



# Church Newsletter

First Baptist Church of  
Niles

Volume 1/Issue 4

WHAT WE ARE DOING? AND WHAT WE SHOULD DO?

IN THIS ISSUE

## WELCOME

Week 4 of the Shelter in Place.

It's Easter Sunday. Wishing everyone a Happy Easter. A different Easter than we have all known. No Sunrise Service or breakfast fellowships, no gathering of families to celebrate the birth of our Savior. We still have hope. After all Easter is all about hope. As you read Pastor Vitel's message meditate on what Easter really means to you.

This Sunday's reading is Psalm 67 (ESV). Titled, ***Make Your Face Shine Upon Us***. To the Choirmaster: With Stringed Instruments. A Psalm. A Song.

Shout for joy to God, all the earth;<sup>2</sup> sing the glory of his name; give to him glorious praise!<sup>3</sup> Say to God, "How awesome are your deeds! So great is your power that your enemies come cringing to you.<sup>4</sup> All the earth worships you and sings praises to you; they sing praises to your name."

*Selah*

<sup>5</sup> Come and see what God has done: he is awesome in his deeds toward the children of man.<sup>6</sup> He turned the sea into dry land; they passed through the river

on foot. There did we rejoice in him,<sup>7</sup> who rules by his might forever, whose eyes keep watch on the nations—let not the rebellious exalt themselves.

*Selah*

<sup>8</sup> Bless our God, O peoples; let the sound of his praise be heard,<sup>9</sup> who has kept our soul among the living and has not let our feet slip.<sup>10</sup> For you, O God, have tested us; you have tried us as silver is tried.

<sup>11</sup> You brought us into the net; you laid a crushing burden on our backs;<sup>12</sup> you let men ride over our heads; we went through fire and through water; yet you have brought us out to a place of abundance.<sup>13</sup> I will come into your house with burnt offerings; I will perform my vows to you,<sup>14</sup> that which my lips uttered and my mouth promised when I was in trouble.<sup>15</sup> I will offer to you burnt offerings of fattened animals, with the smoke of the sacrifice of rams; I will make an offering of bulls and goats.

*Selah*

<sup>16</sup> Come and hear, all you who fear God, and I will tell what he has done for my soul.<sup>17</sup> I cried to him with my mouth, and high praise was on my tongue. <sup>18</sup> If I had cherished iniquity in my heart, the Lord would not have listened. <sup>19</sup> But truly God has listened; he has attended to the voice of my prayer.<sup>20</sup> Blessed be God, because he has

not rejected my prayer or removed his steadfast love from me!

This is much more than a thanksgiving Psalm. Its actually a prayer that God will bless his people Israel so that the rest of the world will come to know the true God.

Making this Psalm is a perfect reading for Easter Sunday as we remember Christ's death and resurrection and our mandate to spread the gospel.



"The Watchman Notes" Pastor Chuck Vitel  
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The Watchman's Notes  
*Offering biblical messages,  
perspectives and views on  
Biblical & moral issues and current  
events.*

*A Ministry of Chuck Vitel, Pastor –  
Bible Teacher*

*"For thus the Lord said to me: Go,  
set a watchman; let him announce  
what he sees." Isaiah 21:6 [ESV]*

April 9, 2020 – Issue #4

"Raised from Death to Glory"

My topic in this Issue #4, "Raised from Death to Glory," relates to Easter - which is coming on Sunday April 12, 2020.

He is risen! *He is risen indeed!* That is our joyous confession on this Resurrection Sunday. In fact, that was the confession of the early Christians on every Sunday. The very existence of Christian worship on Sunday, the first day of the week, is historical evidence of the resurrection of Christ.

For Christians [Believers/followers of Christ], Sunday is the Lord's Day. *And the reason why we worship on Sunday is because our Lord rose from the dead on the first day of the week.* And so, even though we celebrate our Lord's resurrection in a special way once a year, every Sunday is truly resurrection day and a celebration of the fact that Jesus Christ is alive.

The Resurrection of Christ is central to the Christian faith. The great apostle Paul said that *"without the reality of the resurrection, our preaching is in vain [useless, meaningless] and our faith is meaningless."*

If Jesus Christ did not rise from the dead, then He was a fake, and we might as well

believe in something else. If there was no resurrection, *Christ is not who He said He was, and we are still lost in our sins.*

The validity of Christianity rises or falls on the truthfulness of the resurrection. Our faith is based on it. In Romans 1:4, it says that Jesus, *"was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead."* Christianity rests on this miraculous event.

