

Friday, December 29, 2006

QT THOTS

Isaiah 9 [selected and adapted]1 The light has dawned [upon] those who dwelt in a land of deep darknessWhen did this happen? at the Incarnation: when God became flesh in Jesus3 ...you have shattered the yoke that burdened them; the collar that lay heavy on their shoulders.When did this happen? At the Incarnation: when Jesus was born in Bethlehem4 For to us a child is born and to us a son is givenAnd who is this baby?5 his name will be called: Wonderful Counselor; Mighty God; Everlasting Father; Prince of PeaceThis new-born came to rule over all nationsand the government will be upon his shoulder. 7 ...the throne of David and ... his kingdom, And what will be His program?to establish and uphold [His Kingdom] with justice and righteousness.Can we be sure this shall happen? Yes! [and] 6 Of the increase of his government there will be no end, 8 ... the zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this.[By doing all this, God has] 2 increased [our] joy and given [us] great gladness Ours is to see the King at work and to serve Him

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 08:51

Tuesday, December 26, 2006

HOW DO YOU ADDRESS GOD?

The writer of an article in the current Books and Culture magazine ponders what Name to use in talking to God, when she prays. What Name do you most frequently use? Obviously there are several available: Father, Jesus, Lord, God are probably most popular. Her theory is that the name we use most reflects more about ourselves than it does about God. I think the name reveals the dominant way we image God in our minds and our belief about who He is. She says, she most often addresses God as "Lord", when she prays to Him. I usually open my prayer with "Almighty God, Heavenly Father" I guess I am most influenced by Jesus, who taught us to pray, saying, "Our Father". But, what do we mean by "Father"? For many, that is not the most positive name; but, it can have many negative, as well as positive associations. I see the Person to whom I pray, first of all, as God- the God who is all mighty, omnipotent. Thus, He is Creator and Judge of all; but, I am thankful, that, through Jesus my Lord and because of Jesus my Savior, I see and know this almighty God as my Father- not just any father or a faulty father or a human, earthly father who is almighty. Rather, I see the Almighty God (Creator and Judge) as my Father who is in Heaven. Yes, when I pray, my hearts and words go to "Almighty God, Heavenly Father". My next words are, "Thank you for your mercy and grace." And, gracefully, mercifully, He hears me. What Name do you most frequently use?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:42

Sunday, December 24, 2006

MERRY CHRISTMAS

May your celebration of the Incarnation be wonder-full!

Posted by Cal at 19:22

Friday, December 22, 2006

BEING A "MISSIONAL" CHURCH?

There has been a movement in this country for more than 15 years: Christians emerging from conservative, traditional, institutional churches into a new way of being and doing church, shaped by, and relevant to, the current cultural values, mores and interests of young adults. Some of these "emerging" churches (not all and not inevitably) are also "missional". I am here interacting with the latter group: emergent missional churches. They are a relatively small proportion of all churches, but growing in number and influence. It has become increasingly common to read and hear that these churches are the future; indeed, they supposedly are the only hope for churches to survive. The claim is that only missional churches are relevant to today's culture; all others will become marginalized (Interestingly, I have read others who insist the future belongs to churches that are Roman, Orthodox or Pentecostal and located primarily in the Global South. American Protestant churches will become marginalized, as they are now in Britain and Western Europe.) Advocates of the missional churches see this coming and are saying Protestant churches have a choice: become missional or marginal.

But being missional is far more than a pragmatic move for survival. There is a very definite Theology involved. When missional churches are described, we hear a lot about incarnation and cultural immersion and community and friendships and sharing and walking together on the journey of life, especially with the poor and marginalized. I certainly agree with all of that. But, behind all this, driving it, is a concept called the Mission of God ("Missio Dei") "Missional" does not mean "missions" or mission-minded in the traditional sense. It is not about a church sending out vocational Missionaries to distant places, reaching lost people with the Gospel of Grace. The Theology is that God is active in the world. He is on a mission of loving, caring and serving all people and thus redeeming their lives and the world and consequently, extending His Kingdom on earth. We do not do missions, we are "missional". To be missional is to be committed to carrying on this mission of God, or better, to be the instrument through which He fulfills His Mission, working with Him. This is what every single Christian, the entire Church (the People of God, not any particular institution), is called to do. Being missional is a mind-set, an identity: who we are and what we are all about: working with God on this mission to share His love in very practical ways, seeking to help others to also become missional ("passing it forward"). We do it, advocates say, by incarnating the Good News of God's presence and redeeming love in how we are, how we live and relate to others, everywhere we live and work, all the time. Words are futile or ineffective or counter productive apart from the incarnation of God's love and mercy and grace in our lives, in the world. The life of Jesus, as they see it, is the Model for Missional. Ideally, we are this way among the poor and marginalized- many of the advocates and practitioners of missional living are intentionally located in urban or inner city areas. There is a strong bent here toward progressive, "liberal", social and political activism. (The reality is most of us live among people of the same economic and social status as ourselves, where ever and whatever that might be. Most of us are also committed to "moving on up" in our economic and social status). I disagree with the concept of "Missio Dei". It sounds so good, so positive, so life-affirming, and so "Christian"- how could I not agree with it? The people I know who advocate being missional, and are doing so in their own way, are caring, good-hearted, idealistic people, seeking to follow Jesus (as they understand that). How could I not support them? I will try to explain. Yes, the Creator is directly involved in preserving His Creation and, yes, all people experience His common grace (even when they do not realize it). I believe in a strong Doctrine of Providence. I also believe that God has raised His Son, Jesus, to the Throne, in a literal Heaven, from which He now rules as Sovereign over all. I do not follow the Nazarene, I worship and serve the risen Lord. This is a major difference in focus and allegiance. It leads to a very different understanding of the Christian life. I believe that King Jesus is now reigning over the current events of the world. He is working out His purposes, directing all things to fulfill the Plan He has for Humanity and History to glorify His Name. One day all of the peoples and nations of the world will see and acknowledge Jesus to be God's Prophet, Priest and King. History will end with all bowing at His Feet, before His Throne. Making this happen is God's mission. I further believe that God sent Jesus to atone for the sins of the Elect. The purpose of the Incarnation was to enable God to become Man, one of us, in order to die as our Representative on the Cross. That was His Mission. Throughout all the centuries since, God has been actively calling the Elect to salvation, thus creating His Covenant People, for His Name's sake. That is His Mission. Yes, we should be living daily in terms of this mission, all of us, every Christian; but, I'm afraid none of this is what advocates of "missional" churches have in mind. Missional Christians say and believe they are orthodox, although they generally eschew Statements of Faith and seek to be very inclusive and ecumenical. Determining exactly what they believe is very difficult. I have honestly tried. Seeking harmony with all kinds of Christians and refusing to discriminate between "us and them" and trying to be non-judgmental, it is difficult to get them to articulate exactly what doctrines they adhere to. They seem

