

Below the Surface

By Pastor Andy Straubel

This summer brown circular spots started showing up in my backyard grass. I asked around as to what might be causing it. The unprofessional consensus was that my dog Roo was to blame, “deposits,” if you know what I mean. As the summer progressed, so did the brown spots. Not only was the problem unsightly, it was also killing my lawn.

I did some digging, literally and figuratively. I dug down just below the surface and saw little creatures. It turns out that my lawn provided the perfect environment for a number of yard eating, yard destroying grubs. These “critters” start off by burrowing down into the roots of the grass and eat to their hearts’ content. And when they are done, they move the circle out and keep on eating. Once I realized what was happening, I became indignant...and a little embarrassed. How could I not see it? Why did I wait so long? Then, I made it my business to rid myself of these little monsters and to get my lawn back. It was there that lessons to the Christian life began to emerge.

There are a lot of things that just seem to show up in our lives, “spots,” if you will. We didn’t ask for them; they just appeared. Too often we don’t see them or dismiss them as unimportant. But under the surface, there is a lot going on. Things that start at the roots—thoughts, attitudes, impulses—that can stand in the way of our Christian lives. Once we become aware of the destructive nature of these beasts, we have to take action.

For the believer, Galatians 5:17-23 is instructive. It speaks in verse seventeen of the ongoing conflict between the desires of our flesh and those of the Spirit. I would love to think that the desire for love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

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Summer Fellowship



A perfect combination of summer Sunday mornings after church. A special time of refreshing fellowship: tempting refreshments and unhurried time for our friendly congregation to spend time together.

“Below the Surface,” continued...

gentleness, and self-control win out in our battle with the flesh, but truth be told, it often does not. Our flesh wins. In fact, verse 16 says that our flesh keeps us from doing the things we want to do.

So what do we do? You will be happy to discover the ministry of the Holy Spirit provides the answer. It is the “resident teacher” given by God to help us overcome the thoughts, attitudes, and impulses we have in our struggle with our flesh or old nature. Three times we are told in Galatians 5 how to experience the Holy Spirit’s ministry in our lives. Simply put, we are told to “walk by the Spirit” (v.16), be “led by the Spirit” (v.18), and “live by the Spirit” (v.25). And it is assumed the “fruit of the Spirit” will follow.

While I am not sure of all that is involved with regard to the Holy Spirit’s work in my life, I am committed to finding out. One thing is for sure, we are not alone in our pursuit to follow the Lord.

Don’t wait for brown spots to show up on your lawn. Ask for help, get to the root of whatever might be hindering growth, and go after it. Oh, I apologized to Roo for blaming her “deposits” for killing my lawn. Thankfully, she forgave me!

Men’s Breakfast

Join us on Monday mornings, from 7:00 to 8:00 at the McDonald’s on Brunswick Circle as we study, “Inexpressible: Hesus and the Mystery of God’s Lovingkindness,” by Michael Card. God’s identity is beyond what we could ever fully express in human words, but Scripture uses the Hebrew word “hesed” to describe the distinctiveness of God’s character. As we follow our God of hesed, we ourselves are transformed to live out the way of hesed, marked by compassion, mercy and faithfulness. Contact Scott Bruno (609-213-9545) for more information. The food, fellowship and study are great!

TRAVELING TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH...

Travel mercies were prayed for Tim Hurd before he left on an extraordinary business trip. Pictured with his wife Yvonne and children Hannah and Tytus, Tim will be working as a surveyor with a team in Antarctica. He will be stationed there for the next six months. If you would like to reach out to him, his address is: Tim Hurd, PSC 769 Box 700, APO AP 96599- 9998.

*Congratulations to
Lisa and Kentaro Yamamoto
On the birth of their second
granddaughter
Rory Mae Yamamoto*



Rory was born August 8, 2019 and weighed 6 pounds and 5 ounces. She joins her parents Akira and Jaime Yamamoto, and big sister Cameran.

36th Annual ISI Garage Giveaway Saturday, September 7 8 AM - Noon

Help international students and their families experience the warmth and caring of our local community. The ISI Annual Garage Giveaway, which will be held between 8 am and noon on Saturday, September 7, at the Lutheran Church of the Messiah, 407 Nassau Street, in Princeton, assists internationals by providing them with large and small items to help ease their transition to Princeton.

Donations of furniture, small appliances and kitchen, bath and bed needs are especially welcome. Drivers with pickups are also needed. The rain date is September 14. Contact John and Aruna Desai at (609) 924-0763 or idesai45@verizon.net for additional information.

11th Hour

Our adult Sunday School class will resume its study of the Gospel of Luke on September 15. Please join us as we look to see what we can learn about our Lord and Savior from the good doctor.

