



*Joyfully Sharing God's Unboundless Love with all in our community
without Limitation, Exception, or Condition*

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Can Anything Good Come Out of Nazareth?

by Dustin Maddox, Lay Minister & Commissioned Ruling Elder



I have always been struck by the opening chapter of John's biography of Jesus. The first eighteen verses are some of the most prosaic in all of Scripture that connect so many theological strands from nearly every other part of the Bible. It's poetic, majestic, complex -- the kind of thing you memorize to sound profound when you recite it at family dinner. But then, just a few verses later, we're brought back down to earth with a stark contrast when Nathanael -- who would become one of Jesus' first followers -- responds to his friend's excited report that Israel's long-awaited Messiah has finally arrived on the scene and hails from Nazareth by snidely saying, "*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*"

Now, this may not sound like that big of a deal on the surface; perhaps he was asking a genuine question. But under the surface, we begin to see the judgmental pretension lurking. Nazareth, you see, was a backwater town full of uneducated, blue-collar, working class folk who were largely dependent upon the wealthy, educated elite for their employment. Nazareth was an out-of-the-way rest stop while you were on your way to somewhere better and more cosmopolitan. With this in mind, we begin to see that yes, of course, every region has their "Nazareth," and so Nathanael, like us, doesn't necessarily expect off-the-map places to be integral cites of power or renewal. Thus, "Can anything good (i.e., newsworthy, worthwhile, objectively significant) come out of Nazareth (i.e., insignificant, forgettable, a non-destination)?"

Nathanael's question is intriguing to me because, if we're honest, I think we similarly ask ourselves the question, "*Can anything good come out of Fresno?*" Even though Fresno is California's fifth largest city, we are the state's urban "Nazareth," the working class rest stop on the way to Los Angeles or San Francisco. Fresno is perhaps a place where people are from, but it's not high on people's list of places they want to be. The only media attention we tend get is due to high crime and poverty rates or reports of terrible air quality (thanks Bay Area and Southern California!), or when Fresno State has an uncharacteristically good football team. But perhaps none of this is more prevalent than in the disdainful summers when we are forced to bear triple-digits temperatures. Who would choose to be in Fresno in the summer? Eeww, gross!

I wonder about all of this because I think this has the potential to subtly-yet-powerfully lower our

expectations about the place we call home, to find ourselves in Nathanael's shoes, questioning whether God could actually do anything with our place.

This, in turn, raises questions about whether or not God could actually do anything good or true or beautiful with us. In our worst moments, we may ponder: "Can anything good -- in any truly meaningful, lasting, or transformative way -- come out of my life?" This raises questions about the power of our imaginations.

Pastor and theologian Greg Boyd says this:

"[O]ur relationship with God is completely mediated by our mental conceptions of God. The depth of our love and the vibrancy of our relationship with God can never outrun the beauty of our conceptions of God. So too, the beauty of our life will never outrun the beauty of the way we envision God."

According to Boyd, there exists a powerful and profound correlation between how we imagine God, what we expect from God, and, ultimately, how we experience God. This, of course, shapes our imaginations regarding how we expect God to interact with our lives and the places and spaces in which we live.

I wonder what would happen if we committed the summer months to expanding our imaginations about God? I wonder what would happen if we came to expect that God is powerfully present in our lives and in our city?

I wonder what would happen if we began to imagine there was a bigger purpose to our living in Fresno than affordable housing and exceptional burritos?

I wonder what would happen if, during these hot summer months, we gathered people into our cool, air-conditioned homes or around our refreshing pools, sat down over a meal, and then began to seek God in prayer, asking how we might begin to expand our expectations of what might be possible through us? I wonder what might happen if we began to prayerfully imagine God healing the deep wounds of our lives? I wonder what could be possible if we came together and prayed for the imagination to see things done in Fresno as they are in Heaven?