to claim something from every Denomination and Tradition and from other Religions, as well; being systematic and dogmatic goes against their grain. All of that makes me question how "orthodox", let alone evangelical, they actually are. I have read dozens of lengthy articles written by many advocates of missional churches and reviews by advocates of books written by advocates. I have read innumerable relevant Blogs and websites, both pro and con, in order to learn and develop some opinion about this Movement. I recognize that there are many variations of "missional" and various Pastors and writers are selective in what they adopt or reject from all of this. Even though I disagree with and am really disturbed by much of what I have read, nevertheless we can and must learn and benefit from its advocates. They raise important issues, justified criticisms of evangelical churches, and valuable insights about our American culture, which we dare not ignore. I share much of their assessment and dissatisfaction with contemporary churches. I really do! I think I have read enough to form a fair understanding of what the "missional" church is supposed to be about. The major advocates do not believe in the traditional, Pauline, Book-of-Romans, Reformed, Calvinist Gospel of Grace. They seem to be ignorant of, or misunderstand, or repudiate, or have radically changed the meaning of, all five of the key Calvinist Doctrines (TULIP), as well as the 5 Solas of the Reformation. Most glaring to me, in what I read, is the omission of the "Fall", the Doctrine of Total Depravity, the Bondage of the Will, the Antithesis and Curse and the need for Regeneration and that, by prevenient and irresistible Grace. Rather, there seems to be great optimism about human nature and great value put upon freedom (and ability) to make choices. They do not believe that the Church is to publish and propagate the (Reformed) Gospel around the world, bringing this Truth to Peoples who do not have Truth. To them, just saying that is presumptuous and arrogant on my part. They reject the concept of absolutes and propositional Truth (defined as correspondence, rather than coherence), let alone that the Bible contains it. (Thus, they reveal academic, post modern roots) In fact, everything I have just said above, that I believe, is nonsense or offensive to the main persons who speak for this Movement or else is simply ignored by them, not on their screen at all. To them, above all, God is Love (grounded in the nature of the Trinity) The Triune God's love is missional- it reaches out, seeking and calling everyone to Himself. If I understand them correctly, all people are on a journey to God or Jesus, whether they realize it or not. Our mission is to befriend everyone we can, walk with them on their Journey, and help them to recognize God, or Jesus, already in their lives (recognize His call and love) and help them to follow Him further, if they so chose. This is best done in Community. In fact, belonging to a Community of people, who are each helping the other on their respective journeys to Jesus, is the best way of finally becoming the person God intends for each of us to be, a person who will incarnate the love of God and intentionally pass it on, keeping the mission going. The Reformed approach is different. Sinners are called and regenerated by the Spirit of God, through hearing and believing the (Reformed) Gospel. Thus, at that moment in their life, they become justified in Christ and the adopted children of God. Consequently, they belong to the Faith Community, known as the Church. [They become one of us] Through its Sacraments, Preaching/Teaching, Discipline and Fellowship these justified Believers will then grow in grace to become the persons God intends for us to be. Such persons will be righteous. They shall seek to know and walk in the Spirit, according to the Law of God. This is the missing component in most churches. Christians often do not incarnate the grace of God in their daily lives (walk the talk) and often do not seek to live by the Principles of His Kingdom. The latter is a major problem I have with all kinds of evangelical churches- emergent, missional or traditional, charismatic and Reformed, too. Across the board, they all talk about the need to love others and to be involved in works of compassion and mercy. Increasingly, from every quarter, I read and hear about the need for evangelical Believers to engage their culture and the social issues of the world, especially Poverty. But what defines these actions? What standard is used to determine what God wants in these matters? The talk should be about Righteousness and Justice. These define what it means to Love. And the Law (Torah) defines what God means by Righteousness and Justice. The principles of the Kingdom are not selected from the teachings of Jesus in the synoptic Gospels (especially the Sermon on the Mount). They are found in the Law (Torah), interpreted and applied in light of the teachings of the Prophets, Jesus and the Apostles (through out the New Testament). The Great Commission has never been cancelled. Obeying it is the Scriptural way to be "missional". The Church, all Christians, should make it their responsibility to publish and share the Gospel about repentance and the forgiveness of sins in the Name of Jesus to all people groups (ethnicities and cultures) and make disciples of those who believe that Gospel, by baptizing them (into the Church) and teaching them (in the Church) to obey the Commandments. <http://jmm.aaa.net.au/articles/567.htm> http://www.friendofmissional.org/reading_list.html <http://www.friendofmissional.org/http://www.redeemer2.com/resources/papers/missional.pdf> <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/september/11.57.html> <http://amazon.com/o/ASIN/0802843506/brianmclarenn-20/ref=nosim> <http://www.theofframp.org/about.html> <http://www.challies.com/archives/000710.php> <http://www.coolchurches.com/news/2005june.htm> <http://www.nextreforrmation.com/wp-admin/reviews/secret1.htm> <http://www.theofframp.org/emerging.html> http://thebolgblog.typepad.com/thebolgblog/2006/06/lesslie_newbigi.html http://www.urbana.org/_articles.cfm?RecordId=993 http://www.theofframp.org/missional_comm.html

QT THOTS

Psalm 126:2 our mouth [is] filled with laughter and our tongue with songs of joy. This sounds like what our time together as family should be this Christmas, simply because we shall be all together. But, that is not what the Psalmist is talking about. He is remembering hard times, times of suffering and sadness. Ironically, we often muse on them during this time of festive family fun. 1 When the Lord restored the fortunes of Zion, then were we like those who dream. 3 Then [it was we said] 'The Lord has done great things...' Best remedy for the blues, is remembering the blessings of the Lord over times past, particularly when he healed and helped us through those hard times. My, how faithful He was, coming to our rescue. He heard our hearts break and our tears fall. 4 The Lord has indeed done great things for us, and therefore we rejoiced. This is why "our mouth [is] filled with laughter and our tongue with songs of joy". 6 Those who sow in tears shall reap with songs of joy. 7 Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed, will come back with shouts of joy, bearing their sheaves with them. Here is one of the great promises of Scripture. Christian ministry, Christian living, often is done with heart break and with difficulty; but, we push on all the same. We don't give up. We know that, if we are faithful anyway, eventually it will all be worthwhile. God will honor and bless our hard labor, finally. Our work will bear fruit in abundance. Weeping shall give way to joy.