Men and women will meet together for this Bible study. Teachers: Larry and Janet Berrill, Ken and Cindy Bills.

"We were talking about cats and dogs the other day and decided that both have consciences but the dog, being an honest, humble person, always has a bad one, but the cat is a Pharisee and always has a good one. When he sits and stares you out of countenance, he is thanking God that he is not as these dogs, or these humans, or even as these other cats!"
— C.S. Lewis, Letters to an American Lady

*Scott and Karen Bruno have been blessed
With their first grandchild
Anderson Oakwood Leo*



*Anderson's parents are
Amy and Alex Leo.
He weighed 6 pounds 3 ounces
and was 18" long.*

Perisseia

Our women's growth group will begin its fall series on Thursday evening, September 19, 7:00-8:30, in the Chapel House. We will spend this six-week series looking at the problem of anxiety and how Scripture addresses the issue of fear. All women are welcome.

Please do not be afraid to come when you can and as you are able! No commitment or preparation is required. For more information, please contact Cindy Bills (clbills@verizon.net; 609-275-8557).



Elder's Corner

By Ken Bills

For approximately eight years, Cindy and I were blessed to live with two Cornish Rex cats, Pippin and Caspian. They were a year apart in age, brothers from two consecutive litters. The two could almost always be found cuddled together when they were not racing around the house. Because Cornish Rexes are energetic and athletic, Pippin and Caspian were often in active play mode, wrestling with each other and resembling dolphins as they floated (or flew) over dog gates. And because they were brothers—and cats—they would periodically annoy each other by cleaning the other too aggressively or competing for prime nap spots; but mostly it was a peaceable kingdom.



Pippin died unexpectedly and prematurely several months ago, and we are still grieving the loss. We soon noticed that Caspian was also missing his brother. Several times a day, he would walk through the house, crying. Caspian also started to spend more time with us (which was lovely) and waking us up multiple times during the night for attention (which was sweet but had a pretty substantial downside).



Eventually, we came to the conclusion that while there would never be another Pippin, our entire household is happiest with its full complement of two Rexes. Last week, we brought home an adorable little sister for

Caspian, a Cornish Rex kitten we have named Portia. Our dog Lucy immediately thought a

new kitten was a great idea and expressed her desire for friendship in typically enthusiastic (and counterproductive) fashion. Caspian, however, was incredulous that we had done such a thing. Although we had expanded our family in large part to give him a companion, Caspian was suspicious and terrified of the tiny playful creature; he hissed whenever Portia approached him.

In the days since Portia's arrival, Caspian has been gradually becoming more and more comfortable with the concept of another cat in general and Portia in particular. Once or twice, they have been close enough to touch without hissing! At times, they have been found sleeping within a few inches of each other, and they are beginning to take turns playfully chasing each other. Cindy and I fully expect



that within a matter of weeks if not days, Caspian and Portia will be inseparable. And with any luck, we will all again be sleeping

through the night!

We brought Portia into our home to be a blessing to Caspian as well as to bring joy to us. Even though we understand that cats are cats, we certainly wished he would have recognized the gift he had been given. Caspian's reaction has caused me to think about my response to the blessings that God brings into my life. I don't always recognize them as a blessing, and I sometimes react in fear rather than respond in praise and thanksgiving. Jesus assures us that God knows what we truly need and will not give us a stone when we ask for bread. May God open our hearts to trust that He knows our needs and will give us good gifts, along with eyes of faith to recognize and praise Him for the good gifts we receive from Him.



Further Up and Further In

*Inviting dialogue to encourage growth in
and among us*



By Cindy Bills

Justification by Faith

Those who consider themselves to be Christians embrace a fundamental biblical truth: we are justified by faith in Christ. We trust that Jesus' sacrificial death on the cross on our behalf has satisfied our sin debt before God. And so we stand before God's throne clothed in the righteousness of Christ.

Justification by faith is a theme that runs through the New Testament. It is a prominent topic in the letters of the Apostle Paul. Paul frequently found it necessary to exhort those under his care to remember that a believer's life of faith requires dependence on the Lord for their justification and not on their Christian performance. Salvation—righteousness before God—is a gift that we receive when we enter into a faith relationship with Jesus Christ. Salvation by faith and not by works was at the heart of Martin Luther's reformation message.

I often remind my counseling clients that bond-servants of Christ are the freest people on the planet. We are free from the penalty and power of sin. We are free from the opinion and expectations of others (even and perhaps especially ourselves). And, we have nothing to learn and nothing to prove.