Though we cannot gather in our church buildings because of the virus COVID-19, the Church can still gather and worship wherever they are this Sunday.

May God give you a Blessed Easter.

*Pastor Chuck Vitel*

Easter Sunday is this coming Sunday, April 12, 2020. Therefore, I want to focus on Christ's Resurrection. We all understand that *The Cross* is the very heart of the Christian faith, and without *The Cross* we have no faith at all. What happened on that first "Good Friday" [*The Crucifixion of Christ*] was one of the three most important events in all history: the other two events are *The Incarnation* [God becoming man and coming to earth] and of course, *The Resurrection* [Christ being raised from the grave].

In (2 Timothy 1:9-10) Paul the Apostle is talking about our salvation through grace and says: *"God has saved us and called us to a holy life – not because of anything we have done but because of His own purpose and grace. This grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the beginning of time, but it has now been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the Gospel."*

Of all the fears that grip the hearts of modern men and women, no fear is greater than the fear of death. Killing and dying is easier today than it ever has been. Our technology and lack of morality have made it easier to kill or murder. And we can die from many different sources, even from a *pandemic*

*virus* that comes out of nowhere and creates havoc and death across the world in weeks. The question I want to ponder for a moment is, do we know how to die? In reality, we are not given a choice about whether to meet death, or the manner by which we die, or even when to meet death – only how to meet death. *How... relates to our attitude and preparation.*

Every time I am confronted with the death of someone I know, I tend to ask myself, *"Am I prepared for my own death?"* As strong as I think my faith in God is – thinking about my own death is a bit unsettling at times. After all, I am closer to that time than I was 20, 30 or 40 years ago, or even one week ago. Death is so unsettling because death is so final – it also beyond our control – and quite frankly, I am a "Rookie" when it comes to dying. I have never experienced my own death. Death is such an unknown and that itself is unsettling.

This is a subject we'd all rather not talk about, especially at Easter or during a time we are battling the Coronavirus [COVID-19]. However, if we can't talk about death on Easter, when can we talk about it? The very essence of Easter Sunday is a celebration that one Man has slipped through the grave and come back to tell us about it. Death could not hold Him. And now He holds the keys of death and hell.

Our text in 2 Timothy 1 makes a wonderful affirmation when it declares that Jesus has destroyed death. The older versions of the Bible say He has "abolished" death. There is but one problem with that thought. Death does not appear to have been abolished. If death has been *destroyed*, someone forgot to tell the undertakers. People still die every day. The cemeteries fill up and new ones open. There is no end of

funeral homes, mortuaries, wakes, and weeping spouses or parents. And there is no end of cancer, strokes, heart attack, sudden accidents, unexplained tragedies, ethnic cleansing, bombs in the night, and viruses.

Death is all around us – Where is the Resurrection? How can we say that death has been abolished when death seems to stare us in the face every day? It is natural to think about it because sooner or later we're all going to die. That much is certain. Let's consider the following statements.

1. If death has been abolished, why do we still die?

If death has been *abolished*, why do we still die? I think the most obvious answer is that we die because of sin. (Romans 5:12) *tells us that death came to the world because of Adam's sin. First there was Adam, then there was sin, then there was death.* Sin always leads to death and as long as sin exists in the world, death will never be very far away. *Obituaries are written every day. Why? Because death reigns everywhere.*

Sue and I read the Obituaries in the newspaper and often online. First, we check for our names. Second, we check for the names of people we know. There is even an entire industry built about the expectation of your death. It's called the Life Insurance industry. The only reason you buy life insurance is because someday you are going to die. If you lived forever, you'd never need life insurance. But you buy life insurance precisely because you know the fact of your death, you just don't know the time of your death. But when you die, someone else gets the money. Life insurance is based on one great theological truth: Death reigns.

When you die, the coroner will fill out a death certificate for you. There's a space

on that certificate that says "*Cause of Death*." If we understand the Bible, the answer is always the same: "*Sin*." Not sickness, not cancer, not an accident, not old age. Those are merely symptoms of the one great cause of death: *Sin*.

2. In what sense did Christ destroy death?

The word translated "*destroyed*" in 2 Timothy 1:10 means to "*render powerless*." When Jesus rose from the dead, He broke the power of death forever. And one day death itself will die. Until then, death has taken on new meaning for the Christian. This is what Jesus meant when he said, "*Whoever lives and believes in Me will never die*" (John 11:26). Death for the Christian is a temporary interruption, a passing from one stage of life to another. *That is what Paul meant when he declared that to live is Christ, and to die is gain* (Philippians 1:21).