I wonder about this because the way we answer the question, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" is, in a very real way, the litmus test of our faith. The answer, of course, is an unequivocal, "Yes!" God is always doing the unexpected through unexpected people from unexpected places. This appears to be God's preference in dealing with humanity. Maybe -- just maybe -- as we prepare for a new season of ministry at University Presbyterian Church (which will come in God's perfect timing), God will do more than we can possibly ask or imagine through a little band of Presbyterians at 1776 East Roberts Avenue.

So, dear friends, *Can anything good come out of Fresno?*

Let's expand our imaginations and see what's possible. *Dustin*

A Musical Summer at UPC

by Cactus Harris, Director of Music & Arts and Resident Organist

As the Chancel and Bell Choirs take a break for the summer, we have a variety of talented musicians lined up to add to our summer worship services. The hosting of recitals and concerts at UPC has helped subsidize the assortment of outside musicians we are able to bring in. This summer we will enjoy everything from strings, woodwinds, brass, and vocalists providing special music.



Our first guest musician is with us on Pentecost Sunday, June 4 during the 9 a.m. service. Steve Vincent will be covering as organist and pianist. He will be sure to bring the spirit, as he is a very talented keyboardist, with some gospel flare!

Thank You All!

With the many changes happening this summer, none make me more excited than getting married to Krista Moore! As we begin our lives together, *we can't express our gratitude enough for how the people of UPC have taught, given, and loved us.* With regard to our nuptials, we are having a small wedding June 3 at my home church, St. James Episcopal in Paso Robles, with a reception at the family ranch. We would love to celebrate with our UPC family and friends upon returning from our honeymoon, with a cake cutting and dessert reception. Look for more info to come!

Exploring the Text of a Hymn: How It Came to Be

Continuing our hymn exploration series, I am including a snippet of one of our wedding hymns "*Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*." This wonderful text by prolific hymn writer, Charles Wesley, seeks to capture the transformative power of love, specifically, Christ's divine love. What many don't know about this text, is that it was actually a parody of another song. Wesley reworked a piece by English composer Henry Purcell (who composed the famous "trumpet tune" most often heard at weddings) from the opera *King Arthur*. Here is an original verse from the opera:

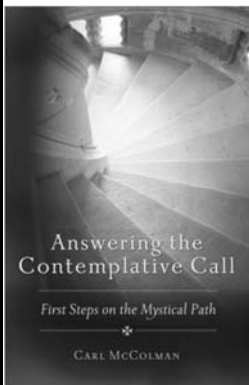
Fairest Isle, all isles excelling,
Seat of pleasures and of loves;
Venus here will choose her dwelling
And forsake her Cyprian groves.

Wesley's purpose for parodying, was not like that of entertainer Weird Al Yankovic who changes the lyrics of pop tunes to humorous lyrics like "*I Love Rocky Road*" instead of "*I Love Rock and Roll*", but was to express his conviction that nothing was beyond redemption or could not be enlisted for God's purposes. So, for Charles Wesley, parody became a way of claiming secular models for sacred purposes, as he adapted a song from *King Arthur* about Venus, the mythological goddess of love, to a hymn celebrating the true divine Love. You'll find Charles Wesley's words on page 366 of our hymnal, *Glory to God*.

Gratefully, Cactus

Summer Reading with the Contemplative Prayer Group

by Cathy Wingert, Leader of the Contemplative Prayer Group



The Contemplative Prayer Group meets Mondays at 6:30 p.m. in the Godly Play Room (Rooms 3-4) for Christ-centered meditation. No previous experience is necessary, just a desire to spend quiet, still time with the Divine.

Each summer, the group adds to their evening by discussing a book they have chosen to read together. This summer they will be reading *Answering the Contemplative Call: First Steps on the Mystical Path* by Carl McColman. The study will begin on Monday, June 5 and starts immediately after their regular prayer service. All are welcome to join in. It's a great way to learn about contemplative prayer while experiencing it. For more information, click [here](#) to email Cathy Wingert, or call her 287-0286.

A Moment on the Children's Moment

by Dustin Maddox, Lay Minister Ct Commissioned Ruling Elder

For many years, the Children's Moment has been a brief interlude of childlike joy in the middle of our worship gatherings. As a community who prioritizes the inter-generational connection of children in worship, we are always attempting to find how to best contribute to the faith formation of the youngest members of our community. We have taken vows during the baptisms of these children to play an active role in their lifelong apprenticeship to Jesus.



