



Jan/Feb/March 2011

January 6, 2011

In Need of Some Good Counsel and Inner Peace? :: Several nights ago I awoke during the night with an awful fear and anxiety inside me. Satan was using a concern in my life to wreak havoc in my heart. There was no way I would immediately fall asleep again. I needed some help. I needed some good counsel. Soon I found myself getting up and reflecting on Isaiah 9:6, a Christmas text I spoke from in December. I have taught from this text on numerous occasions in past Christmas seasons, but this year I saw something new in this verse prompting me to ask these two questions: "Why does Wonderful Counselor appear first? Is there any significance why this title, the first of four prophetic titles referring to Jesus, appears first? Here's my take on it: Something very powerful happens when we seek Jesus' perfect counsel and obey it. New power, the power of the Mighty God, is unleashed in our lives; a new realization of God's love towards us, the love and protection coming from our Everlasting Father, refreshingly overwhelms our mind; and a growing inner peace, the peace coming from the Prince of Peace, begins to slowly dislodge those feelings of fear, rejection and anxiety. While this may not be the primary interpretation, turning our hearts and ears to the Master Counselor in the midst of inner turmoil does change things. After seeking His direction, I found myself calmly heading back to bed and quickly falling asleep again, awaking in the morning with thankfulness in my heart for the manifold benefits of seeking His wonderful counsel. And the day went well. Praise be to Jesus for how He turns our troubles into triumphs, and anxiety into peace, when we seek His good counsel.

- Pastor Lino

And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. - Isaiah 9:6

January 13, 2011

Growing Together :: When we bought our house, the backyard was just dirt. The last few years we have gone to work building and planting. It has been fun, but also hard work. Along the way someone explained the process of planting trees this way: the first year provide lots of water, but don't expect to see much noticeable growth. That's because growth is taking place in the roots. The second year, keep the water coming, because the trunk is gaining strength, and the branches are starting to thicken. Year three, that's when you really start to actually see your tree grow. At Butler we are celebrating our first year in the new model. Much like a tree, our new "plant" has been establishing its roots. Many of us have faithfully served, learned, and sacrificed. It has been hard work, and much has taken place that couldn't be seen. This important work has brought stability, good roots. Now as we enter year two we are starting to see outward signs of growth. A strong core is forming, and our branches strengthening. This tree is preparing for Fruit! This church is growing! Much more hard work is ahead. We must soak in the living water. We must let the Master gardener continue to shape us. Let's keep growing together.

- Pastor Scott

Oh, the joys of those who do not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand around with sinners, or join in with mockers. But they delight in the law of the Lord, meditating on it day and night. They are like trees planted along the riverbank, bearing fruit each season. Their leaves never wither, and they prosper in all they do. Psalm 1:1-3 (NLT)

February 10, 2011

How do we grow? Come and see... :: It seems as though I have been talking a lot about growth these days. Whether it has been with congregational leaders, ministry partners, or just friends and family, it has been an absolute joy to talk about growth at Butler! If you haven't tried it, I highly recommend it! Yet I am reminded that all of this growth, or even potential growth, is rooted in Christ and not our own efforts. In John chapter one, when two potential disciples sought to follow Jesus, they asked him where he "dwelled". Jesus' answer was short but profound, "Come and see." One of those men, Andrew, repeated that invitation when he brought his brother Simon to meet Christ. Simon's life (and his name) was never the same after that! So let's talk big about the growth we have found in coming to Him!

Let's invite anyone within earshot to come and see Jesus! We have a wonderful testimony to share, one that is continually unfolding. Let's invite others to join us as we grow in Christ.

- Pastor Scott

February 17, 2011

Too Much Community Building, Bible Study, Worship, etc.?:: Can a follower of Jesus get out of balance regarding the Christian disciplines and our call to go and make disciples of all nations? Is it possible for a Christian to give too much time and effort to building community, studying the Bible, worshipping God, doing church and conference work, etc., that they leave behind the call to be His witnesses and tell people about Him? I think so. While the above disciplines are necessary for proper growth into the likeness of Jesus, there is a spiritual short-circuiting that takes place if they become an end in themselves, or crowd out time to touch lives around us. Last Sunday night Mary and I attended a Valentine's Day banquet. Across from us sat a young couple who came to faith about 5 years ago. In between us were their neighbors, the result of a growing friendship with this couple. I asked our friends how many others were present that evening because of their investment of time and love in their lives: three other couples, all family members. My heart jumped with joy. I was proud of them, knowing too they were also involved in building community, participating in Bible studies, worshipping on Sunday, etc. in their local church. Jesus, as well as our friends, physically moved into the arena of the hurting and lost, spent time developing friendships, and then shared the good news about a God who saves us from sin and heals us of our sins. It is said there is one word that both Christians and non-Christians alike detest...evangelism! To make this task more enjoyable and meaningful I would encourage you to let God lead you to one lost person or family, start a relationship with them (if you haven't already done so), nurture that relationship in meaningful and natural ways, and give testimony about our Jesus who changes lives. And see how your life joy will increase.