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 08:40

Wednesday, December 20, 2006

LAMBASTING TURKEYS

The Government (FEMA) has been lambasted lately for wasting more than a billion dollars in relief aid given inappropriately to certain Katrina victims. Why are the people who took that money fraudulently not being lambasted for keeping it?

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 11:56

MOVIE SUB-TITLES AND THE BIBLE

We recently tried to watch a recommended movie from India. The dialogue was in Hindi. We have watched many foreign language movies with minimal problems (except when they put the sub-titles in yellow) This particular movie printed a surfeit of subtitles in black and ran them across the middle of the screen, making it very difficult to see the picture. We gave up about 20 minutes into it. Here was an interesting illustration of post modern doctrine: The story was literally behind the words. The words were in the way. They were just arbitrary anyway. To enjoy the movie, especially the cinematography and sounds, we would have to look beyond and behind the printed words. In fact, the words should be ignored. However, without the words we could not understand the story. The words were essential to understand the meaning of the story. They could not be ignored, if we were to grasp the intent of the movie makers. Do you see the connection between all this and the use of the Bible, as well as with preaching?

Posted by Cal in Theological Issues at 11:29

US AND THEM

2 Thessalonians 1 To the church of the Thessalonians We must always give thanks to God for you, brothers and sisters, ... we boast of you among the churches of God for your steadfastness and faith during all your persecutions and the afflictions that you are enduring. ... it is just of God to repay with affliction those who afflict you, and to give relief to the afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who do not know God and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might, when he comes to be glorified by his saints and to be marveled at on that day among all who have believed Here is another passage about the Second Advent. Note again, that it will be a terrible day for non-Christians. It is a very common criticism of Christians that they are judgmental and intolerant. It is said we are to be pluralistic and multicultural and avoid any talk that distinguishes between "us and them". The Apostle Paul must have missed that memo

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 11:17

POLITICS AND RELIGION

Our Governor-elect, Deval Patrick, has been holding town meetings all across the State. He has enlisted many business and community leaders to give him input on what the State, cities and towns, schools and businesses need. He has had thousands of suggestions and requests from every quarter. His campaign slogan was "Together we can". He says he is all about participatory democracy and many people are embracing him with enthusiasm (Note: Barack Obama is his clone in many ways). Time will tell how all this plays out. My question is: by what standard will he, as Governor, decide between all these ideas, suggestions and requests? What criteria will he use to determine the wheat from the chaff? What principles will guide his decisions, choices and actual actions? There must be standards, criteria, values and principles. He can not do what everyone wants willy nilly. There must be order and priorities assigned. There will be political pressures and fiscal restraints, but what moral values will govern the Governor? For all the profession of bi-partisanship, Mr Patrick is a social and economic liberal Democrat. That will determine much of what he will do when in Office. Many Christians believe that the values of liberal Democrats are Biblical, e.g.- Mr Patrick is expected to increase State spending on Education, Social and Human services. Many other Christians believe that Mr Patrick will promote non-Biblical values, e.g.- gambling, embryonic stem cell research, abortion, "gay marriage" and

much of the involuntary redistribution of wealth to support programs of a socialized welfare State. People may always argue over Religion and Politics, but they are not only essential, they are inseparable. And the latter must be grounded in the former. More specifically, the latter must be grounded in Biblical values and principles. Let the arguments continue- we are in serious trouble if they do not.

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 10:16

LOVE WITHOUT BOUNDARIES?

The young woman, in line ahead of us, had on a tee shirt with the words of some Proclamation printed on the back. These were announcing an event on a local college campus, a Celebration of Love. Included was a line that said, "We celebrate love without boundaries". Sounds enlightened, right? Well, depends how she defines "love". If she is including sexual activity in the word "love", does her slogan include love between humans and animals? Adults and young children? Adults who are siblings? Multiple adults simultaneously? Married adults with other adults married and unmarried? Adults of the same gender? She probably had the latter in mind. If the woman thought logically about it, she would have to agree (I hope) that there must be boundaries to love, if sex is involved. If her argument for no boundaries is based on freedom of choice and human rights, then all of these multiple couplings would be logically permissible. There must be boundaries, or society would degenerate (both meanings of that word). Ahh, but then- where do the boundaries come from? Who or what sets them? Not government or the courts of today. God- He sets the boundaries. And how do we know for sure what God decrees in this matter? Revelation from Him. Propositional revelation. Objective, absolute, propositional revelation. Where is that to be found? The 66 canonical Books of the Christian Bible.

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 09:32

Monday, December 18, 2006

QT Thots

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11 adapted
The Scripture readings in Advent are primarily about the Second Coming (Advent) of Christ. We sing of that Coming as a joyous occasion. For many it will be the most terrifying Day in History. They will not be ready... sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! It will be a day of reckoning, a Day of Wrath. Scoffers and Skeptics, Agnostics and Atheists are doomed. Non-Christians will perish for Eternity. concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you ... know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. What about Christians? We do not need to fear that Day. God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us. This means whether we are awake [alive] or asleep [have died] we may live with him when He comes. Meanwhile, let us be sober [serious minded], and put on armor for our personal spiritual warfare-the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. and stay active in the church ... encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing. As the Day approaches, we need each other more than ever!

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 14:56

Friday, December 15, 2006

QT THOTS

Psalm 108 My heart is firmly fixed, O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and make melody. Wake up, my spirit; awake, lute and harp; I myself will waken the dawn. I will confess you among the peoples, O Lord; I will sing praises to you among the nations. Jim and Eleanor Pelley's life together (52 years) has been committed to spreading the Word of God around the world via radio. Upon returning from years doing this overseas, they settled in Hamden, CT and continued that ministry with the Christian radio station WIHS in Middletown. Jim Pelley was the first voice heard on WIHS when the Station initially began radio transmissions on October 11, 1969. He served the Station as Lead Announcer and Program Director for the next 22 years, through the end of 1991 and, after retirement, he and his wife continued on as volunteers until recently. Jim went to be with the Lord last Sunday. Early in our marriage, my wife and I and our first child lived in what was the North American Headquarters for another Christian Radio Station, HCJB. Clarence Jones and his wife were radio missionary pioneers. They went to Quito, Ecuador and set up a short wave station there, in a sheep shed, high in the Andes. Then they traveled down into the jungles and gave out radios fixed to receive only one station- HCJB. It began broadcasting on Christmas Day 1931. HCJB stands for "Heralding Christ Jesus' Blessings". The Pelleys and WIHS and the Jones and HCJB were all dedicated to doing just that. And they did it to the Glory of God. Millions have heard the Word and untold numbers have come to Christ and grown in grace, through these people and their ministries. We thank the Lord for them and renew our own commitment today to personally herald Christ Jesus blessings, in every way we can.

