jesus resorted to the Word of God to resist these temptations. So Lent is the time given to us to learn to live by the Word of God. It is a time to repent of the times we have yielded to

sin, and seek God's forgiveness-a time to turn from something and a turning to something, "a time for losing and a time for keeping" (Ecclesiastes).

Today people don't believe in the devil. They choose to believe they are all right as long as they live a good life. But they fail to realise that leading a good life means living with compromises. But the call of God is to resist evil. We must seek to name evil for what it is, and rely on God to keep us from evil. We may fall at times, but God is always ready to forgive and enable us to start again. It is with this spirit of repentance and confident hope in forgiveness that we should begin Lent.

So far we have dealt with the authentic followers of God and their perspective on the obligations of Lent. Now follows a true story of how modern people of no particular religious perception come to faith in Jesus. There was this couple who led the life of normal young people in London. They came home from Work, ate their prepacked meal from the microwave and then slumped in front of the television till bed time. As they switched off the set, one of them said, "There must be more to life than this". They talked about it till late in the night. Neither of them was religious, and they were not church goers. But they decided to attend church the following Sunday to see if God had any answers for them. They met the pastor and after much discussion, many days later they were baptized and confirmed. They discovered God and found a deeper meaning and purpose in their lives.

Mrs. R. Chandy



A Different Approach to Fasting.....

Fasts have a tendency to be oriented toward things like giving up food or television. But there are many other creative ways we can welcome Jesus' healing touch.

Here are suggestions you may want to consider.

1. **Fast from anger and hatred.** Give your family an extra dose of love each day.
2. **Fast from judging others.** Before making any judgments, recall how Jesus overlooks our faults.
3. **Fast from discouragement.** Hold on to Jesus' promise that He has a perfect plan for your life.
4. **Fast from complaining.** When you find yourself about to complain, close your eyes and recall some of the little moments of joy Jesus has given you.
5. **Fast from resentment or bitterness!** Work on forgiving those who may have hurt you.
6. **Fast from spending too much money.** Try to reduce your spending by ten per cent and give those savings to the poor.

May we all come closer to the Lord Jesus during Lent.

Contributed by Usha George



The Passion Play at Oberammergau, Germany – an experience to cherish

My daughter in the USA invited me to join her on a trip to Europe in 2010. The highlight of this odyssey would be to view the historic Passion Play at the village Oberammergau. The play is enacted every 10 years.

We left Dallas for Munich, Germany. The airport is lively and I looked around with wide-eyed interest. At the airport we had breakfast – croissants with ham and cheese. I gaped at the 'biergarten' in the airport's courtyard where people were enjoying beer at 10 a.m, till my daughter nudged me to move on!

We rented a car and drove from Munich to Ettal. The hotel was charming and monastic with entrancing views of the Bavarian Mountains from our bedroom windows. We dined on delicious fish, herbed potatoes and soup for dinner.

The next day was Sunday and we felt refreshed after a good night's rest. We looked around this beautiful place Ettal, girded with mountains. We visited a market run by the Benedictine monks. We met two ruddy-cheeked young monks sipping a warm drink and helping themselves to warm candied almonds. They kindly offered us mulled wine and almonds. I would gladly have accepted but my Puritanic daughter frowned.

From Ettal we caught a shuttle to the village, Oberammergau. Tourists from all over the world had assembled with eager hearts to watch the play which was to commence at 2.30 in the afternoon. The tradition dates back to 1633 when the villagers underwent an agonising Thirty

year old war, leading to months of suffering, and dying of the Plague that afflicted them. It was during those dark times that the villagers had vowed to stage the suffering, death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. There were no more deaths due to the plague and the villagers have kept their pledge for over 375 years. This Bavarian village has about 5,000 inhabitants. Over 2,500 of them participate in this play as performers, musicians, choir and in the maintenance of the 40 metre wide open air stage.

The village is so pretty, the air soft and balmy that the whole place looked like it was spun out of dreams. The greenery around was spangled with flowers of various hues. The ever-present Bavarian Alps stood in arrogant loveliness. The atmosphere was timeless.

The play commenced with Christ's triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The stage was stark but the scene captured the crowd's frenzy, the rush, the shouts, the palms waving to welcome our Lord who came riding on a live ass. The scenes had living pictures of the Sadducean priesthood, the vulgar but lucrative bazaar in the court of the Gentiles, the rulers, and the appointed officers of justice. Etched in my memory is the sublime dignity of Jesus during the trial.

The laceration of Christ was graphic and painful to watch. The placing of the cross in its socket with the nailed body of Jesus made me recall the words of the psalmist in 22:14 "I am poured out like water and all my bones are out of joint".

The play ended with the glorious resurrection. It was accompanied by uplifting rhapsodic music of the choir and orchestra. One could exalt the Lord with Job, "I know that my Redeemer lives" 19:25.