Now, with over a year of Godly Play experience under our belts, we have come to the conclusion that the Children's Moment is no longer helpful in setting our children up for successful and constructive faith formation. This decision was made, in part, in response to feedback from the Godly Play teachers -- who also happen to be the parents of these children -- because it was becoming increasingly challenging to settle the children down in the classroom. Godly Play is a place where children are encouraged to "walk more slowly and talk more softly," to listen attentively and reflect. We want to do all we can to effectively provide this for all of our children. Session discussed this decision at their last meeting and is unified in their full support of doing whatever it takes to make our Children's Ministry thrive.

A couple of responses to numerous questions and concerns that I have received regarding this decision. First, the children are not being "kicked out" of worship. They are being dismissed to Godly Play (which is patterned after the structure of our worship services) at the exact same time as before. The children are dismissed when they are in the 9 a.m. service in order to allow for the 9:30 start time for Godly Play, which enables families from the 11 a.m. service to participate. Second, this is fully in line with our prioritization of the many needs of young families and doesn't detract from our desire to be intergenerational. For those who prefer to have children in the whole worship service, we extend a welcome invitation to attend the 11 a.m. service where children remain in worship. Third, if you would like to gain more clarity about what Godly Play is, how it works, and why this decision was made, Renée or Dustin will be pleased to talk with you and even arrange a time for you to come observe a Godly Play lesson. Finally, this decision is not directed at any one child, but was made in order to accommodate the needs of *every one of our children* and provide greater support to the parent volunteers who give of their time each week to teach and embody the love of Jesus for our children.

If you have any further questions, comments, or concerns, please do not hesitate to talk with Renée, myself, or any of the Elders.

Monthly Food Distribution Helps Our Neighbors



If you've been around UPC over the last few years, you are probably familiar with our monthly food distribution that takes place every third Saturday of the month. Perhaps you've even donated some peanut butter, tuna, paper bags, or some of your own money to help make it happen.

Last month, we shared how the distribution works. How we place an order with the Community Food Bank, who then delivers it the Thursday morning prior to distribution so volunteers can store items awaiting Saturday's distribution where some volunteers arrive at 8 a.m. to sort the food into 60 equal shares, and

others extend hospitality with coffee and conversation as clients gather for the 9 a.m. distribution.

This month, we add some history you might not know about how this all got started, as well as update you on our latest "innovations."

One of UPC youth members, Claire Buchanan submitted a proposal as part of a Girl Scout project, identifying our neighborhood as a food desert, which exists when particularly nutritious food is difficult to obtain due to availability, affordability, distance, or limited places to shop in a given area. Partnering with the Community Food Bank, a pilot "mega-distribution" took place on Saturday, March 22, 2014, with 37 volunteers distributing food to over 1 00 families. It was then decided that UPC could handle a monthly distribution to 60-70 families.

The latest addition to the Distribution is fresh items from the UPC Community Garden which began in the spring of 2016. It was started by Beth Buchanan as she felt we should add some fresh items grown on our campus for our neighbors who come to the distribution. She and a host of volunteers set up tubs and a hydroponic watering system and now we are able to share fresh herbs and vegetables with those who come for the distribution. This spring, four citrus trees were added and we'll eventually add UPC grown fruit to the Distribution.

If you have questions or would like to help on Thursday or Saturday, come by on distribution day or click here to email Dustin, or text him at 288-0083.

Session Report

Session met for their regular monthly meeting on Tuesday, May 9. At the meeting, they continued to dig deeper into their study of the on-going series of "Growing Young Strategy" by introducing the topic of *Taking Jesus' Message Seriously*.

Regrettably, the UPC Session accepted the resignation of our Clerk of the Session Jane Reid. Elders expressed deeply felt thanks to Jane for her committed service to the UPC Session and congregation. Session's prayers, love, and complete support are with her daily as she continues to focus on her health and happiness. In the meantime, Session is looking for a new Clerk to replace Jane and continue with her duties.



