

They're Lining Up...

August 3 – August 9

Friday: Clarity

Read: Isaiah 49:6⁶ he says: "It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

Reflect:

Another song we sang on Sunday was "Today". The end of verse two states, May we live lives that are worthy; Of your calling; That praise Your name. One of the choruses states a desire to "reflect Your mercy".

Grace elicits a response. It is not freely given just for the sake of being freely given. We are to respond to God's grace by living a holy life. Similarly, the Jewish people were to live a holy life in response to being God's "chosen people" (*segullah*). We would be remiss to say no one did/tried – but the majority did not.

Somehow the blessing promised to all through Abram (cf. Gen12) was misconstrued to rest on a select few. Here YHWH says "You don't understand, My grace is for everyone" ("nations" is the same word from Monday). Some call this the "Great Commission" (cf. Mt28:18-20) of the Old Testament...

Respond:

How have you lived a "worthy" life today?

Do you think grace is freely given, or given to elicit a response? Why?

What are your biggest struggles in realizing that God's love is for everyone? In other words, how do you propel yourself to share Him with others?

Are faithful in fulfilling the Great Commission?

Pray: Pray for NLCC to be a "light" for Emporia and the surrounding communities. Be in prayer for the upcoming school year – pray our students will represent God well to their peers. Ask God to help you become more concerned for those who don't yet know of His love.

The single file line of people is now 49 miles longer. That's basically the distance between Emporia and Topeka on the turnpike. For a line to grow that much since April 27th, it must indicate there is something very worthwhile at the end of it. Unfortunately that is not the case. At the end of this line is emptiness, no joy, but pain, no love, but torment...

What's at the end of this line? The end of this line is a total separation from God. In other words, a separation from everything that is good in this world. It's a sad fact, one that I don't think people realize. When a person's physical life on earth is done they won't enjoy being in "hell" because "that is where all of their friends are..." Friendship is an aspect of community; community comes from God Who has always existed in community (the Trinity). And since "hell" is the total absence of God...well the implications of that (i.e., nothing good is there) are mind numbing...

I would like to think that if people realized the end of the line that has grown 49 miles longer since I first told you about it (and is now close to 53,000 miles long) has such horror and emptiness – that they'd change paths and get in a different line.

I'd also like to think that since we've at least heard about this growing line that we would do whatever we can to keep people from getting in it. Wouldn't you stop someone, even if they were a total stranger, from getting in a line (that you could physically see) if it had a firing squad at the end of it?

I think we care enough, but caring enough has to be translated into action. That is why it isn't simply "evangelism" (i.e., sharing the Gospel which is the Good News) that is important, but doing it in a way that meets needs. We see Jesus do that with healings and by simply being with people the religious establishment of His day viewed as "unclean".

Recently a portion of New Life's body delivered groceries to needy families in Emporia. While that one time event is/was wonderful – it needs to be ongoing. Will you go back? In the near future we hope to assist one of the schools in Emporia in a real, tangible way. Will you be a part of that?

Part of evangelism is being concerned about the things that concern God. We typically stop at "lost people". God is concerned about more than that. I'd say He's concerned primarily about our holiness...because when we truly live holy lives we're genuinely concerned about the things which concern God, and "lost people" are on that list.

Saturday: Do we ask?

Read: Acts 6:1-7

Reflect:

Last Sunday we also sang "You Said". The chorus states, You said, 'Ask and I'll give the nations to you.'; O Lord, that's the cry of my heart; Distant shores and the islands will see Your light as it rises on us.

If the nations are ever going to hear of God's amazing love for them, more people are going to have to share the Good News. Bringing it closer to home, if Emporia is ever going to hear (and experience) God's amazing love for them, more of us are going to have to share the Good News.

Tomorrow we again look at "Empowering Leadership". It's what the leaders of New Life want to be. And, just like any of the other quality characteristics we're looking at through the Natural Church Development health assessment – it's one we will always need to improve upon. Fortunately, that is the design of/for the church.

