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Being the heart and hands of Jesus Christ for our valley Vol. XI Issue XII December 2011

REV. BOB SHEPARD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



FOLLOW THE STAR (even if it leads you to a stable)

“On coming to the house, they saw the child with his mother Mary, and they bowed down and worshipped him.” Matthew 2:11

The story of the wise men is an example of what happens when you follow a star only to find a stable. They set out following the star, with wonderful expectations thinking that you will find something grand, only to discover that the star had led them to the backyard of a barn. And there instead of a palace, mansion and robes and thrones, they unexpectedly find a baby in a manger wrapped in common clothes.

The wise men weren't the only ones to have this type of experience. I would venture a guess that all of us from time to time have had or will have this same type of challenge- seeing our expectations dashed.

The lesson of the wise men gives us comfort in three ways.

1. Look for God when you come to the stable. Don't panic when you come to the stable, but rather hold steady and say "God is here somewhere". Even in the most unexpected places there is something we can learn, there is perhaps a new discovery about God we can receive, and new way of understanding God's faithfulness and provision. Looking for God gives us the ability to be part of the answer rather than part of the problem. Looking for God gives us encouragement rather than excuses.
2. The wise men teach us that even though we expectantly come to the stable, we are still to offer our very best. The temptation constantly facing us is this. When we come to the stables of life or come to something we did not expect, the temptation is for us to hold back, not give our very best effort. We are tempted to save our very best for the situation of our dreams which we hope and pray will come to us later. The irony of this reaction is that the time that we should give our very best is when we often give our very least. The difference between merely being an average Christian and a Christian who can make a significant mark for Christ in the world around them can be boiled down to three words. These three words are *and then some*. If you look at the stories of men and women who have made the greatest mark for Christ throughout the history of the church- their lives are not marked by superior intelligence or extraordinary skills and abilities- rather it was marked by their willingness to give their very best *and then some*.
3. Finally, allow God in the midst of these experiences to change the direction of your life. That night in Bethlehem, the wise men continue in their journeys, but they journeyed in a new direction. Their loyalties were changed; their introduction to Jesus Christ gave them a new-found sense of daring and adventure. Because they had discovered in Bethlehem, a baby whose life and truths would become more powerful than the Roman Empire.

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Have a
Merry Christmas
and a
Happy New Year

Continued from Page 1, Rev. Bob Shepard

If Christmas is to have any meaning to us we must remember that Christmas is the story of God changing the world. Changing our world. It has been said of our culture that most Americans tend to *worship their work...work at their play...and play at their worship*. As a result, values are distorted, lives are lived in meaningless fashion, and relationships disintegrate right before our very eyes. Is there any better time than Christmas to ponder the changes God wants to make in our lives?

As we learn from the wise men, this Christmas may we find at the simple stable the wonderful shining star that reminds us of these valuable lessons. *Have a wonder-filled Christmas*

A THANGSGIVING THANK YOU

Special thanks goes to all who helped with our recent Baskets of Blessings event- decorating baskets, sponsoring baskets and/or helping with the distribution.

430 families were helped with ingredients for their Thanksgiving meal.

We wish to thank Grocery Outlet, T-sales Wholesale Distributor and Albertson's for their help in the purchase of the food. All the baskets were sponsored and we were able have some excess funds to help us with food boxes for Christmas as well.

Serve Wenatchee Valley Support Update

As we enter the most special time of the year with opportunities to bless thousands of people during the holiday season. Your continued support will help us finish the season strong.

	November 2011	Year to Date
Income	\$20,138	\$150,647
Expenses	\$13,258	\$157,255

Gretchen's Prayer Corner

GOING HOME FOR CHRISTMAS 2011

And Jesus said, **"I am the Resurrection and the Life."** Gretchen – are you just a little bit mixed up? This isn't Easter after all – this is December and Christmas!

The seasons completely complement one another.

The beautiful birth of our Lord; the "pause" of His death; but then the culmination of the "buy-back" - this Complete, Absolute, Utter Resurrection - the eternal proof of the FINISHED, CALVARY - COST; when Jesus rightfully, and with perfect legality says to us in John 11:25: **"I am the Resurrection and the Life: he that believeth in Me though he were dead, yet shall he live."**

A dear Sister in Christ, her life ebbing away over the past two weeks, has been on my heart, and consequently, the topic of many prayers over the past fourteen-plus days. Today, as I drive up to her home, I first see the raised window blinds. After parking the car, instead of ringing the doorbell, I look into the open window. The now familiar hospital bed in the dining area is absent. "Oh, Dear One," I say out-loud, "You are Home." My Spirit immediately knows the Truth of: "I am the Resurrection and the Life." I speak out-loud once again: "She is not here; she is WITH the Lord." Full provision was made for this trusting, precious daughter of the King, so very, very long ago. The Babe in the Manger birthed from heaven to BE the Ransom for many has very practically, and, oh, so tenderly, called one whom He cheerfully calls **FRIEND** unto Himself. She is entirely ready to make the trip, thanks to His provision, His LOVE - the giving of His Life-Gift to her. Every detail is in place. He has seen to it all.

Which brings us back to the season that we are in once again – Christmas. As we, the Church world-wide, re-tell the beautiful story found in Luke chapter two –the manger, the animals, "no place to lay His head," and the "Glory to God in the Highest Angelic Choir" – we are reminded of the simple, yet oh, so complex message: Father sent His One and Only Son to care for our sin. "He that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." The LOVE-GIFT has arrived for "Whosoever – Will." The Sin-less Manger-King **IS** the Gift; the Cross our Pathway; and the Resurrection our total, true Deliverance.

Oh, one more thing about my friend who is home with the Lord for Christmas...

She was a *Giver*.

She actually looked and acted an awful lot like her Father and His Son in that way. Father gave her His Gift, and she just passed Him on. A whole lot.

This is, as Paul Harvey says: "The Rest of the Story..." The Father gave the Gift – His Son, Jesus. The Son gave His Life – a Ransom for many – to restore us to the Father. The full-manger bed exchanged for the empty bed. The empty tomb empowering the "spent" life. I believe that I see the pattern – the Life of the Spirit, lived inside of us. Could this be what Paul talks about in Romans 8, and what others have called the "Normal, Christian Life"???

One day, my bed and your bed will be found empty. Do we "hear" now with the ears of the Spirit that Great Cloud of Witnesses cheering?? Let us choose to spend, spend, spend our lives while there is ample light – doing His will and knowing Him.

Receiving His Gift by Grace.

Graciously Giving His Gift.

Receiving His Gift.

Giving His Gift...

We call you "Treasure" here at Serve, and love you.

A most Blessed Christmas to you and yours,

Gretchen

