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REV. BOB SHEPARD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A LEGACY OF CHARITY

If you really fulfill the royal law, according to the scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well James 2:8

Recently, I can across an article written by Christopher Price that outlined the evolution of acts of charity in the development of the church. Allow me to share with you some of what he has written. It serves as a great reminder for the times we face. It serves as a

"The idea in the West that individuals, organizations, and the state should offer help to those in need without an expectation that the favor will be returned -- charity -- is largely due to Christianity's influence. The Christian concept of charity was unique because it promoted the idea that charity was not just limited to one's own family or even one's own social or cultural group. From the founding of early Christianity to the modern age, Christians have carried with them a beneficial concept of charity that has had a substantial, positive impact on humanity.

There was, of course, Old Testament precedent for charity. The Old Testament instructs landowners to allow the poor to glean their fields for food. First century Jews were known even in the pagan world for the practice of "alms giving." Moreover, the charity produced by Jewish society was generally limited to the Jewish poor.

Christian attitudes towards charity can be traced directly to the teachings of Jesus. Many of his sayings and teachings emphasized the role of caring for the poor in the Kingdom of God. The point here is clear and powerful. You express love for God by expressing love for the poor and disadvantaged.

Jesus had instructed the people to love their neighbors as themselves. But in Jesus' time, social responsibility was limited to members of one's family or social/racial class. So when asked who was a neighbor, Jesus took the opportunity to greatly expand the scope of obligations. By using the example of a Jew helping a Samaritan -- who Jesus' Jewish audience saw as religious and cultural enemies -- Jesus imposed the burden of charity and mercy towards those who are not part of one's own family or tribe.

Christians took Jesus' teachings to heart and carried with them their broader concepts of charity. Many such examples and injunctions to act charitably were provided to early Christians in the New Testament beyond Jesus' teaching. Acts records that the Jerusalem Church had established a common fund for the support of widows (Acts 6:1-6). Though exact numbers are obviously not available, that it took the appointment of seven men to administrate indicates that it was substantial.

The pagan concept of charity at the time was really nothing more than politicking or an exchange of favors -- to the extent it existed at all. All told, classical philosophers regarded mercy and pity as pathological emotions--defects of character to be avoided by all rational men since mercy involves providing unearned help or relief.

Some Christians devoted themselves to missionary works, others to charitable deeds among the outcasts of Roman Society--lepers and other identified as 'unclean': vagabonds, prostitutes, the homeless and destitute. Churches everywhere took care of widows and orphans; tended the sick, the infirm, and the disabled; buried the dead, including indigents; cared for slaves; and furnished work for those who needed it.

Even more interestingly, the Pagan Emperor Julian -- who attempted to lead the Roman Empire back to paganism -- was frustrated by the superior morality shown by the Christians, especially when it came to charity. This was something he readily admitted: 'The impious Galileans relieve both their own poor and ours . . . It is shameful that ours should be so destitute of our assistance.' In an attempt to emulate the Christian Church, Julian attempted to impose a high sense of moral behavior on his priests and attempted to copy aspects of Christian charity. Furthermore, it seems that pagan recognition of Christian charitable efforts was a significant factor in its success in gaining converts.

Continued on Page 2, Rev. Bob Shepard

UPCOMING EVENT

• -- Mark this date on your calendar -- •



Make a Difference Day is Saturday October 22nd

We know you are planning to go out in our community, serve as neighbors and continue the tradition that makes Wenatchee one of the best places to live in the entire world!

Why not give yourself a break and continue making a difference by ordering your dinner from the annual New Life Adoptions of Wenatchee Make a Difference Day Barbecue? Order a meal of barbecued chicken or pork ribs for 2 for \$30*, pick up your meal on your way home and not only will you not have to worry about what to have for dinner, but you'll be helping New Life Adoptions Wenatchee find permanent, Christian homes for our orphans right here in Washington State. Order your meal by either e-mailing Mike Magnotti at maddog@nwi.net, or call him at 509-699-1866.

**A meal for 2? For the last two years many folks have told us they were able to have a total of four meals for the amount of food we gave them. Not that we guarantee this, of course, but we do guarantee you won't be disappointed in either the quality or quantity of your food!*

Continued from Page 1, Rev. Bob Shepard

Of course, this Christian concept of charity did not end with the Roman Empire. The Christian Church continued its veneration of the virtue of charity throughout the middle ages. Indeed, if anything the scale of charity had increased. Will Durant notes the following: 'But never had the world seen such a dispensation of alms as was now organized by the Church . . . She helped widows, orphans, the sick or infirm, prisoners, victims of natural catastrophes; and she frequently intervened to protect the lower orders from unusual exploitation or excessive taxation.' The administration of charity reached new heights in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Individuals, guilds, governments, and the Church shared in relieving the unfortunate. Almsgiving was universal.

The Christian ethic of charity continues strongly into modern times. In North America, 750 Protestant missions presently receive and dispense \$2 billion annually to those in need. Christian churches support over 500 religious rescue missions in urban areas. Organizations like the Salvation Army, Catholic Social Services, the Pew Charitable Trust, Red Cross, YMCA, YWCA, and the United Way all have explicit Christian origins.

But the modern link between Christianity and charity is not limited to the creation of large and successful charitable organizations. It produces more charitable individuals as well. Polls reveal the widespread factor of Christianity and religion in charitable giving. "Churches and synagogues contribute to America's social service more than any other non-governmental institution, including corporations. According to the Washington Times, 'religious institutions contribute \$19 billion annually to care for children and the elderly, education, healthy, food for the hungry, and housing for the homeless.' Additionally, the dollar value of church volunteers' time for such services is estimated to be more than \$ 6 billion.