Session began the systematic membership review based on the new Book of Order categories on membership, which include primarily the elimination of the inactive member status. The list of inactive members was previously reviewed by the Deacons and John and Lorna Bosavanh. A letter will be sent to those on the list offering the alternatives of remaining on the membership rolls, transferring their membership to another church, or being removed from the rolls. A final list based on the response from the letter will be presented to Session at the August meeting for final approval.

There was a lengthy discussion on the reaction to removing the Children's Moment from the 9 a.m. service. (See the article above.)

The Financial Report indicated the church is on track with giving and spending as of the end of April 2017.

Pastor Renée reported on the progress of the Pastor Nominating Committee and the process moving forward.

Session then moved to an Executive Session to consider options to fill the Associate Pastor position.

The next regular Session meeting is on Tuesday, June 13, 2017.

UPC Groups

Sunday Night Youth Group: This group for our teens usually meets Sunday nights at 6:30 p.m. in the Youth Room for fun, laughs, and Jesus. This summer, Dustin has some surprises in mind, so look for more information to come. For more information, email Dustin at dustin@upcfresno.org, or text him at 288-0083.

Contemplative Prayer: Come Mondays at 6:30p.m. to the Godly Play Room (Rooms 3-4) for Christ-centered meditation and, this summer, for a book study too (See the article above) No previous experience is necessary, just a desire to spend quiet, still time with the Divine. For more information, email Cathy Wingert at wingy104@aol.com.

Women's Bible Study: The group meets for study and prayer Wednesdays from 9:30-11 a.m. They conclude their study of the Sermon on the Mount on June 14, then take the rest of the summer off. They invite you to join them for prayer and study now, or when they begin again in September to study *Women of the Old Testament*. For more information, email Laura Lindegren at punkin2826@yahoo.com, or call her at 299-1838.

Intercessory Prayer Service: This monthly service, where all are invited to come pray for loved ones, members of our congregation, community, and world, meets Monday, June 5 and Monday, July 3, at 7 p.m. For more information, email Pastor Tedd at teddlyons@gmail.com, or call/text him at 906-1438.

Presbyterian Women (PW): Presbyterian Women meet monthly on the second Tuesday at 9:30 a.m. They take the summer off, so watch for information about their September meeting. All women are invited to PW. If you have questions, email Ruth Kallenberg at rbkallenberg@gmail.com, or call her at 431-7681.

Clippers Summer Gatherings:

Wednesday, June 14 at Shinzen Gardens at 4 p.m.: Clippers will meet at the Shinzen Garden at Woodward Park for a tour of the garden, followed by dinner together at Sweet Tomatoes. For seniors, park entry is \$3; garden entry \$1. RSVP by June 10 to the Gists at 299-7885 or Babcocks at 299-5276.

Friday, July 7 at the Kingsburg Band Concert: Clippers July event is the Kingsburg band concert. The concert begins at 8 p.m. but dinner and/or dessert are available in the park earlier. Meet at approximately 6:30 p.m. and sit together. Bring your own chairs. No RSVP needed, but for information or directions, email Ruth Kallenberg at rbkallenberg@gmail.com, or call her at 431-7681.

Pub Theology: Join the discussion on Tuesday, June 20 and Tuesday, July 18 from 6:30-8:30 p.m. at Sequoia Brewing Company (corner of Champlain and Perrin in the Piazza Del Fiore Center). Add your voice to the discussion of a variety of topics concerning faith, religion, and God. Seating is limited so come early to ensure a spot. They meet monthly on the third Tuesday. Listening and discussion are encouraged; drinking is optional. For more information, email Dustin at dustin@upcfresno.org, or text him at 288-0083.

Meeting at UPC

Sheeper Than Therapy: Enjoy a group of knitters and crocheters whose skills range from beginner to expert. They meet at UPC the first Saturday of the month. Join them Saturday, June 3 and Saturday, July 1 from 8:30-11 :30 a.m. For information, email Pastor Renée at rrico@aol.com.

