

THE GOSPEL MESSAGE

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Editor ~ Wade Stanley

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Social Distance from Anxiety

Kevin Crittenden

"It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." Thus starts *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens. Were we to write a book today, we might say, "It was the worst of times" and leave it at that.

Each day, we awake to frightening statistics about the pandemic, this endless quarantine, the plunging economy, schools caught in limbo, businesses fighting for survival, and a growing, pernicious divisiveness in our country. We all imagine something disastrous is crouching on our doorstep and its desire is to have us.

For me, it's a struggle to stay afloat in this maelstrom. But I am not lost and neither are you, for we have a solid Rock under our feet upon which to stand and weather this storm. His name is Jesus. And right now, today, He is talking to us in the same manner as He talked to Martha: "*Martha, Martha,*" the Lord answered, "*you are worried and upset about many things,*" (Luke 10:41).

Can you hear His calming voice talking to us?

Jesus calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee and He has the power to calm the storms of anxiety that rage within us. The Bible is a **living** document, so it still speaks to us today. Jesus knows our worries and speaks to us in **Matthew 6:25-34**. He says:

"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life" (Matthew 6:25).

"So do not worry . . ." (Matthew 6:31).

"Therefore do not worry about tomorrow" (Matthew 6:34)

He knows that people are worriers, back then and even more so today. Anxiety is the chronic pandemic of our age, countered with medication and therapy. However, medication and therapy are not the **ONLY** resources that we have. Christ's counsel is sorely needed, and what He says can profit every one of us.

Christ is telling me, "Kevin, Kevin, you are looking intently at a blip in time. Up your game, son, lift your head and behold the Glory of the Future when you will enjoy the unfading splendors of a home in that eternal city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God."

I hear in my mind the tune from, "This World is Not My Home" based on Hebrews.

By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later

receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise. For he was looking forward to the city with foundations, whose architect and builder is God. And by faith even Sarah, who was past childbearing age, was enabled to bear children because she considered him faithful who had made the promise. And so from this one man, and he as good as dead, came descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as countless as the sand on the seashore.

All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance, admitting that they were

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foreigners and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own. If they had been thinking of the country they had left, they would have had opportunity to return. Instead, they were longing for a better country—a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared a city for them (Hebrews 11:8-16).

Quite frankly, I am amazed that the Creator of All takes the time to sit with insignificant me, as if I were important to Him. I'm sure that He is very busy and needed elsewhere. He's probably looking at his watch.

I then suddenly realize that this way of thinking is the source of my anxiety. I realize that I simply have **NOT TRULY ACCEPTED** in my heart His unconditional love for me. I can see the Cross from where I am. but it is at a distance.

We have so many Biblical verses that speak of God's love for us, such as: "*See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are!*" (**1 John 3:1b**). This verse is in my head, but is it really in my heart?

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Do I trust in God's promises? Would I still worry if I did? "Yet man is born to trouble [worry] as surely as sparks fly upward" (Job 5:7). So my issue is a continuing one – truly pondering these things in my heart.

Jesus speaks again and says, "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matthew 6:34). The familiar refrains drift through my head, "Stop worrying. Anxiety is futile. Do not borrow trouble. Don't let worry about tomorrow rob today of its strength."

How can I possibly do this?

Jesus is very patient with me. He says, "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well" (Matthew 6:33). When we are in a continual quest for God's kingdom, our focus is no longer on worldly cares, and so we are freed from the chains of anxiety.

Do not live in the uncertain future. Live in this moment. Glory in the fact that the Kingdom of God is at hand. Hug your family. Take a walk with your child today. Drink that coffee. Enjoy the life God has given you as His beloved child.

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Is Jesus Really the Winner?

Thomas W. Woody

EDITOR'S NOTE: Brother Tom went to be with our Lord in early 2015. Your editor ran across his article on this publication's website: www.gospelmessage.net. Your editor hopes you find Brother Tom's words encouraging.

There is a great spiritual battle raging in and all around us. *"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me you might have peace. In the world you shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world."* The meek and lowly Jesus of Nazareth said these words to His followers shortly before He gave His life on Calvary to conquer this world. Did Jesus succeed in defeating Satan and the rest of our foes, or did He fail? Just how do we know that Jesus really is the winner in this war of all wars? The evidence of Christ's power over the god of this world is convincing. Keep in mind that the conflict is spiritual at its core, though it does manifest itself physically in battles between nations and individuals. If this were just a physical fight, Satan could be instantly crushed by Jesus. But the spiritual fight about whether or not sinful man has a right to be accepted by the righteous God could only be settled by the Lamb of God being offered for our sins. In this way, Jesus proved that "Right makes Might," not "Might makes Right," as earthly wars are intended to prove. Praise God that Christ obtained for us the victory rightfully and that we now have the "right" to be God's children with an eternal inheritance in Heaven!