Each of us, 4,700 spectators would have known, read and heard this sacred story over and over again. And yet when we experience vicariously a play of this excellence, the truth resonates with us like a "rich chord from the belly of a guitar". There remained with me a glow of emotional and spiritual restoration. Thank you, Jesus!

Usha George

The Rhythm of Life



I have recently begun to realize that living successfully requires one fundamental ability: listening for a guiding rhythm.

All of life has its rhythms. The trees follow seasons, the oceans tides, man and beast follow light and darkness; the body has its rhythms-heartbeats, breathing, nerve transmission and hormones-they all communicate in rhythms. Pulses of action and stillness. A kind of music. A dance.

Death is the absence of rhythm. Both chaos and silence have no rhythm. Life begins with new rhythms being formed.

While being universally true for all the living, for Christians, this is especially relevant. Eternity isn't dependent on deeds, done right or wrong by human will; but simply letting go and falling in to the rhythm of the Spirit. Let Him direct you, pace you, tell you when to hasten, act or be still.

Being born again is being awakened and sensitized to a rhythm that is the essence of all other rhythms, the rhythm that began all others, the unforced, joyful, free, Source of life.

Jesus. He is the life, the light, the truth, the glory. He is the Lord of the Dance.

Matthew 11:28 MSG

"Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you'll recover your life. I'll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me, and work with me-watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won't lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you'll learn to live freely and lightly."

A member of the church



Medical Corner

HOW DO WE SEE?

Doctors treat but Jesus heals

We all know that the camera has a lens, which focuses the objects we want to click, on the film roll. Similarly, our eye has “cornea” and “lens” (living!) made of clear crystalline protein which focus the objects we see on to the retina, which is the innermost layer of the eye. The retina is our natural film roll! The image on the retina, is then transferred to the brain through a system of nerves known as the visual pathway. The brain processes the images from both the eyes and fuses them as one image and then we are able to see, what we are looking at. This is comparable to the development of the film roll in the dark room in a photo-studio. Our brain is our photo-studio. Any disease affecting, the eye or the brain can result in decreased, blurred or loss of vision.

We not only have “central” vision but also “side” vision (field of vision), which helps us to move about freely, cross the road, drive etc. Some diseases of the retina and brain, can cause defects in the field of vision. A common eye disease “glaucoma”, damages the optic nerve and causes field loss.

Since our eyes are situated in the front of the face, we have depth perception, 3D view of images, and stereopsis, which most animals (e.g. Rabbits, Deer) birds, snakes, fish, do not enjoy! Their eyes are located on the side of the head, to have a very large visual field, so as to detect predators quickly and escape. ‘This also’ helps them to locate their prey easily. We also have colour vision and are able to enjoy this beautiful world in rainbow colours.

Dr (Mrs.) Rajini Kantha



Fake Sells, Law Yells & Truth Tells

The Cake is Fake was the thought which crossed my mind when the cake could not be cut by the Bride Groom and Bride at the evening party after the marriage service in the church. It was a grand triple decker (triple layered) beautiful yummy pink and white cake which was placed in front of the beautifully dressed bridegroom and bride. As both their hands held the knife to cut the cake, the cake did not cut through and the couple was embarrassed. I wanted to help and looked at the cake- the cake was a fake – only on one portion it could to be cut and the others were made of beautiful white, and colored thermocol. Finally the baker had to be called – who showed where the cake needed to be rotated to be cut. From far – the cake looked creamy, mouthwatering and yummy, a feast to our eyes, but actually the Cake was a Fake one. Yes Fake Sells – All Artificial things – Counterfeits/ Duplicates Sell – and sometimes are better than the Original. Today men have created artificial beaches in Dubai. There are artificial ocean like aquariums in Dubai and Singapore which create a replica of real under water life. Yes, as long as fake things are for entertainment – they are fine – but when used in the real world can cause huge trouble. Fraud today is all around us. Today we have fake jewellery, fake flowers – fake laughter clubs to make people laugh. Observational studies state that 80 to 90% people laugh at things which are not funny (TOI, Nov 3, 2016). People say **Fake it to make it**. There are artificially created fake opinions and ratings to sell products and innocent people are fooled into buying them.

Deception has entered our lives. Cheque Forgery of Signatures, Credit Cards thefts – ATM pin number thefts / Many stealing from Bank

Accounts posing as Fake Bank Officials has caused Cybercrime police to quickly catch the culprits. The **wrong person gives the wrong impression** to us in elections and we end up voting for the wrong candidate and hence the wrong Govt. There are Fake Police Inspectors, Fake Tax Officials but the Truth comes out at last.