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 10:05

Wednesday, December 13, 2006

THINKING OF USING POWER POINT?

"Reading Tufte on these matters [such as the use of Power Point] can be a life-changing experience for people, like me, who deal in information every day—who are, as the current argot has it, "information workers." After spending some time in Tufte's company you become less inclined simply to accept the usual ways in which quantitative information, or non-quantitative information for that matter, is displayed. You start to ask yourself whether there are more creative ways than you had previously perceived to outline an idea for a book, or summarize historical developments for a college class you teach, or make handouts even for Sunday School or church vestry reports. You learn to try out various ways to organize information—historically, thematically, geographically—and in the process you force yourself to reconsider the way you habitually organize data in your own head." <http://www.christianitytoday.com/books/features/bookwk/061211.html>

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 15:47

BEYOND A REASONABLE DOUBT

The last two full days, I served on a jury in a criminal trial here in town. Between us, my wife and I have been called to Jury Duty 6 times. It is a privilege to serve and always educational (although the process itself can be very boring). It is also, obviously, very important to the people involved. This case could have gone either way; that meant that the decision, "guilty", was impossible because it would not have been made "without reasonable doubt". A Jury serves as "judge of the facts". It was refreshing to hear, over and over, how important facts are, as well as reason and common sense. No question, there were some who wanted to go with "gut feelings", but that is where the requirement for a unanimous vote by all 12 peers of the defendant was essential (although there can be emotional peer pressure on any hold-outs to go along with the majority. just because it is the majority and everyone wants to go home) We had a good Foreman to keep the deliberations honest and fair and focused on the the evidence and the facts, "just the facts" - in other words, on determining the Truth of the case. I personally enjoyed listening to the older, very experienced Defense lawyer use great skill in his very analytical, logical approach in presenting evidence and questioning witnesses. He did it very well. The much younger and inexperienced ADA did not do as well in this process and "lost the case". What he was saying may have been valid, but he did not present it well enough, compared to his opponent (hence, the doubt factor). Comparisons here to Christian Apologetics and Preaching should be obvious.

Posted by Cal in Personal Journal at 12:30

WOULD YOU BE FOUND GUILTY?

If you were on trial, charged with being a Christian, would there be enough evidence for the Jury to find you guilty without a reasonable doubt?

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 12:24

Sunday, December 10, 2006

QT THOTS

Luke 1.1-24 I believe the Bible is the Word of God, meaning its contents, from beginning to end, is revelation, given by God to humans, who write it down. We read what they write as Scripture, the revealed Word written- inspired, verbal, prepositional Revelation. This opening paragraph (one long sentence) of the Revelation we know as "The Gospel according to Luke" tells us, however, that this "Book" comes from human research into historical facts. The words have not been dictated by God to a writer who is in some trance. The writer investigated and interviewed eye-witnesses and wrote down the facts he uncovered in an orderly manner. He did this that the intended original reader, Theophilus, might know the truth about the account of Jesus he had heard. God used the mind, research and editing ability, even the vocabulary, of a man to record Revelation from above. Since many have undertaken to set down an orderly account of the events that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed on to us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word, I too decided, after investigating everything carefully from the very first, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the truth concerning the things about which you have been instructed. Our Faith is historical, based on facts. Those "facts" are true because they correspond to reality- what really happened. We accept the original, common sense meaning of the words and sentences used to record and communicate the revelation of God. Our definition of Truth is not coherence with our personal or shared group experience. The Gospel is objective and public Truth, not subjective and private. We accept and give priority to the original intent and meaning of the writer (Luke, in this case) over our personal interpretation of it or how our local "faith-community" feels about it, these many centuries later. This simple text encourages me today to have confidence in the Scripture and gives me courage to proclaim it in the market of ideas around me. It emboldens me in this age of skepticism.

In the days of King Herod of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah .. Once when he was serving ... at the time of the incense-offering ... there appeared to him an angel of the Lord, standing at the right side of the altar of incense. When Zechariah saw him, he was terrified; and fear overwhelmed him. But the angel said to him, 'Do not be afraid, Zechariah, for your prayer has been heard. Your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will name him John. You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth, for he will be great in the sight of the Lord. ... Zechariah said to the angel, 'How will I know that this is so? For I am an old man, and my wife is getting on in years.' The angel replied, 'I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to bring you this good news. But now, because you did not believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their time, you will become mute, unable to speak ... Within this historically true story, there is another kind of revelation mentioned: a private vision. An angel appeared and spoke to a man, Zechariah. He gave him an oral, unwritten prophecy that would become historically true and recorded in a book - the conception, birth and ministry of John (the Baptist). Zechariah did not believe the words the angel spoke to him and he paid the consequences. We want to believe what we read in the Bible. The Bible tells us to be sure to also believe the words the God may speak to us orally and personally that know one else knows about.

This gets us into a gray area. We have to grant that such messages may come to us ("The Lord said to me..") Normally, we call this guidance of the Spirit and it has to do with our private lives, often direction about something we must do. The danger is that we could misunderstand what we think we are hearing. What we think the Spirit has said may not really be from the Spirit. In this case, realistic Zechariah did not want to believe what he thought he heard, because there were facts that seemed to make it impossible. That is an important factor to check- common sense. The Angel persisted. He would show Zechariah that what he predicted would come to pass. Then, based on that evidence, that fulfilled prophecy, he would believe what he had heard. That, too, is a wise thing to do when we think the Lord is leading us. Wait and look for confirmation that we can test. The fact that the elderly couple conceived convinced Zechariah. Over the next 9 months, he mediated over and over on what he heard the Angel had say to him and he came to believe it was all true. So must we. This story is recorded in The Gospel according to Luke. It is historical fact, along with the rest of the Nativity Story.

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 22:40

Saturday, December 9, 2006

7x5=75 AGAIN

In a post below, I repeated the story of the school girl who said $7 \times 5 = 75$ because she felt it was, no matter what her teacher my say. Not humorous, because this expresse the attitude of multitudes about "Truth". Evidence of that came in a news item this morning. Merriam-Webster, the Dictionary company located here in Springfield, runs an annual online survey, asking "What word best sums up the year?" They received tens of thousands of responses. The overwhelming winner, by a five-to-one margin, was "truthiness", a word coined by TV satirist Stephen Colbert last year. It means "truth that comes from the gut, not books". Exactly what the student was illustrating. The President of M-W is quoted as saying, "What constitutes truth is a question on a lot of people's minds and truth is up for grabs." Yes and that is a major problem Christians must address (although I fear many of us are acquiescing to the popular view).