The great miracles of Jesus proved that He really is the Winner. Healing the sick, for example, was not something He did to eradicate illness and make the world a better place. *"But that you may know that the Son of man has power on earth to forgive sins, (then he said to the sick of the palsy.) Arise, take up your bed, and go to your house"* (**Matthew 9:6,7**). Since Jesus is more powerful than physical sickness, we can trust Him to heal us of the sins which cause our spiritual sickness! The King of kings cast out demons: The reason? *"But if I with the finger of God cast out devils, no doubt the kingdom of God is come upon you"* (**Luke 11:20**). When temptation seems so hard to resist, just remember that Jesus is stronger than the god of this world! Think of the display of our Savior's superiority over nature itself when He calmed fierce winds and turbulent waves instantly: Don't you believe He can bring peace to your life, no matter how great the storm may be? We should never forget how Jesus gave "life from the dead" to at least three people, and was Himself raised from the dead! Not even death itself, our "last enemy" (**1 Corinthians 15:26**), could overcome the Captain of our Salvation, so rest assured (**Revelation 20:14**) that it will once and for all be cast into the lake of fire on the Day of Judgment!

In **Ephesians 4:8**, Paul quotes from **Psalms 68:18,19** and gives

us a unique description of what Jesus has done to prove that His cause is right and that He is victorious over all enemies: *"Therefore He says: 'When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.'" "He led captivity captive"* is a reference to the practice of conquering kings leading a victory procession before their loyal subjects which would include the enemy king (or kings) who had been defeated – the enemies who had previously held others captive until the conquering king came and made them captives!

It was very prudent for kings to make good use of their successes in battle, capitalizing on them to gain more honor in the eyes of their subjects and insure for themselves a legacy. Kings of Israel did this by erecting memorials, from King Saul (**1 Samuel 15:12**) to King Absalom (**2 Samuel 18:18**). Jesus, however, has obtained something far greater from His victory in this great spiritual war: an eternal memorial with The Name that is above every name; the Name which every tongue shall confess, and to which every knee shall bow! (**Philippians 2:9-11**).

The enemies of Jesus and the things that would keep us from our Creator include pain, suffering, disease and death. The gifts that Christ gives to the church are described in **Ephesians 4:11**: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers are the precious gifts Jesus left for us to edify, strengthen and comfort the church of Christ until the Bridegroom returns to take us home to the place He is preparing in Heaven. Much could be said about these edifying endowments, but for now, ask yourself if you truly appreciate these gifts and do you take advantage of the teaching they provide for us? Are you preparing yourself to be one of these gifts yourself, if it is God's will?

An honest evaluation of the evidence shows us that Jesus is the clear winner in the war that matters the most. You didn't start it, but you had better be on the right side when the final verdict is announced. Choose today the winning side! Stand on the promises of God, knowing how Jesus has proven His superiority over Satan, and rejoice in all the blessings we are given in Christ, especially the dear men who teach us the Word. Sweet victory can be yours, but only in Jesus, the bona fide winner of the epic battle of the ages!

Glory to God!

The brethren who meet in **Nixa, MO** rejoiced when **Dawn Wood** was baptized for the remission of her sins on August 18.

The church in **Kirksville, MO** rejoiced when **Kelly Ames** was restored to the congregation on September 2.

The brethren in **Ottawa, KS** praised God when **Richard**



Please check your expiration date!

Continued from page 3: "Glory to God"

Weixeldofer and **Mason Brooks** were baptized for the remission of sins.

Here and There

The church in **Ottawa, KS** is glad to report the appointment of three new deacons: **Tom Craft, Adam Brooks, and Jessie Madden**. **Evangelist Don King** appointed these brothers on March 8.

Special Meetings

The brethren who meet on **Riverside Road, Ozark, MO**, have cancelled their annual **Fall Weekend Meeting** which normally takes place the third weekend in October.

The **Kirkville Church of Christ, 110 Pfeiffer Avenue, Kirkville, MO**, invites everyone to hear two of their teachers who were scheduled to teach at the "20/20 Vision Meeting" that was cancelled.

Mike Kirby is scheduled to teach on "Qualities of Vision Leadership" on Saturday, October 31 from 1pm-4:30pm and Sunday, November 1 from 10am-12:15pm.

Tad Morris is scheduled to teach on "Finding Our Vision To Serve" on Saturday, December 5 from 1pm-4:30pm and Sunday, December 6 from 10am-12:15pm.

For housing, contact **Dean & Teena Hansen** at 660-665-8298 or deanhansen52@hotmail.com.

Because of the long-term uncertainties surrounding Covid-19, the church in **Excelsior Springs, MO** has decided to cancel the **2021 one-meeting meeting** that traditionally takes place in late July. They have committed to hosting the same meeting in **2022**, if God is willing. Your editor knows these are difficult decisions. May God grant us all wisdom and mercy!

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