Another area of faking is in health, where we are led to pop pills that are not required but help to fatten the profits of pharma companies. Obesity through fattening foods is another case of faking and the ad industry plays a big role in levering the process. Today Some Cricket Matches Results are tampered with, Lottery winners are unreal. The system of ranking educational institutions and examinations is also warped. Even innovations involve frauds because of copying from others and claiming credit for it. The Bible has also instances of such faking. Rebekah faked Jacob to be Esau and got the blessings from Isaac (Gen 25:33). Isaac faked his wife Rebekah to be his sister in front of Abimelech King of Philistines Gen 26:7-9. **What does the Bible teach us about how to deal with and overcome Faking?**

Lesson 1: God Calls us to be Authentic Christians because Jesus himself is The Truth – Authentic Christians are marked by thankfulness and prayer, faith in Christ, love for saints and genuineness in living for Christ Colossians 1:3-8. Mathew 7:16-18 states that we need to bear good fruit which is real inside. Judas was an example of a fake disciple. King Herod faked his intention to get information of the baby Jesus from the wise men. There are many people who pretend to be followers of Christ but only a few are chosen. Matt 22:14. Am I also an honest truthful Christian following Christ IN ALL ASPECTS?

Lesson 2: God Calls us “Be Part of the Solution & Not Part of the Problem” - God calls us to actively take part in the solution of truth and not be a part of the problem. There are many spectators who do not take part in the solution and these people are “people sitting on the fence”. God calls us to be disciples who impact and transform the hearts of men (Matt 28:20) and expose False Teachers and Prophets through God’s word and our personal testimony. Am I a PART OF THE SOLUTION or a MERE SPECTATOR?

Lesson 3: God calls us to “Use Discernment of the Spirit” to identify What is right & What is wrong – There will be many situations when you will need to depend on the Holy spirit to identify what is correct (1 John 4:1) and what is not correct because on the mere face of it – it might look good and fine – but later you find that

they are actually not right at all. Acts 5:9. Do I use the DISCERNMENT of the Spirit to Judge the Truth?

In conclusion, we need to understand – that we need to be truthful – from the smallest to the biggest things in our lives because Ps 14:2 says The Lord looks down from heaven. Yes, we need to be actively part of the solution and use the discernment of the Holy Spirit to understand the authenticity of any task to be done.

Dr Samip Baruah



John's Corner

HELP!

(Read Ps 94 : 18, Isa 41 : 10)
(Prayer for Lent)

No, Lord, I can't stand on my own,
I need a helping hand;
Temptations I cannot resist,
The devil can't withstand.

I daily pray, I read Your Word,
I know that You are near,
But somehow when the devil speaks,
I lend a willing ear.

Forgive me when I go astray,
Have mercy, Lord, I pray,
And held by Your upholding hand,
With You help me to stay.

John H. Bala Singh



Bible Quiz No. 76 - March, 2017

Based on the Gospel of Matthew (King James Version)

Give only 1 reference.

1. There was a very rich man who was a disciple of Jesus. What was his name?
2. What was the name of the wilderness in which John the Baptist preached?
3. Is Bethlehem located in Galilee or in Judea?
4. How long did the prophets and the law prophesy?
5. True or False : When Jesus talked about the stone that the builders rejected, the Pharisees were not aware that He was speaking of them.
6. Why does Jesus tell His listeners to take His yoke upon them?
 - (a) because His yoke is light
 - (b) because believers must be led by the yoke of the Spirit
 - (c) because they will find rest for their souls.
7. True or False : Jesus said, "A house divided against itself shall not stand" in answer to a question about a civil war between the Jews and Samaritans
8. How did Jesus reply when asked why His disciples did not fast, but the Pharisees often fasted?
9. Fill in the blank : Although one man ran for the vinegar, the others said "Let be, let us see whether Elijah will come to ____ him"
10. "For the mouth speaks out of the abundance of the_____."

Kindly send your answers to the church office by 19th March 2017.

Usha George

Answers to Bible Quiz No. 75

(February 2017)

Based on Proverbs (King James Version)

The answers are :

1. Timely advice - spoken at the right time - 25 : 11
2. Pride -- 16 : 18
3. Brothers -- 18 : 9
4. Heart -- 4 : 23
5. A merry heart -- 17 : 22
6. Slack hand -- 10 : 4
7. The lazy person -- 22 : 13
8. The simple -- 14 : 15
9. A hypocrite -- 11 : 9
10. Evil people -- 29 : 6 or 5 : 22

The winners are:

1. Mrs. Minnie Devadoss
2. Mrs. Indira Rajanayakam
3. Mrs. Peace Rani Sudhakar
4. Mrs. Suguna Joseph
5. Dr. (Mrs.) Elizabeth Sujatha Prasad
6. Dr. Rachel Chacko
7. Mrs. Aruna Asir
8. Mrs. Gladys Wilson

Hearty congratulations!