Justification by faith is not merely about our relationship with the Lord. It is my experience and observation that even while we trust the Lord for our justification before Him, we relate to others as if we have something to prove. How often, when we are confronted by someone who has been hurt by a manifestation of our sin nature, do we say, "I

was just...." ? We may trust Jesus to restore our relationship with Him, but we nonetheless feel the need to try to justify ourselves—never successfully—in our relationships with others.

Please consider with me the relational power that Jesus offers us if we depend upon Him for our justification as we deal with others. If Jesus is the source of our identity, value, and security, then we have the freedom to engage with others without the need to prove our worth. We need not defend ourselves when our sin nature surfaces. Instead, we can confess and repent. In doing so, we exercise important spiritual muscles as we rest in who we are in Christ. And, we bless the person we have hurt as we affirm their worth instead of defending our own. As we depend upon our Justifier, we become better able to build deeper and more intimate relationships with one another, which in turn reinforces our relationship with our Lord. It is in our relationship with the Lord and in our relationships with our brothers and sisters that we can truly know the joy of the Lord, and it is in the expression of these relationships that others will know us by our love.

*Please feel free to contact Cindy (609-275-8557 or
cbills@verizon.net) to continue the dialogue....*

Financial Update

(Through July 31, 2019)

"The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want..."

	Actual	Budget
Income	\$161,054	\$166,250
Expense	\$159,629	\$166,250

Windsor Chapel has sent \$22,917 to our missionary partners this year. That's 14% of your giving!

God Revealing Himself

By Janet Berrill

In Matthew 12:9-13, Jesus heals the shriveled hand of a man on the Sabbath by telling the man to stretch out his hand, and when he does, he finds his hand completely restored. At that time Jesus was engaged in a conversation with the Pharisees who were looking for a reason to bring charges against Him. The response of the Pharisees to this miracle was to plot how they might kill Jesus. This response in one way was not surprising, because based on the Old Testament law given by God, the Pharisees developed their own set of rules about what should and should not be done on the Sabbath. Since Jesus was not following their rules, they assumed He was not from God. Since Jesus claimed He was from God and they concluded He was not, they determined that He must be put to death for blasphemy.

But in another way, their response is quite surprising. They completely ignored the fact that Jesus was able to heal a man by the power of His words! Wow! Most people who saw something like this would ask, "Who is this that can do that?!" By healing the man, Jesus invited all who saw it to ask that question and come to find who Jesus was. He used this opportunity to reveal Himself, but the Pharisees were so focused on their agenda, their rules, their expectations that they completely missed Jesus revealing a truth about who He is.

When I first reread this story recently my initial reaction was to shake my head in unbelief at the Pharisees' response. How could they be so blind! How could they totally ignore the power they just witnessed? But as I meditated on the passage, I began to ask myself, "When am I so focused on my own agenda and expectations that I miss Jesus revealing Himself to me?" I decided to be more aware of God revealing Himself, especially when things were not going my way. Perhaps those were times when God was trying to show me something about who He is.

Within the next few days, I had an opportunity to put this into practice. Some of you may already know that I do not like to cook. I can do it, but I do not consider myself very good at it. One evening I

decided to cook salmon for dinner. I put some olive oil in the frying pan and placed the salmon filets in once the oil was heated. When it came time to turn the salmon, I found that it was sticking to the pan. When I tried to get the spatula under the filets, they started to fall apart. I took the small pieces which were cooked and had fallen off and put them on a plate while the rest of the filets continued cooking. As I was doing this, negative, condemning thoughts were running through my mind, "I am a terrible cook. I can't cook anything right. Even my kids are better cooks than I am, etc." Then I remembered to look for Jesus revealing Himself and I prayed, "God, are you using this to reveal something to me about You? If so, please show me who you are."

Shortly after praying this, my husband, Larry, came over and looked in the frying pan. I thought he was going to make a comment about not cooking the salmon right but instead he said, "Looks good." I replied, "No it doesn't. It's sticking to the pan and falling apart." Then he tried a piece from the plate and said, "It's cooked and it tastes good, that's all that matters." Immediately, my anxiety was lifted and the condemning thoughts disappeared. God used that opportunity to remind me that He is not a god of condemnation, but of love and affirmation. He loves me as I am and accepts my efforts, as feeble as they may be.

Let us not be like the Pharisees and miss God revealing Himself because we are too focused on our plans or expectations. When things do not go according to your agenda, rather than focusing on the negative, ask God if He is using the situation to reveal something about Himself to you.



If you have any items or information you would like to share in the newsletter, please e-mail:

Susan Seiboth at

susan@quiltingsquare.com

Dorothy Soi at

dsoi@windsorchapel.org

Chapel Office (609) 799-2559

www.windsorchapel.org