GROW IN GRACE NEWSLETTER

**Volume 43, No. 47, November 29 , 2016** / Southside Baptist Church & Christian School / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / The Grow in Grace Newsletter is **a weekly Bible Study**, plus local church news notes— designed first and foremost for members and those attending services at Southside Church. It is sent forth with the desire to aid one and all, (including friends far and wide), in the experience of 2 Peter 3:18. ***"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."***

## The following info is quoted from simply GOOGLING this question: 'How much do Americans Spend on celebrating Christmas?

**AMERICANS LOVE TO PARTY!** In 2014, **approximately 70 percent** of all Americans participated in Halloween… **spending about 7.4 billion dollars**… including 2 billion dollars for Halloween candy and **350 million dollars for pet Halloween costumes**. But of course what Americans spend on Halloween is not even worth comparing to what Americans spend on Christmas. Christmas in particular has become virtually synonymous with materialism.

This year, (2014), the National Retail Federation is projecting that Americans will spend **more than 600 billion dollars** **just on Christmas**. According to a **Gallup survey**, the average U.S. adult plans to spend 781 dollars on Christmas gifts this year, which is significantly up from last year… Of course holiday spending does not end there. There are trees to put up, packages to send out and decorations to buy. AN OLDER REPORT: Dec 7, 2011 - This year Americans will spend a whopping **$6 billion** on Christmas decorations, including LED lights, 16-foot-tall inflatable Santas, and pre-decorated Christmas trees.

**So where is all of this money coming from?** That is a key question. Our incomes are stagnant at best. But Americans always like to party as if it were the best of times. **So they will pull out their credit cards** *and spend what they feel they need to spend in order to feel happy once again this year.*

NOTE: This ends the Google quotes. BUT THIS MUCH IS SURE: With all the mega-billions being spent— LOTS OF FOLKS ARE AIMING FOR A BIG CHRISTMAS!

FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT AND TOTALLY UNRELATED TO MAN'S HOLIDAY SYSTEM— **WE NOW TURN TO MEDITATE UPON THE BIRTH OF CHRIST!**

**"JESUS CHRIST GAVE HIMSELF FOR US!"**

WHAT AN ASTOUNDING WONDER— A SAVIOUR FOR SINNERS is born! "His name shall be called JESUS for He shall save His people FROM their sin!" By amazing grace, may we, one and all, be ASTOUNDED, BLESSED, FOCUSED, and REJOICING in the REDEEMING LOVE of God! **HOWEVER, BEWARE!**

**Grinches and Scrooges** abound SEEKING to keep the FOCUS away from Jesus and God's redeeming love! **James Smith, in "REDEEMING LOVE!" 1861, writes:**

"**JESUS GAVE HIMSELF FOR US**— that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous for good works." (Titus 2:14) "**JESUS GAVE HIMSELF** for us." Note the *contrast* between the Giver— and those for whom He gave Himself. ***THE GIVER* is He who was** . . . the only begotten Son of God, the author of creation, the sustainer of the universe, the brightness of divine glory, the source and end of all things! He who was proclaimed by the prophet as "the mighty God, the everlasting Father, and the Prince of Peace." He who is declared by the apostle to be "*God* over all-- blessed for evermore!"

"**JESUS gave Himself FOR US**." For US— who at the best are *mere creatures*, between whom and our Creator, there can be no comparison. But it was not for us as *mere creatures*— but for us as base, vile, insignificant, and totally depraved creatures! We had debased ourselves, even unto Hell.

**Our nature could not be worse,** for "the human heart is the most deceitful of all things--and desperately wicked!" The most exalted, glorious, and holy being in the universe— gave Himself for the most

polluted, vile, and degraded of His creatures! ***O how astonishing! JESUS volunteered*** on our behalf, without any solicitation, offering to become . . . **our *Substitute—*** to fulfill the law in our stead; **our *Sacrifice—*** to make a full atonement for our sins; and **our *Ransomer—*** to pay the satisfactory price for our redemption. He engaged to bear the desert of all our sins in His own body-- to suffer all that the holy and inflexible justice of God could inflict on our Surety-- and so put away our sins forever, by the sacrifice of Himself.