Posted by Cal in Current Events at 10:06

INSPIRING MESSAGE

Have you watched the Piper video yet? <http://www.god-centered.com/blog/2006/10/supremacy-of-christ.html> Dr Piper declares boldly the Supremecy of Christ over every thing!!

Posted by Cal in Theological Issues at 10:00

Thursday, December 7, 2006

THE COMFORTING CONVICTION OF A CONFIRMED CALVINIST

Sovereign Ruler of the skies, Ever gracious, ever wise; All my times are in thy hand, All events at Thy command. His decree who form'd the earth Fix'd my first and second birth; Parents, native place, and time, All appointed were by him. He who formed me in the womb, He will guide me to the tomb. All my times shall ever be Ordered by His wise decree. Times of sickness; times of health; Times of penury and wealth; Times of trial and of grief; Times of triumph and relief; Times of the tempter's power to prove; Times to taste the Savior's love All must come, and last, and end, As shall please my heavenly Friend. Plagues and deaths around me fly, Till He bids, I shall not die; Not a single shaft can hit, Till the love of God sees fit. Written by John Ryland Jr., a Calvinist (1753-1825) All of this is true and I believe it, and yet, I also believe we are accountable and responsible for decisions we make every day. This paradox is Scriptural. The young father, who recently died in the snow, as he went for help in the wilderness to save his family left in their car, that had become stuck in mire, is responsible for two decisions he made: to turn on to that road and to leave the car when they became stranded and no help seemed forthcoming. Prior to that, he and his wife made the decision to go on this particular trip. So we seek to make the most wise and thoughtful decisions possible; and, trust in the Truth expressed in this poem. The latter is our comfort and strength to go on through our trials and anguish. It also gives us confidence to get up in the morning and tackle the day with hope.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 10:44

TODAY'S HYMN FROM OREMUS

Wondrous birth! O wondrous child of the Virgin undefiled! Though by all the world disowned, still to be in heaven enthroned. From the Father forth he came and returneth to the same, captive leading death and hell high the song of triumph swell! Thou, the Father's only Son, hast over sin the victory won. boundless shall thy kingdom be; when shall we its glories see? Brightly doth thy manger shine, glorious is its light divine. Let not sin overcloud this light; ever be our faith thus bright. The remarkable thing about this Hymn to me is its provenance: Words [Latin]: Ambrose of Milan, circa 397; paraphrased [German] by Martin Luther, 1523; trans. [English] William Morton Reynolds, 1851. And now posted on the Internet, in English, 2006 The Light that came into the world, in one small place, has grown ever brighter through two millennia and has spread around the world and now shines on us today!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:02

Wednesday, December 6, 2006

The Church Calendar today commemorates St Nicholas

Far-shining names from age to age
Enrich the Church's heritage,
The loyal liegemen of the Lord,
Who found in thee their great reward.
One name from that immortal throng
Inspires to-day our festal song:
In loving memory we hold
The bishop and the saint of old,
Who, far away in eastern land,
With gentle heart and open hand
Loved all things living, shared his store
With homeless men who sought his door.
Friend of the poor, no less was he
The guardian saint of those at sea;
O'er wave-swept rock and sheltered bay
God's churches bear his name to-day.
And his the skill, the tender art
That wins the trustful, child-like heart:
His dearest title to the end
Saint Nicolas, the children's friend.
Words: William H Savile (1859-1925)

from Oremus "Nicholas was a native of the western part of what is now Asiatic Turkey. He became Bishop of Myra in the fourth century, and there are many stories of his love for God and for his neighbor. The best-known story involves a man with three unmarried daughters, and not enough money to provide them with suitable dowries. This meant that they could not marry, and were likely to end up as prostitutes. Nicholas walked by the man's house on three successive nights, and each time threw a bag of gold in through a window (or, when the story came to be told in colder climates, down the chimney). Thus, the daughters were saved from a life of shame, and all got married and lived happily ever after. Because of this and similar stories, Nicholas became a symbol of anonymous gift-giving." [James Kiefer, abridged]

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 08:07

Tuesday, December 5, 2006

THE ANGELS GOT IT RIGHT

"A multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, 'Glory to God in the highest'".-Luke 2:14
Desiring God is the title of a book by John Piper [the Preacher in the video posted below] He nails it perfectly when he says "God is uppermost in his own affections: The chief end of God is to glorify God and enjoy himself forever." "God's ultimate goal in all He does...is God's own glory. In everything He does, His purpose is to preserve and display that glory. ...He puts a greater value on it than on anything else. He delights in His glory above all things." "His infinite and awesome greatness and worth is His glory." pp. 1, 32,33
Hear what the Apostle Paul says in his letter to the Ephesian Church-1:5 he predestined us for adoption through Jesus Christ,... 6 to the praise of his glorious grace 11 In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined ...12 so that we ... might be to the praise of his glory. 13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel ..., and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, ...to the praise of his glory. Everything is about the glory of God. That is what the Gospel is about. That is what evangelism is about. That is what the Christian life is about. That is what worship is about. That is what ministry is about. "The chief end of man is to glorify God BY enjoying Him forever" (p.226) Pastor Piper gives a much needed survey of the entire Bible, entitled "The Goal of God in Redemptive History" (Appendix I) He looks at texts that mention the glory of God or the Name of God, which are interchangeable. All that God does, from creating the Universe and Humankind, to choosing Israel to be His Covenant People, to setting them free from slavery in Egypt, to saving specific sinners - it has all been for His Name's sake, for His glory. And we thought it was for our sake. That is the Gospel. Promoting the Glory of God is our Mission!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 16:03

HAND-TO-HAND COMBAT

Over and again, we hear that the true spirit or meaning of Christmas is charity, giving and loving and, yes, peace on earth. All admirable, desirable qualities. But notice, they do not include, or even reference, Jesus. The good has marginalized, even eradicated, the Best. Every year, I proclaim that Christmas celebrates the Incarnation of God in the person of Jesus Christ. Notice, this is not the same as saying it celebrates the Birthday of Jesus. Everybody has a birthday. There has been only one Incarnation of God. And the purpose of the Incarnation, was to enable God Himself to suffer and die, an atonement for sin. More than that, the Incarnation was part of God's conflict with Satan and the powers of darkness. The Incarnate God went about healing and forgiving and exorcizing demons- all incidences of encounters with the Evil One. [This was the topic of my Master's Thesis some 40 years ago!] God Incarnate had invaded Satan's territory in the land of Israel and was defeating him in hand to hand combat here and there; but, finally, the incarnate God entered into the Darkness of Death, into the Pit itself, there to conquer the Prince of this World with His own Death. Thus securing the deliverance of the Elect from the Dark Kingdom, He arose victorious and ascended His Throne in Heaven, from whence He now rules all. The Incarnation is about all of that. And the true spirit of Christmas is joy and celebration of the Incarnation. Pass it on.