In summary, where Christianity spread it carried with it the teaching that charity was a religious duty and should be broadly given. When Christianity rose to prominence in the Roman Empire, new charitable programs were instituted. Through the Middle Ages, Christianity promoted wide-spread charity to those in need. Even into our modern day, the great charitable organizations in the West were founded upon this Christian ethic. Modern day polls also show that Christianity plays a very significant role in providing charitable giving and services. Accordingly, Christian promotion of charity is one of its great contributions to humanity."

THE MOVIE COURAGEOUS COMING TO A THEATRE NEAR YOU

This is your chance to give a cop a ticket.....to the movie Courageous. Starting September 30th this movie, from the creators of Fireproof, will be coming to our Gateway Theatres. Not only is this a movie you will want to see, especially the men of your church, but how about buying an extra ticket or two for one of our local officers and their family members to encourage those who serve our community and far too often see the true depravity of man-kind. The movie will only be in our area for a limited time. We will be coordinating our efforts with the local police and sheriff's departments so if you need help donating tickets contact our office.

For more information about the movie, check out COURAGEOUSTHE MOVIE.COM

ALL-VALLEY WORSHIP CELEBRATES

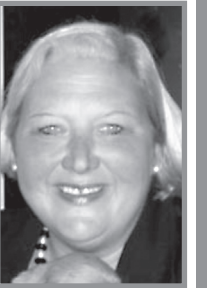
TEN YEARS OF MINISTRY IN OUR VALLEY

What a delightful time of worship and celebration we had at Eastmont Baptist church during the afternoon of August 28 as over 500 believers from the valley came together to thank God for His faithful provision in blessing the SWV ministry for these past ten years. It was special to hear of some of the early steps in the formation of the ministry, despite the counsel that it could not be done. Also we were challenged to consider the role God is calling us to play as we shape our valley for the future. A special treat was to have a pastors' chorus lead us in worship (requests for the CD are coming in and as good as it was no plans are in the works yet). The offering collected allowed us to cover all the remaining funeral costs for the Garcia family as well as purchasing a headstone for the gravesite of the two young boys. We praise God for the ways He is honoring our commitment to unity and His purposes in our valley.



Gretchen's Prayer Corner

The Little African Boy



Last month, my husband (a physician) and I were truly privileged to be a part of a Medical Mission team in four different slums, and then a prison in Africa. We saw well over 5,000 patients, and prayed for almost all of them. When asked about my favorite part, the answer is knee-jerk easy: **ALL OF THE AFRICAN PEOPLE!!!**

I now understand experientially the Bible passages that talk about the "crowd pressing in," and Jesus knowing that He had been touched by someone, but not exactly sure who. The throngs surrounding us at these Medical Camps to be seen by the medical staff felt, at times, overwhelming. At 4:00 PM, it seemed to us that we had not made even a "dent" in the crowd that had arrived, even before we had, early that morning. It was in the midst of this that the little boy, a very young child, perhaps two to three years of age, with the "orange," "kwashiorkor-like," tightly-cropped African hair "APPEARED," staring at my face, smiling, and gleefully grabbing my right hand. In a George MacDonald book, "Little Gibbie" is the name of a precious character, and it was the name that occurred to me as I looked at this little boy. And the name stuck in my mind. I frantically called out for his mother - most surely his mother would be worried; this was such a young child. But, hour after hour, this is how "Little Gibbie" sat - smiling at me, staring at my face, and holding my hand whenever it was free from ascertaining the next person's blood pressure, temperature and chief-complaint. This infatuation was so obvious, that the Nurse stationed next to me looked up periodically amidst the cacophony of slum noise and activity, and said over and over: "He is smitten with you." I told him so many times that Jesus and I love him, both in English and his mother-tongue, over the course of the many hours that he sat. But, I had done absolutely nothing to earn the love that was so obvious to all; the love that lit up this little boy's precious eyes. Someone tried to explain it away as my blond hair, or blue eyes, but whatever it was, this little guy simply stayed put. In my entire life, I have never experienced anything quite like this.

And then, just as mysteriously as the little fellow had appeared, he vanished. He was not an angel, or an apparition, or a figment of my imagination. He was a little African boy with orange hair, and dancing, beautiful eyes. He was made in the Image of God. I do believe that I may have returned to him a minute measure of the Love of God that He absolutely lavished on me. My prayer is that we meet in heaven, and that we spend eternity in Worship unto the Lamb, together. He is a remarkable child, and simply put, I need to "remark" about him and introduce him to you. I will never, ever forget him. He has touched, or more-like "seared" a place inside of me. So, this brings me to the punch-line:

I believe that we are all "seared" if you will on our Father's heart, because like "Little Gibbie" we are all made in Father's Image. God's Will is truly that every human would know Him as Father. No exception. He NEVER gives up on us. Not all humans look as "lovingly" back at Him, as He does on all of mankind, however. And, for that Man, Woman, Boy or Girl, that must be true hell indeed. But, because we don't know where anyone is at, and because Father really never gives up - we shouldn't give up either. The two verses that were quickened to me in the midst of this particular day of Medical Camps in the Dagoretti Slums were as follows:

Isaiah 49:16~ "Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands: thy walls are continually before Me."

Luke 19:10~ "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost."

True privilege, indeed.

Love, Gretchen.

Serve Wenatchee Valley Support Update

Thank you for your faithful support. We are hearing the disturbing news of benefit cuts coming from Olympia. That compounded with the already fragile economy is making it even more important for us to carry out our ministry. We are seeing a tremendous rise in requests for assistance causing us to spend our annual allotment of funds for food and non-food by July. We continue to trust in the God who can make the impossible possible and can multiply the faithful efforts of His people.

	August 2011	Year to Date
Income	\$19,075	\$107,402
Expenses	\$13,739	\$115,963