Usha George

Kirk News



King David writes in Psalms 136: "Give thanks to the Lord for he is good. His Love endures forever" (NIV). As we enter the 3rd month of the New Year 2017, we need to be thankful for His Love which sustains us in every walk of our life.

Guest Speakers

12th February 7a.m. Rev. Isac Soundara Raja, spoke on the topic "Hindrances in fulfilling the purpose of God?" from Joshua 1:1-9.

9a.m. Rev. Andrew Anderson spoke on the topic "The Healing at the Pool" from John 5:1-15.

26th February 6p.m. Mr. Thomas George spoke on the topic "...and they will know that we are Christians by our love" from Matthew 25:31-46 in the evening Youth & Koinonia service.

District Meetings

During the month, **District 5** met on 5th Feb in the home of Mr PC Varghese & Mrs. Saramma Verghese for a time of Bible Study and Fellowship. We thank God for the hosts and their resourcing for the Fellowship.

House Church Meetings

During the month, The Hosts of the Meetings for **Friday 3rd February** were Dr. P.C. Verghese & Mrs. Saramma Verghese, for **10th February** Mr. Jayakumar Daniel & Mrs. Prema Daniel, for **17th February** were Mr. D.S. Dennis & Mrs. Kala Dennis & for **24th February** Mr. C. Jacob Sumithran & Dr. (Mrs.) Percy J. Sumithran. We thank the members for opening their homes in Christian love and fellowship.

Evangelism and Missions Movement's Fasting & Prayer met on **9th Feb, 16th Feb & 23rd Feb 2017 & Monday Bible Study** was held on in the Manse/SACCE hall. Pastor continued to lead the members in the study on St.Luke's Gospel.

Friday Prayer Cell met on **3rd, 10th, 17th & 24th Feb 2017 at the SACCE** hall. Pastor led the study of Proverbs. Do come in the future programs and be blessed.

Kirk Youth Fellowship met on **5th Feb** and a group of youth went as a part of the outreach program on **12th Feb 2017** to Thirupalaivanam, fellowshipping with the youth there and teaching them English. Another group went to Gypsy Colony, Pallavaram, to teach in Sunday school and also present the Gospel. Please continue to pray for their ministry so that God's will be accomplished by the youth and also through the Sunday school children. **The CATALYST Youth Worship Service** was held on **26th February** between 9 & 11 AM.

The Men's Fellowship & Women's Fellowship met simultaneously on **19th Feb 2017** after the 9 a.m. service for their fellowship meetings after the church service.

A prayer for Students writing Public / Board Exams was done by the Pastor & Congregation on **5th Feb 2017** so that they would be enabled by God's grace, wisdom, memory and good health, **to do well.**

All Night Prayer was held on Friday 24th Feb & our member Dr. (Mrs.) Christina Ambrose spoke on the topic "Power of Fasting and Praying", and Praise & Worship was led by Dr. (Mrs.) Anita Chelliah.

Confirmation Classes of 2017 On 12th February after the 9 a.m. service, the Pastor had a preliminary interaction with parents and children who wished to enrol for confirmation classes this year,.

Vacation Bible School 2017 will be held in the Church from **April 18 to April 30, 2017**. The **theme** for this year's VBS is "**I am willing**" **I Chronicles 29.5**. Dear Parents, please plan your holidays accordingly so that children can study God's word during these ten days. Those willing to participate as teachers and volunteers may please block these dates, apply for leave etc, to make yourselves available to be used by God for His glory.

CONGRATULATIONS!

Mrs. Niranjana and Mr. Praveen were blessed with a baby boy "JOHANAN" on 31st January 2017. He is the grandchild of Dr. (Mrs.) Rajini Kantha Narendranath & Mr. M.M. Narendranath and Mrs. Chitra Bennett & Dr. D. Bennett. The child also happens to be the great grandson of Mrs. Mercy Thavaraj and Mrs. Jasmine Bright Singh.

Niranjan Paul Gunasekaran & Jyotsna Jothi were blessed with a son on 25th February. Grandson to Mr. Jebasingh Jothi, Treasurer and Mrs. Jayanthi Jothi.

OBITUARY

Mrs. Ranjini Daniel, our member aged 62 years, passed away on 19th February 2017. We convey our heartfelt condolences to the family. Please pray.

Dr Samip Baruah



Financial wizardry

During my interview for the Financial Controller's post, I answered all questions satisfactorily; the last question was from the president. What is 7 plus 3? I thought about it and said 12. On my return, I opened my mobile phone calculator app and found out the right answer.

But I was surprised to get an appointment letter. I could not resist asking the president the reason. He smiled and said, "Of course you were wrong, but you were the closest."

J.C. Thomas



The villagers of Oberammergau participating in The Passion Play they regularly perform every 10 years in lieu of a 400 year old vow for protection from the Plague. The enactment of the suffering and crucifixion of Jesus Christ captivates spectators even though they know how it will end.