- Pastor Lino

*And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14)
...preaching the good news of the Kingdom (Matthew 4:23).*

March 3, 2011

The Good and Faithful Butler Servants:: It was reported in our last Church Life Meeting that the Butler 2011 church budget was \$8 off from being balanced. Of course, we know the hat was passed in that same meeting and we ended up with a surplus! I personally want to take my hat off to the good and faithful servants of Butler Church who, if Jesus were to return today, would hear the words: "Well done, good and faithful servant!" (Matthew 25:14-30) These "Butlerlites" are the ones who have taken what God has given them, whether their financial assets are substantial (five talents) or humble (two talents), and have multiplied them for the sake of the Kingdom of God. What is important is not how deep the pockets are, but rather the faithfulness in giving. According to the parable the eternal reward will be the same for both groups. But Jesus also gives a word of deep caution, for there is a third servant in the parable who in the end lost out on God's eternal blessing. This is the "one talent servant" who chose the safe and sound route. I personally believe there are "five talent servants" who also choose the safe and sound route like the "one talent servant" of the parable did. Again the main point of the parable is not how much someone has, but rather the level of their diligence in giving of what they do have. I would suspect there are these types of "withholders" within the Butler family as well. Present giving and tithing trends in the US would support this. So, to those who are growing in giving I would say you are obedient servants. God knows who you are. I don't. Keep giving with diligence. You will be rewarded. And to the other group that is withholding what is appropriately God's portion, I would encourage you to reorder your values: riches or God. Live for yourself or live for God and others? (Matthew 25:31-46) God too knows who you are. I don't. So make the choice to be diligent in giving today so that you can receive the eternal reward tomorrow.

- Pastor Lino

March 10, 2011

Adding Fruits to our Cultural Repertoire:: Julia C-R, serving with SIL International in Asia, sends this Food for Thought: I just finished teaching two workshops about "Participatory Methods for Engaging Communities" in Cambodia. What a great experience! I shared insights about serving others with Cambodians, both of the majority and minority cultures. Those who shared a devotional kept returning to the topic of the fruits of the Spirit, as the basis for our desire to serve communities as humble servants instead of controlling dominators.

- Julia C-R

Matthew 20:25-28 - Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

March 17, 2011

Hollywood and Worship:: We recently stayed in Hollywood. It is not a place I thought I would ever visit, but it is close to the Thai consulate, where we needed to go to get our visas. And the accommodations were reasonable. I've never really cared much for the Hollywood scene. I don't watch many movies or TV shows. I'm pretty much a cultural illiterate in regard to these things. But it has been an educational experience staying here a couple of nights. I have found that Hollywood is a city devoted to worship. People come here to somehow make a connection with others who have become famous in the film industry. Posters. Wax figures. Names of stars, in stars, in the sidewalk. Perhaps even catch a glimpse of someone famous. All this comes close to and may in some cases even be idolatry. Some of these "idols" no doubt, started in the industry because they liked performing. Some got famous—and they liked it. They become like those Jesus described in John 12:43, "for they loved praise from men more than praise from God." Some may not be in it so much for the fame as for the fortune. Perhaps they like the earthly treasures that come as a result of being famous. Some in the entertainment industry cannot handle the fame very well. There is a huge, light-up billboard that currently flashes the face of an actor who is having personal and legal difficulties because of his moral lapses. But lest I criticize others too quickly, I must look at my own life. Do I devote more of my time and energy to the things of this world than I do to God? It is easier for me to remember an obscure fact about someone or something that it is for me to quote the Word of God? Do I want to connect with God as much as these Hollywood visitors want to connect with the rich and famous? And in regard to ministry: do I do things at church out of service to God and others - or because I like to be popular? Do I desire men's praise more than God's praise? And just like those who fall because they become famous, I must be careful that my position in the church does not set me up for a fall. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! (1 Cor 10:12 NIV)

- Edd Russell

March 17, 2011

Investing in Children:: When Wil and I first learned about Compassion's program of "Releasing children from poverty in Jesus' name," we decided it was something we would like to support. At the same time, we had been brainstorming ways to invest in our own grandchildren. Then the two ideas coalesced: why not invite each of our grandchildren to help select and sponsor a child with us? Wil and I make a small monthly donation that supports the child's education, health (including supplementary food when needed), and spiritual growth through a church-based program. But the more important contribution—prayer and correspondence—involves the grandchildren, as well. We started a tradition when Dylan, our oldest grandchild, turned seven. Using Compassion's website, we searched through the photos of children in need of sponsors, looking for a boy about

Dylan's age. When we get letters from Byron, who lives in Ecuador, we share them with Dylan who, in turn, draws pictures and writes notes to send to him.

- Luetta Reimer

March 31, 2011

Sharing Our Hope:: When was the last time someone asked you about the *hope* you have in Christ? When was the last time your faith in Christ was the topic of conversation with someone who genuinely wanted to know? If it has been awhile, why is that? Recently I read 1 Peter 3:15

But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect...

Peter hits me between the eyes here with some underlying assumptions. First that I would live in such a way that it would be obvious my hope is in Christ. Second, that there would be people in my life that do not already know this hope themselves. I don't think these two assumptions in and of themselves are terribly hard to live up to...separately. The challenge is to make them overlap. This past week I was able to see these two pieces come together powerfully through members of Butler. Their neighbor was struck with a tragedy, the passing of a loved one. Who did that neighbor turn to? Whose hope was evident, and sought after? It was our members, who for years have demonstrated their hope, through love, friendship, and sharing of the source of it all, that their neighbor turned to. Are there people in your life today who don't know the hope found in Christ? Does your life reflect the hope found in Christ, through a gracious, obedient, and loving lifestyle? Are you prepared, and even eager to gently and respectfully give the reason for your hope? So many in our world need the hope found in Christ, let's live it and declare it!

- Pastor Scott