**JESUS gave . . . His person** -- for our persons; His blood -- as our ransom price; and His life -- for our lives! **JESUS GAVE HIS ENTIRE SELF**, doing and suffering all that was necessary to secure our release from sin's curse, and our everlasting salvation. *O AMAZIANG GRACE OF A GRACIOUS SAVIOUR!* **JESUS GAVE HIMSELF** -- that He might justly redeem, ransom, and deliver us -- from the guilt, power, and penal consequences of sin. **JESUS GAVE HIMSELF** -- to take away and destroy the power, the guilt, and the punishment of our transgressions.

**JESUS GAVE HIMSELF** to purify unto Himself, by fully making atonement for, paying the penalty for their sins -- a *peculiar people:* a people *purchased* -- to be peculiarly His own; a people *sanctified*, separated from all others -- to be set apart for Himself; a people to be His own *subjects* -- as the King of Zion; a people to be His own *soldiers* -- as the Captain of our salvation; a people to be His own *servants* -- as the Lord of the house; a people to be His own *children*--as the everlasting Father!

**"JESUS GAVE HIMSELF!"** The love of Jesus is *unparalleled*. Out of pure love to us who had no love to Him, nor ever would have had -- but for His *first* loving us! He gave, not only His *time*, His *labor*, His *wealth* -- but *Himself!* JESUS gave His entire person as the God-man, the incarnate GOD!

**"JESUS GAVE HIMSELF!"** This was more than as if He had given *a thousand worlds*-- for these He could create with a word! **"JESUS GAVE HIMSELF!"** And not merely to *live* for us, or *labor* for us -- but even to *die* for us! **"JESUS GAVE HIMSELF!"** And not even to die some *easy* and *honorable* death -- but the most painful, shameful death, that any man

ever invented, or any creature ever suffered! ***O wondrous love!*** *O Jesus, never, never was there love like Yours!*

**THEREFORE**, LET US ALL ENTER INTO THE PROFOUND JOY **OF THOSE WHO FIRST WELCOMED THE BIRTH OF CHRIST!**

**1. BEHOLD the wonder and JOY in the angel's words,** when speaking unto Joseph, *"....that which is conceived in her (Mary) is of the Holy Ghost... thou shalt call his name **JESUS:** for He shall save His people from their sins."* (Matt. 1:20-21) **The angel** announced that Jesus was coming to *'save His people from their sins!'* In all of the Biblical 'snap shots' of joy and celebration at Christ's birth there is simplicity and singularity of focus. **The joy is this:** Jesus comes to save His people from their sins! That is reason enough for the joy and rejoicing! **Or is it!? Just how excited am I about JESUS who saves from sin!?**

**2. Stand in Awe!** *"Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the LORD by the prophet, saying, **Behold a virgin** shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name, **EMMANUEL**, which being interpreted is, **GOD with us**."* (Matt. 1:22-23; Isa. 7:14; 9:6-7; 11:1-9) **EMMANUEL! GOD with us!**

**3. LET US ASK** the Holy Spirit of God to teach US from Gabriel's **announcement** to Mary! *"Hail, thou that art highly favored, the LORD is with thee: blessed art thou **among** women.... Fear not, Mary: for thou has found favor with God. And, behold, thou shalt bring forth a son, and shalt **call his name JESUS**... the Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the highest shall overshadow thee; therefore also that Holy Thing which shall be born of thee shall be called **the Son of God**... **For with God nothing shall be impossible.**"* (Luke 1:28-36) **Note:** There is no worship of Mary. The total focus is on the coming of Jesus, the Son of God, and the need for a response of FAITH!