Posted by Cal in Theological Issues at 15:37

WHY LOVING GOD MUST COME FIRST

We have it backward. To listen to many today, Jesus said the great Commandment is to love our Neighbor and the second Commandment is to love God. Worse than that, increasingly we hear, never mind God, (We can't agree about Him, We get bogged down in Theology and Religion. These are obstacles.) The only thing that really matters is to love our neighbor. And "neighbor", these days, is understood to be the poor and homeless. What really matters is loving the marginalized, meaning providing for their perceived needs. This is what Jesus was all about. This is what the Gospel is all about. This is what being a true Christian is all about. No, no, no! Let's get the correct order. Jesus said the first commandment is to love God and to do that with all our heart, soul and mind. The second commandment is to love our neighbors as though they were ourselves. God first. Neighbors second. And "neighbor" here is not defined as the poor and homeless, but anyone who, literally in Old English, nearby dwells (or, simply, the people around us) They might be poor or rich. Much is made today about the need for Christians to become true disciples of Jesus. That is often intended to mean someone who serves the poor. A "disciple" is, by Jesus' definition, a Believer who learns to obey all his

commandments. (Matt 28:19-20) A Disciple of Christ is a Believer in Christ who obeys the first Commandment to love God with all heart, soul and mind. And, secondarily, a Believer who goes on to love other human beings. Both are essential and the order is essential.

We can only know who we are as human beings vis-à-vis (face to face, in relation to) God. We Image Him. That is what makes us human. If we do not know Him, we can not know ourselves, our Humanity. We will always wonder, "Who am I?" "What am I?" and be unable to answer truth-fully. We can only know the meaning and purpose of our lives vis-à-vis God. We can only know Truth vis-à-vis God. We can only know what ethics and morality are supposed to be vis-à-vis God. We can only know how to live vis-à-vis God. We can only have the ability to live vis-à-vis God. This is why the Commandment to love God is, and must remain, first. We can not truly love others (including ourselves) if it is not first. I become greatly saddened when I see well-meaning, professed Believers in Christ gradually become completely secularized in the name of following Jesus and serving the poor. We must first, and always, be God-centered and saturated people, loving Him with our whole mind and heart. And that includes loving Truth and Doctrine that comes from Him. It is the knowledge we get from our relationship with God that informs us as how we can best love our neighbors. And that love for neighbors will always include introducing them, in turn, to the love of God. Failing that, we fail to truly love them, even if we give them shelter and clothes.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 14:23

A THRILLING SERMON BY JOHN PIPER (VIDEO CLIP)

The following 10 minute excerpt of a sermon by John Piper goes well with the last post (below) and it illustrates the power of good traditional preaching- enjoy <http://www.god-centered.com/blog/2006/10/supremacy-of-christ.html> The inspiration and power of this message derives from its strong Doctrine, as well as from its masterful delivery.

Posted by Cal in Theological Issues at 09:03

THE PREGNANT WOMAN AND THE RED DRAGON

Chapter 12 of the Book of Revelation, is not a Vision of the Future, the End Times. It is a Vision of what happened in the Past and is happening now in the Present. We must grasp a very basic, important truth: what we read about in the daily news and in history books is not what it seems. We are witnessing in real time the cosmic conflict between Christ and Satan being acted out in the time-space world in which we live. Everything in Chapter 12 is symbolic of that Conflict. 1 And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars. 2 She was pregnant and was crying out in birth pains and the agony of giving birth. Jesus was a Jew. His Heritage was the Faith, Tradition and History of Israel. In a very real sense, Israel was his mother. She is the pregnant woman in this passage. 5 She gave birth to a male child, one who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron. Jesus was born to fulfill the Old Testament prophecies of the coming Messiah, Savior of Israel, who would govern all Nations.

3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great red dragon... 4 ... And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she bore her child he might devour it. From the beginning of time, Satan hated Jesus. His purpose was to destroy him, preventing him from becoming Ruler of the world. He sought repeatedly to interrupt his royal lineage and prevent his birth, throughout Old Testament history. Failing that, Satan sought to have the infant Ruler to be killed. Failing that, too, Satan sought to derail and ruin Jesus' earthly ministry and again worked to have him murdered. For his part, the miracles and exorcisms of Jesus were his attacks against Satan. These two characters were locked in fatal combat. The entire Gospel narrative must be seen in this wider context. Satan engineered the trial that led to Jesus' murder, but God had something else in mind. Jesus was not destroyed by the crucifixion. 5..., but [instead, the woman's] child was caught up to God and to his throne. By his death and resurrection, Jesus defeated Satan; but, his enemy was not finished with him. Being defeated enraged Satan and he turns his hatred of Jesus against his followers, the Church. This explains much of the trouble and suffering that the Church has experienced throughout the last 2000 years. Paul speaks of this when he writes that our struggle is not really with people. It is with evil spiritual powers that manipulate those people. (Eph 6:12) The Cosmic Conflict continues on earth- 7 Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, 8 but he was defeated and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. 9 And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world--he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him. Jesus, the woman's baby and now the Risen Christ, has become

Ruler of the Nations. As He said, after His resurrection, all authority in Heaven and earth had been given by the Father to Him. We do not simply try to be like Jesus as he was when he walked beside the Sea of Galilee. We now have to do with the exalted Sovereign Lord. We worship and serve the King of all kings. 10 I heard a loud voice in heaven, saying, "Now the salvation and the power and the kingdom of our God and the authority of his Christ have come. But the authority of the Sovereign is contested and Satan is determined to prevent His rule over the nations and to cause havoc on earth among men." 12 "... woe to you, O earth and sea, for the devil has come down to you in great wrath, because he knows that his time is short!" 13 "...when the dragon saw that he had been thrown down to the earth..." 17 [he] became furious ... and went off to make war ... on those who ... hold to the testimony of Jesus. Thus, this advice from the Apostle Peter to the persecuted Church of his day- 5:8 Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. 9 Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. 10 And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you. 11 To him be the dominion forever and ever. Amen. <http://www.calvinfox.com/web/revelation.html>