Consider the bare facts surrounding Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Did Jesus not die? Yes. Was he not buried? Yes. Did the women not weep? Yes. Where, then, is our Hope? It rests not on Good Friday or in the long hours of that lonely Saturday. Our only Hope may be found in what happened early on Easter Sunday morning – Resurrection Sunday.

If Jesus was nothing more than a man, then we have no hope at all. And our dreams of immortality are just that – idle dreams. But there is *good news* from the graveyard this Easter. There's an empty tomb in the cemetery. It's the tomb of Jesus Christ. He died on Friday afternoon, they buried him on Friday evening, and by Sunday morning his tomb was empty. This is God's good news – that death could not hold him, that the grave could not keep him, that he is the Lord of life, the King immortal and eternal.

How did Jesus destroy death or render it powerless? He could only conquer death by entering the realm of death, yanking the keys from the hands of the devil, unlocking the door, and marching out on Easter Sunday triumphant over the grave.

Jesus died like we die. He was really dead, actually dead, completely dead. He wasn't partly dead or mostly dead. He was as dead as any person could be. And from that state of death God raised Him back to life. He himself walked into that dark valley alone. He faced cold death and looked into its awful face. He stared down death, broke its power, and walked away victorious.

One day death will die! "O God, let that day come soon!" God can do a Resurrection! If mankind can invent computers and chips, cell phones with cameras, take your DNA and identify you in a crowd of 6 billion people, send rockets to the moon and find a cure for the Coronavirus - truly we live in a remarkable age. But if man can do that, what can God do? He can raise the dead. He did it once and He can do it again.

3. What is death like for a believer – in Christ?

Four thousand years ago the prophet JOB asked this question, "*If a man dies, will he live again?*" (Job 14:14a) That is the greatest of all the questions, it is the one great question Easter was meant to answer.

Death feels terrible, unreal, unnatural. When we stand over the lifeless body of someone we love, we feel helpless, angry, defeated and afraid. Death is sobering, frightening, terrifying. No wonder the Bible calls it "*the last enemy*" (1 Corinthians 15:26). No one has ever lived who hasn't trembled before the Grim Reaper or the Death Angel.

Deep in our hearts we wonder what will happen when our time comes to cross the Great Divide. How will it be with us when we have to go through *the valley of the shadow of death*? Will we be afraid? Will our faith stand the test?

The Bible tells us that the “*sting of death*” is sin (1 Corinthians 15:56). Consider that picture for a moment. How do you take the sting out of a bee? By taking the sting yourself. Then the bee can hurt you no more. Christ took the venom of death. Death stung Him and killed Him. But death could not keep Him dead. He took all the venom of death so there is none left for His people to fear. Death for us is no longer a curse but a blessing. The New Testament calls it “*sleep*” because when you sleep, you plan to wake up later. For the Biblical Christian, physical death is when you go to sleep in this physical world and transition waking up in the spiritual world in the presence of God Himself.

People ask, will it be the same body? Yes, but greatly improved – which is good news for most of us and for some of us, it’s the only hope we have. Our bodies will be immortal and incorruptible. Today we have five senses, after our resurrection we may have hundreds more. Scientists tell us the body constantly renews itself as old cells disappear and new ones are formed. And despite the continual renewing of my body, I remain the same person. This illustrates that even though the body changes completely, human personality endures forever. Now if God can do that on this earth, think what He can do when He has unlimited time to work on you. If God can rebuild us ten times on this earth, I’m sure He can do it again and again. And when He does, He’ll fix us up so we’ll never have to be rebuilt again.

How will He do it? I do not know exactly, and that is one reason I believe in the

Resurrection. If there were no *mystery*, I could not believe it. I don’t want a God who only does things I understand.

How will we know each other in heaven? I don’t know the total answer to that question, but I am certain that we will recognize each other just as James, Peter and John knew Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration. One thing is for sure: *We won’t know less in heaven than we know on earth.*

*“Now we see; but a poor reflection [dimly] as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.” (1 Corinthians 13:12).* Such is the mystery and wonder of the Resurrection.