<p>June Birthdays 3 Phethieng Thirakull 5 Tom Klein 6 Denice Leslie Laura Lindegren 7 Oscar Donahue 8 Nancy Engstrom 9 Kom Thammavongsa 12 Richard Gist 13 Florence Ulrich 14 John Gabel 16 Paul Braswell 18 Alicia Ayars 20 Diddy Wagner 24 Debby Quintero 25 Daphne Stottlemire 28 David Stolling 30 Kurt Rossi</p> <p>June Anniversaries 2 Tim & Amy Evans 4 Micah & Christy Qualle 6 Kristian & Rachel Fern 9 Bob & Andrea Smith 14 Cordie & Deborah Qualle</p>	<p>June Anniversaries cont. 15 John & Lorna Bosavanh 18 Stephen & Denise Grisez 20 Pat & Liz Dodds Wayne & Carol McMillen 22 Dave & Chris Gromis 23 Dustin & Robin Maddox 24 David & Sandra Knudson 26 Adam & Moira Harada Tom & Ruth Klein Kim & Denice Leslie Phil & Kat Melcher</p> <p>June Calendar 1 Thursday Bible Study 7 p.m. 3 Sheeper Than Therapy 8:30 a.m. 4 Pentecost Sunday Youth Group 6:30 p.m. 5 Contemplative Prayer 6:30p.m. Intercessory Prayer 7 p.m. 6 Deacons 7 p.m. 7 Women's Bible Study 9:30 a.m. 8 Bell Choir Rehearsal 6:30 p.m.</p>	<p>June Calendar cont. 10 Kurt Gearhart Memorial 2 p.m. 11 Youth Group 6:30 p.m. 12 Contemplative Prayer 6:30 p.m. Young Families Potluck 6:30 p.m. 13 Presbyterian Women 9:30 a.m. Session 6 p.m. 14 Women's Bible Study 9:30 a.m. 15 Thursday Bible Study 7 p.m. 17 Food Distribution 8 a.m. 18 Father's Day 19 Contemplative Prayer 6:30p.m. 20 Pub Theology 6:30 p.m. 22 Thursday Bible Study 7 p.m. 26 Contemplative Prayer 6:30p.m. 27 Ministry Meetings times vary</p>
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<p>July Birthdays 1 Rita Bodine-Dei 2 Gloria Pearson Ken Scott 5 Emma Glover 6 Judy Adams Karen Aughinbaugh Allison Howells Janis Khamvongsa 7 Carol Corson Thong Douangmala David Foster 8 Bob Berend Dan Cunningham 9 Hollie Volpp 10 Leslie Knutsen Peggy Scott 13 Jennifer Keran 14 Beth Buchanan Matt Stalling Joe Tapia Nancy Youngs 15 Bobbi Mason 16 Devyn n Braswell Julie Buchanan Josh Squire 17 Elli Reid</p>	<p>July Birthdays cont. 19 Ruth Kallenberg 20 Calvin Fern Chet Hansen 21 Patrick Chu 22 Gary Knutsen Carrie Minturn 25 Doug Haas Kathleen Jones 26 Lou Paradise 27 Lynnette Spaulding Julie Townsend 29 Cameron Taylor 30 Mike Watkins Chuck Wilson 31 Ursula Masquelier</p> <p>July Anniversaries 1 Orville & Leslie Ste- phenson 8 Terry & Dawn Lawrence 14 Richard & Susan Hauert 19 Jesse & Rachel Madsen 20 Doug Lowe & Kristin Gearhart 25 Amy & Shanonn Hemmingson</p>	<p>July Calendar 1 Sheeper Than Therapy 3 Contemplative Prayer 6:30 p.m. Intercessory Prayer 7 p.m. 4 Independence Day - office closed 10 Contemplative Prayer 6:30 p.m. Young Families Potluck 6:30p.m. 15 Food Distribution 8 a.m. 17 Contemplative Prayer 6:30 p.m. 18 Pub Theology 6:30 p.m. 24 Contemplative Prayer 6:30 p.m. 31 Contemplative Prayer 6:30 p.m.</p>
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