Posted by Cal in Bible Topics at 07:39

CHRISTIAN VIEW OF HISTORY

Many ancient peoples, some non-Christian Religions and some philosophers believe History runs in cycles. They talk of the rise and fall of civilizations. Both Marxists and Capitalists are convinced that economic forces drive the world. Some historians believe that history is determined by powerful men, the Napoleons, Ghandis and Roosevelts. Other philosophers believe that climate, geography or environment determine what happens to people and nations. These are all determinative factors, but not the most fundamental or ultimate causes. John was greatly troubled that no one knows where History is really going. He learns that Jesus has the answer. By opening the Scroll, Jesus demonstrates that He can explain History. That is a huge claim. God makes the History. His Son, the Risen Jesus reveals the Father's Plan and administers it. (5:4-6) He can do this because He has triumphed over sin and death. He alone! The Risen Christ is Lord of History. He explains it all. Apart from Him there is no explanation. Worse than that, apart from Christ, there are only bad and false explanations. Everything that happens in History must be seen in relation to Christ. Only in this relationship can we measure and understand and correctly interpret what is. This truth applies to all Fields and Subjects and has serious ramifications for Education and Scholarship across the board. Far from aimless, far from random, far from meaningless, far from cyclic, History is linear. It has a purpose, a goal- God's purpose and goal. Life must be lived always with that End in view. Life today must be controlled by the expectation of the End Times (Eschatology). The Secularist does not know it, the Atheist denies it; but, the Future determines the Present. If we do not live, if Nations and earthly governments do not function with the Future in mind, they are doomed. All will end, finally, at the Throne. That is the Omega Point of History. All will lay their "crowns and scepters at the feet of the Lord of History. See <http://www.calvinfox.com/web/revelation.html>

Posted by Cal in Theological Issues at 07:36

Monday, December 4, 2006

The Nativity

For reviews and articles about The Nativity, try this website-<http://www.christianitytoday.com/movies/>

Posted by Cal in Current Events at 20:06

LOVE AND THE MINIMUM WAGE

We must spell out what we mean by "love". To say we are to love our neighbor sounds nice. All may say, Amen; but what do we mean by the word? AIDS spreads to many women, when their infected husbands or "boyfriends" say to them, "If you love me..." Many girls lose their virginity or become pregnant for the same reason. "Hey, if you love me, ... " Many people want to help eliminate poverty. They are convinced that raising the Minimum Wage will help do that, so they argue, "If we love the poor, we will be in favor of raising it. It is the loving thing to do." If we are against legislation raising the minimum wage, these folks will say, we do not love the poor. On the other hand, if we are convinced that raising the minimum wage will cost them their jobs, because their employers can not afford to pay the raise, we are actually hurting them. That is not love. From this perspective, being against raising the minimum wage is the loving thing to do. Both the pros and the antis believe in loving their neighbor. They define what that means differently. The simple exhortation to "Love" is not enough. We must spell out what it means to love. Then let people say "Amen" to that.

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 20:04

7x5=75

The latest newsletter from Gordon Seminary has an article insisting that if we want to communicate the Bible to today's younger generations we must use the alleged preferred language and method of the Bible, i.e.- visual imagery and stories. A recent article in Touchstone Magazine states "4 billion people in our world can't, don't or won't learn through literary means. The primary way...is through oral communication...not through books." We are also told by many that efforts to teach must avoid being authoritative, i.e.- one way, from an Expert to an audience; rather, the most effective learning is cooperative and by group discovery directed by Facilitators. The preferred preaching method uses narratives and is dialogical, inviting participation by the congregation.

I think the real issue here is not method, but content; not books, but the content of the books (and the sermons). Books that contain science fiction, fantasy and romance or stories rich in color and imagery are very popular. Words and books per se are not out, here in America. Books (or sermons) that seek to transmit received truths using linear, sequential reasoning, requiring careful attention to verbal evidence and argument, leading to definite conclusions, are what is in disfavor. And my suspicion is, this is the case, because "truths", objective knowledge and reason are in disfavor. A child wrote on a chalkboard during a math class, $7 \times 5 = 75$. She said, "This may be wrong, but it is how I feel today." This story is from a book review in the current Christianity Today, written by Stephen Carter, professor of law at Yale. He is reviewing *The Decline of the Secular University*, by C.J. Sommerville. The story, he says, summarizes the book. Academia rejected Religion, then Philosophy, then Reason. "Faith is dead, reason is dying, but 'how I feel' is going strong", in Academia. This might go a long way to explaining why the people in the pew, who are products of that Academia, prefer videos and stories.

Posted by Cal in Church at 20:00

QT Thots

Isaiah 35:3-8 adapted
The Season of Advent is all about preparing for the Second Coming Of Christ, even as Christmas celebrates His First Coming. For the Faithful, the Second Coming is something to look forward to with joyful expectations. 4 Say to the anxious, 'Be strong, fear not, your God is coming with judgment, coming with judgment to save you.' 5 Then [when He comes again] shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped; 6 Then shall the lame leap like a hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing for joy
The "blind", "deaf", "dumb" and "lame" are the Covenant People who had grown away from the Lord; doubting Him, they had become spiritually disabled: they had

lost faith and hope that the Lord would come to them in their trial. BUT, the Lord had not forgotten His People or His promises to them. He would come and rescue them. Then-8 The ransomed of the Lord shall return [to the Lord] with singing, with everlasting joy upon their heads. 9 Joy and gladness shall be theirs, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away. These words are great encouragement to those of us today who are going around depressed and crest fallen. 3 Strengthen the weary hands, and make firm the feeble knees. The exhortation from the Lord to us today: "Get a grip. Stand up straight and walk tall!" The Lord is coming.

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 08:49

Saturday, December 2, 2006

DIFFERENCE BETWEEN WHAT A CHRISTIAN IS AND DOES

Help at a food kitchen, volunteer as a tutor or to visit shut-ins, be a good student, stay out of trouble, be sexually pure, don't drink alcohol or do drugs, use clean language, be honest and go to Church, pray and read the Bible. Is this what a Christian is? No, it is not! A person may do all of these things and not be a Christian at all. These are all things that Christians do. They are not what a Christian is. I did all these things, but one day I realized that I did not know Jesus. When I was 17, I came to understand I was doing things I thought Jesus wanted me to do, but on my own, without Jesus. I believed he died for me on the cross, but somehow I had missed the part where I confess my sinfulness (my wanting to live my life on my terms) to him, ask his forgiveness and invite him to take over control of my life because of who he is. Not only did he pay the penalty for my sins and sinfulness, he rose from the dead and lives now to be my King and everyone else's, too. So one night, I confessed my sin and my faith and asked him into my heart and life, to be my Lord and Savior. That is the way I became a Christian. A Christian is someone in whom Christ lives as Lord, by invitation. All the other stuff, the behaviors, follow and come out of this relationship. They confirm it, but are absolutely not a substitute for it. If you have not invited Jesus to live in your heart, there is no better time to do that than now!