As Believers in Christ, we will be raised, restored, recognized, and we will be rested. Isn’t that a wonderful thought? Many people at the end of life say, “*I am so tired.*” Your head is tired, your back is tight, your joints ache, your nerves are shot, your eyes are heavy, and your legs are weary. Why? Because we live in a tired world. Things run down more easily than they are filled back up. Frankly, the older you get, the more tired you become. Everything about this world is exhausting. (Romans 8:21-22) says the whole creation is in bondage to decay and groans while waiting for the day of redemption. God in His mercy gives us rest at last – and when we are raised to new life, we are raised in good health and good spirits, with a smile on our faces, with energy coursing through our veins. We will rise rested – and shall be at rest even while we serve the Lord forever. And so, we shall ever be with the Lord.

#### Closing Thought

The Messiah’s great victory over death and the grave is the *First fruits* of the full

harvest to come, when all believers in Christ will likewise experience the power of Christ’s Resurrection. That’s what Easter is all about!

*Behold, a bright light shines from the Easter tomb. A light that banishes darkness and bids it goodbye. We think death means going from the land of the living to the land of the dying. No! For those who know Jesus, death means going from the land of the dying to the land of the living.*

If a man dies, will he live again? Yes! Yes! Yes! That’s the true answer! All of us will face death someday. But for those who know Jesus, death holds no fear. We’re not afraid of the darkness for Jesus is the Light of the world. We won’t stay in *the valley of the shadow of death* for Jesus has said He will be our guide. We may die, but we won’t stay dead. Jesus has the keys and one day He is going to come back for us.

Are you trusting the Man who rose from the dead? Jesus is alive and standing with open arms inviting you to accept His offer of life eternal. The door to Heaven is wide open. I invite you to take a step of faith and allow Jesus to prove to you that He is alive. I extend to you a personal invitation to consider becoming a Christian: If your soul is hungry for something more than you have found, try Jesus. If Jesus is knocking on the door of your heart, make sure you open the door. Each of us has an appointment with Death sooner or later. But that is a cause for rejoicing – not for fear, provided we have put our trust in the One who holds the keys of life and death.

People of God, rejoice. Easter has come again, death has been defeated, and someday will be destroyed completely. *Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.* The day is coming when God will wipe all our tears away. Until

then, let this thought fill you with hope. *There is a light shining from the tomb, a light that leads us from the darkness to the Glorious Day that shall never end.* Amen.

*“Living, He loved me*

*Dying, He saved me*

*Buried, He carried my sins far away*

*Rising, He justified freely forever*

*One day He’s coming – O’ Glorious day,  
O’ Glorious day”*

(From the Hymn, One Day, Text by J.  
Wilbur Chapman, 1997)

Also known as “Glorious Day”



In Closing.

The title of Pastor Vitels message this week is “Raised from Death to Glory” this topic is especially fitting for the current state we find ourselves in. Just as Easter signals The new birth, this Easter is the perfect time to rethink the road that we are on, where its leading and where we want to go. Easter is a day where we get our bearings and travel a new way to a new place to live a new kind of life. This is more important this Easter as we look forward to the day when we are no longer sheltering-in-place and are once again free to interact with everyone on a personal level.

There is "One" who has set the course for us; One who has set the sign posts for our journey. Jesus is the one who laid the road for us and told us what we can expect from life and Easter is His story and the starting point of our personal journey. Together we are committed to travel the road God has prepared for us, share the joys and burdens common to travelers, and marvel at the wonders and surprises that lie ahead. Easter can be a defining moment in your life when you choose to stay in traffic going nowhere or take a detour and risk staying lost. Movement without meaning leads to frustration. So, if you find yourself travelling down a bumpy road filled with frustration, anxiety, despair and lack of direction, Easter is your invitation to discover a whole new way of living by following Jesus. Jesus is

the way, the way to the Father, the way of life, the way to salvation. Jesus lived on earth to show us the way. To follow Him on this way means that we are to walk as He walked. We are to follow in His footsteps, living as He lived. A way indicates progression. When we follow Him we come to where He is now.

So how do we follow Him today and going forward? The same way the disciples did long ago. They heard the words of Jesus and believed them. They took His words and obeyed them. They confessed their sins to Jesus as their Lord and God. They believed that He died to take away the punishment of their sins and rose from the dead to give them new life. They followed His example and command to tell others the truth about sin, righteousness, and judgment .

When we follow Him in "the way," we can be assured of following Him all the way to heaven.

I invite you today to follow Christ, the same way the disciples did long ago.