**4.** The very first one on earth to CELEBRATE the Advent (Coming) of Jesus Christ was John Baptist, **six months in Elisabeth's womb!** Elisabeth became the second one on earth to CELEBRATE as she loudly proclaimed, *"...Blessed art thou **among** women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb...*

*For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears,* ***the babe (John) leaped in my womb for joy****. And* ***blessed is she that believeth****: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the LORD*." (Lk 1:41-45)

Christ was in the womb of a virgin! John was in his mother's womb… and much more than a mere fetus! **John leaps for joy, in gratitude to God for the Saviour!** This is total, focused, undiluted celebration. Let us learn from six-month-still-in-the-womb John: **JOY at Christ's coming is exclusive!**

**5.** Mary's magnificent Celebration! *"…My soul doth magnify the LORD, and my spirit hath* ***rejoiced in God my Saviour****… For He that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is His name…"* (Luke 1:46-55) Like all of us, Mary was a sinner! She knew it and thus rejoiced in, ***"God my Saviour!"***

The birth of Christ is exclusively about REJOICING IN THE SAVIOUR! The birth of Christ is God coming down to rescue His enemies from the wrath we all so richly deserve. **It is the ultimate rescue operation from the ultimate disaster!** When eyes of faith see and receive the Saviour— no artificial stimulation, no dazzling sights and sounds are needed in order for the saint to be greatly motivated to go forth **in glorious celebration, rejoicing in *GOD MY SAVIOUR!***

**6.** The Angel of the LORD and a great multitude of HEAVENLY HOSTS burst forth in praise, giving **grace-filled revelation to lowly shepherds**, *"Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David,* ***a Saviour, which is Christ the LORD****… and suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host* ***praising God****, and saying,* ***Glory to God*** *in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men."* (Luke 2:10-14) *"And the shepherds returned,* ***glorifying and praising God*** *for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them."* (Luke 2:15-20)

**<u>QUESTION</u>: Will I allow the *annual man-created Holiday system*** *to steal and/or MINIMIZE HOLY CELEBRATIONS OF CHRIST from MY experience?* **The Birth of Christ is about salvation from SIN,**

**salvation from eternal destruction, and salvation INTO the family of God!**

**7. Simeon and Anna!** *"Then took he Him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, LORD, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation, which thou has prepared before the face of all people; A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel."* (Luke 2:28-38) Behold as blessed Anna joins the mighty chorus of those who GIVE THANKS for the Saviour who brings redemption!

**GOD- ORDAINED celebrations are NEVER an escape from reality;** and they **never** cater to the rich, or the talented, or those who feel themselves righteous!

**DEEP REALITY: To escape sadness, the typical American Christmas requires** lots of money and no broken down lives or families. **In contrast, the Birth of Christ shouts**— BRING NO MONEY! Bring all your broken down lives! Bring a hungry, humble heart, and enter into every day CELEBRATION and an eternity with JESUS! (Please read, Luke 4:18-19!)

**8. ALMOST 2 YEARS LATER,** the celebration of the Coming of Messiah continued! Jesus, almost two years old, was now residing in a *house*. **Gentile Magi**, after much journeying, by Divine revelation they had learned of ONE WHO WAS WORTHY OF WORSHIP AND PRAISE! *"... they... fell down, and **worshipped Him**: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented **UNTO HIM** gifts..."* (Matt. 2: 1-11) **ALL FOCUS, ALL GIFTS, ALL WORSHIP WAS FOR JESUS!**

**MORE AMAZING REALITY:** The Holy Spirit hid the birth date of Jesus. No one in the New Testament EVER celebrated the birthday of Jesus— not on December 25 or on any other day. They never had manger scenes, no trees, no decorations, etc, etc. (I'm just reporting the truth, as given in the Bible.)

SO, MAYBE they must have FORGOTTEN ALL ABOUT THE BIRTH OF CHRIST? No, not at all! After Jesus died, arose, ascended, and as He reigns in and from Heaven— **CELEBRATION CONTINUED! EXAMPLES:**

**1.** *"And the Word (Jesus) became flesh, and dwelt among us (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father), full of grace and truth."* (John 1:14)

**2. *"Thanks be to God for His unspeakable Gift."*** (2 Cor. 9:15)

**3. *"...Jesus Christ: Who being in the form of God,...*** *took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men...he humbled Himself ...unto death, even the death of the cross."* (Phil. 2:1-11)