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 19:21

ADVENT, CHRIST MASS and the HOLIDAYS

May this new Advent Season find new hope, peace and joy coming to you. Most of the Scripture we will hear read in Church over the next 4 Sundays of Advent will be prophecies about the Second Advent or coming of Christ. The anticipation of that Event is what makes this a Season for reflection, repentance and renewed commitment to be living for Jesus, that He will find us ready when He arrives this second time Christ Mass (Christmas) at the end of Advent, is a Celebration of the Incarnation: God coming to live among us as a human being, the Birth of Jesus who is Immanuel. This Christmas Celebration actually lasts for an additional Twelve Days. Concurrently, this is also the time for the American Holidays of great generosity and great greed, of giving and getting, of flashing lights and feasting. Some stores, like Walmart, are going back to allowing their staff to wish customers, "Merry Christmas", instead of "Happy Holidays". Actually, there are both and we know the difference, keep them separate and can enjoy the best of each.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 15:39

FOR LEXOPHILES

The following examples of delightful word-play were sent to me by my granddaughter, Abbie-

1. A bicycle can't stand alone; it is two tired.
2. A will is a dead giveaway.
3. Time flies like an arrow; fruit flies like a banana.
4. A backward poet writes inverse.
5. In a democracy it's your vote that counts; in feudalism, it's your Count that votes.
6. A chicken crossing the road: poultry in motion.
7. If you don't pay your exorcist you can get repossessed.
8. With her marriage she got a new name and a dress.
9. Show me a piano falling down a mine shaft and I'll show you A-flat miner.
10. When a clock is hungry it goes back four seconds.
11. The guy who fell onto an upholstery machine was fully recovered.
12. A grenade fell onto a kitchen floor in France, resulting in Linoleum Blownapart.
13. You are stuck with your debt if you can't budge it.
14. Local Area Network in Australia: The LAN down under.
15. He would often have to break into song because he couldn't find the key.
16. A calendar's days are numbered.
17. A lot of money is tainted: 'Taint yours, and 'taint mine.
18. A boiled egg is hard to beat.
19. He had a photographic memory which was never developed.
20. A plateau is a high form of flattery.
21. A short fortuneteller who escaped from prison: a small medium at large.
22. Those who get too big for their britches will be exposed in the end.
23. When you've seen one shopping center you've seen a mall.
24. If you jump off a Paris bridge, you are in Seine.
25. When she saw her first strands of gray hair, she thought she'd dye !!!
26. Bakers trade bread recipes on a knead to know basis.
27. Santa's helpers are subordinate clauses.
28. Acupuncture: a jab well done.
29. Two maggots were fighting in dead Ernest.

Posted by Cal at 15:26

Friday, December 1, 2006

Charles de Foucauld, Hermit in the Sahara, 1916

A biography that greatly influenced me as a younger man, was the life of Charles de Foucauld. He is commemorated in the Church Calendar today. (A few weeks ago it was the story of another one of my heroes, Father Damien, Pastor of the leper colony on Molokai. Rose Hawthorne, daughter of the famous author, who ran a hospice for the poor dying from cancer in NYC, was another hero to me). Charles de Foucauld was born into a wealthy French family and was well into a career in the Military when he was converted to Christ. He believed he was called to imitate Christ by living in poverty and ministering to the most poor people he could find. He renounced his family wealth and military career and eventually lived among the Tauregs, a nomadic tribe in the Sahara Desert near Algeria. He devoted his life to sharing Christ with them. He was a "Hermit" only because he could not persuade anyone to join him in this ministry. He was killed in his hut during a tribal war, by one of the nomads. His work is continued by "The Little Brothers of Jesus", a monastic type order of men, inspired by de Foucauld's example, who live among the poor in cities around the world.

Posted by Cal in Christian Living at 13:14

World AIDS Day

Heart disease and stroke will remain the top causes of death world wide, but AIDS will join them within the next 25 years, according to the latest projections published this week. Almost 3 million people die from AIDS annually, which is a horrible and needless tragedy. I was surprised to read the prayer in today's Oremus that says, in part, God, ... Inspire us to challenge the forces that allow the needless spread of AIDS to continue -- prejudice, unjust laws, repression, prudery, stigma and fear. My understanding is that most people contract the virus through intravenous drug use ("dirty needles") or from sexual intercourse with an infected partner. Increasingly, the victims are women and their children. In other words, the primary cause is behavioral and that means the primary solution is behavioral, meaning abstinence from using infected needles or from having sexual intercourse with infected partners. Very, very difficult, but simple. That change in behavior is possible through Christ and with relevant education and community support. That is what we should be praying for. It is significant that the prayer used today in Oremus was submitted by the Metropolitan Community Church, which is a "gay" denomination.

Posted by Cal in Social Issues at 11:36

QT Thots

Isaiah 42 [adapted] Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my spirit upon him. With these words, at his baptism in Jordan, God anointed Jesus as His chosen Prophet, Priest and King ["the anointed one" is the meaning of the word "Christ" or "Messiah"] see Matt.3:17, 12:17-18, etc. Having the Spirit poured out upon him empowered Jesus for his mission that began at that moment and which is described by God, as follows--He will bring forth justice to the nations. He will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be crushed until he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his teaching. Justice: Jesus is all about Justice. The Baby, whose birthday we are about to celebrate, had come into the world on this mission to establish Justice on the earth. Here is a Promise from God that is the real hope of the world. All the Nations, all Peoples, shall one day hear and submit to the Law of God and obey it. It is crucial that we define "Justice" Biblically. God has declared His will. Simply put, Justice is conformity or obedience to that will [pray-"Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth..."] Thus says God, the Lord,... I have given you [Jesus] as ... a light to the nations. This is a call to world-wide Missions: we, the Body of Christ, exist to hold up that Light for all the Nations to see. One day they will. Let us hasten that day today! It is the only hope for the Middle East, Darfur, the victims of AIDS and all the peoples of the world.

Posted by Cal in QT Thots at 11:22