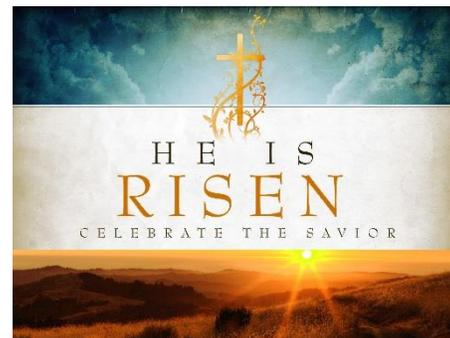
I came across the following by Allison Lanza and I feel that it follows Pastor Vitels message for this week and the correlation between the first Easter and what we are going through is something we all can relate and should challenge us to be more faithful and stronger in our witness when we come out of our homes again. Wishing everyone a Blessed Easter.

*The very first Easter was not in a crowded worship space with singing and praising. On the very first Easter the disciples were locked in their houses. It was dangerous for them to come out. They were afraid. They wanted to believe the good news that they had heard from the women, that Jesus had risen. But it seemed too good to be true. They were living in a time of such despair and such fear. If they left their homes their lives and the lives of*

*their loved ones might be at risk, Could a miracle really have happened? Could life really have won over death. Could this time of terror and fear really be coming to an end? Alone in their homes they dared to believe hope was possible, that the long night was over and morning had broken, that God’s love was the most powerful of all, even though it didn’t seem quite real yet. Eventually they were able to leave their homes, when the fear and danger had subsided, they went around celebrating and spreading the good news that Jesus was risen and that love was the most powerful force on the earth.*

*This year, we might get to experience a taste of what that first Easter was like, still in our homes daring to believe that hope is on the horizon. Then, after a while, when it is safe, for all people, when it is the most loving choice, we will come out, gathering together, singing and shouting the good news that God brings life even out of death that love always has the final say.*

*This year we might get the closest taste we have had yet to that first Easter was like.*





## PRAYER LIST

✓ **Continuing Prayers for loss:**

All the families that have lost loved ones this past year families.

✓ **Continuing Prayers for physical needs:**

Maria Hatfield, Erwin and Elizabeth Lickman, Gloria-Lynn Fernandez, Betty Matson, Ronaldo Claveria

✓ **Continuing Prayers for our Ministry Needs:**

The Pastoral Search Committee, Pulpit Supply, Our Deacons, Financial support of the church during the Virus

✓ **Continuing Prayers for our Sister Ministries:**

BIEM Ministries, Orchard Church, Pastors Davis, Billow, Eddy Bartolome, Pastor and Sue Vitel

✓ **Continuing Prayers for Spiritual Needs:**

Leonard Hatfield

✓ **Continuing Prayers for:**

The spread of the Gospel, Our Government, Our Nation, Our Community, Our Neighbors, Our Families

✓ **New Requests:**

Erwin & Elizabeth Lickman as they are quarantined from each other.

**Mylin Lardizabal - My husband and I are both nurses and were told that we will be pulled to other areas as needed. We are very willing to help and do our jobs but also scared to get expose to this virus due to lack of supplies such as masks, eyeshields, gloves. The shortage of PPEs are very real and were being told to reuse almost everything. Please pray for us that we will stay healthy to take care of others. Our biggest concern is not getting our girls and our friends sick and that includes our church family.**

**Anne Benliro - My Co-worker's (Alicia) husband--Oscar, is fighting for his life right now at the Condell ICU. He is a nurse. He was infected through his patients that have Covid19. Please help me pray for him and his family that God will heal him and restore him to good health so he can continue his noble calling to help those that are sick. He is a warrior in these times. Please also pray for Alicia who is very vulnerable and easily get nervous and stressed. May God give her peace and strength and sustain her in this ordeal. Oscar is the only main bread winner of their family (+2 teen kids). Thank you.**

If you have prayer requests or updates on your family we encourage to submit them to the Newsletter email address at the end of this newsletter.

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On Sunday, March 22, 2020 your trustees, Claude Covington, Dewain Karnes, Brian Mitchell and Nel Varilla gathered for prayer and spent 3 hours sanitizing all the hard surfaces throughout the church. This included all the window sills, door frames and handles, tables and chairs in the basement, every surface in the kitchen and nursery, the pulpit and even the keys on the organ and piano. On Tuesday, April 7, 2020 all the carpeting, pews, 2 couches and chairs were cleaned with Decon 30, (an antibacterial anti viral cleaner).

And over the evening of April 7 the air quality of the entire building underwent an Enhancerall™ air purifier treatment.

The building is now germ free, locked, secured and waiting for our return.