**4. *"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: GOD WAS MANIFEST IN THE FLESH....."*** (1 Tim. 3:16)

**JOY! WONDER! Giving Thanks!** Praising and CELEBRATING Jesus Christ! TELLING THE GOOD NEWS into all the world, till He comes back— **these are New Testament and proper responses** from those who have been rescued from sin, self, satan, and a doomed society! **"O Come, let US adore HIM!"**

**THIS IS ALSO TRUE:** Those who do not believe that they need to be saved from their sin, their sinning, and from the holy wrath of God— **they will never welcome and celebrate the Saviour from sin!** *However, for those who have been broken over their sin— they never GET OVER the Coming of Christ!*

**MAY ONE AND ALL EXPERIENCE THE JOY, WONDER, and CELEBRATION OF JESUS CHRIST UNTIL He comes back**— by living the gospel and TELLING the gospel and ADVANCING the gospel around the world!

LET US CELEBRATE JESUS! / James Bell / www.southsidegallatin.org

## SOUTHSIDE NEWS NOTES:

**MONDAYS: Jail Ministry—** First and Second Monday of each month at 7:30pm. Questions? Contact Mike Munday at 615-681-7533

**TUESDAYS:** Come and sing every Tuesday night at Gallatin Health Care nursing home. Meet at the front door at 5:30PM. Contact Bradley at 615-804-3054.

**WEDNESDAYS:  6:30pm— Children** Ministry/activities;  **6:30pm— Youth** Activities and Bible Study— (For both of these… enter via double doors by gym)

 **6:30pm— Wednesday CHURCH PRAYER SERVICE**… Come in side entrance, iron steps… meet in Ladies Sunday School Room

**LADIES BIBLE STUDY— Studies in the Gospel of Luke! TAKING A BREAK…**
**NEXT MEETING: *January 3, 2017* @ 11:00am;** Cindy Bell teaching. [Front door open at 10:45 till 11:05am; or come in Iron Steps side entrance!]

**MEN: EVERY SATURDAY MORNING @ 8am: Men's Fellowship/Bible Study!** *{DECEMBER Study: Matthew 1 & 2 and Luke 1 & 2}* **… Come to back of Church building… Come in under the drive-thru** awning… walk forward… till you smell the coffee and biscuits!

**SUNDAY SERVICES: Sunday, December 4:**
**9:30am-** Sunday School **// 10:45am-** Worship Service **//**
**NOON** 'Covered-dish' Lunch // **1:00pm** Afternoon Service
**Sunday, December 11:**
**9:30am-** Sunday School **// 10:45am- Worship Service //**
**NOON** 'Covered-dish' Lunch // **1:00pm** Afternoon Service

**Sunday, December 18:**

 **9:30am- CHURCH-WIDE FELLOWSHIP 'BRUNCH'** (During the Sunday School hour, the ENTIRE CHURCH FAMILY is ASKED to gather in the Fellowship Hall. **Bring** 'breakfast/brunch' food stuffs between 9am and no later than 9:20am… We will start eating NO LATER than 9:30am)

 **10:45am- Worship Service**

Sunday, December 25: 10:45am WORSHIP SERVICE & LORD'S SUPPER

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**NOTICE:** The above schedule for December 2016, is not exactly the same as we usually have… **but it is PRINTED CORRECTLY for this year's plans:**

**1. NOTE: We plan to observe the LORD'S SUPPER only on the 25th.**

**2. NOTE:** We realize that some families may not be in town on the 25th…. BUT, PLAN NOW TO BE assembled with a congregation of Bible-believing, Christ-focused saints, WHERE EVER you are on Sunday, December 25th. **AND IF YOU ARE IN GALLATIN…** and even if you HAVE COMPANY COMING… Honor the LORD! Plan now to be present for the worship service. Inform your guests. Bring them with you!

**3. DURING THE WORSHIP SERVICE on the LORD'S DAY of December 25th…**

We plan to have the congregation to join together in SINGING unto the LORD, rejoicing in the ADVENT, the Birth of Jesus Christ the LORD; AND the congregation will also JOIN IN the sharing of some of the MANY REASONS why JESUS CAME!

**We will conclude in worship, by observing the LORD'S SUPPER.**