Respond:

Will you pick up a "pray for China" wrist band tomorrow and wear it to remind you to pray for China during the Olympics?

How can New Life do a better job of reaching different ethnic groups that live here in Emporia? What about those who 'look like us'?

How have you seen New Life's leaders be more empowering in the recent past? How have you seen them be the opposite of empowering? Will you let us know – in either case?

Pray: Tell God of your desire to grow in your love towards all people. Pray that God is glorified and lives are transformed throughout the world (today and tomorrow) as believers gather for worship together. Pray for God's guidance for New Life.

Monday: Everyone

Read: Psalm 117 ¹Praise the LORD, all nations! Extol him, all peoples! ² For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD!

<p>Reflect: Yesterday we sang, “Come, now is the time to worship; Come, now is the time to give your heart; Come, just as you are to worship; Come, just as you before your God; Come. One day every tongue will confess You are God; One day every knee will bow; Still the greatest treasure remains for those who gladly choose You now...”</p> <p>It’s a catchy tune, and while it is somewhat recent – the idea behind it certainly isn’t. In Psalm 117 the same sentiment is expressed.</p> <p>The word for “nations” is a word commonly used in the Old Testament to depict those who are not in a covenant relationship with God. However, here the command to worship YHWH is extended to everyone – both the “nations” (i.e., pagans or Gentiles) and “all peoples” – (a word commonly used for God’s covenant people).</p>	<p>Respond: How frequently are the songs we sing on Sunday morning (or your favorite songs of praise to God) on your lips?</p> <p>How aware are you of the Bible’s influence on the songs we sing? Do you have a few favorite songs? Consider finding their words/themes in Scripture.</p> <p>Pray for someone you know who needs to submit their life to Jesus.</p>
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Pray: Continue to pray for workers in God’s Kingdom (Mt9:36-38). Thank God for the time of worship with your church family yesterday at the building. Pray for all who come to New Life to continually grow to be more like Jesus.

Tuesday: Response

Read: Psalm 117 ¹Praise the LORD, all nations! Extol him, all peoples! ² For great is his steadfast love toward us, and the faithfulness of the LORD endures forever. Praise the LORD!

<p>Reflect: Another song we sang on Sunday was “Mighty to Save”. The opening verse says, Everyone needs compassion; Love that’s never failing; Let mercy fall on me; Everyone needs forgiveness; The kindness of a Savior; The hope of nations. The chorus reminds us that God is in fact “might to save”.</p> <p>Indeed, the love of YHWH never fails. In verse two we read that His “faithfulness” endures forever. It’s a word that implies absolute reliability and complete integrity. It’s also what He desires of us (e.g., Josh24:14).</p> <p>The fact that YHWH’s love never fails, and that He is loyal to those in covenant with Him (i.e., “steadfast love”) are the basis for us to praise Him. We don’t worship God just because He says we must. We worship Him for Who He is and what He has done.</p>	<p>Respond: How have you seen God’s mightiness to save displayed in your life?</p> <p>How have you shown God your faithfulness to Him over the past week?</p> <p>Have you ever been caught in a rut of worshipping God just because it is the “Christian” thing to do? How did you get out of it? How will you get out of it in the future?</p>
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Pray: Continue to pray for God’s people to have boldness to speak for Him (Acts4:29). Pray for the people of NLCC (and followers of Jesus everywhere) to daily choose faithfulness towards God. Thank God for the ways in which He was faithful to you yesterday as you served Him.

Wednesday: Redeemed

Read: Revelation 7:9-10 ⁹ After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

<p>Reflect: On Sunday we also sang, “Oh Praise Him!”. The second verse says, Turn your gaze to heaven and raise a joyous noise; The sound of salvation come; The sound of rescued ones and all this for our King; Angels join to sing; All for Christ our King...</p> <p>Quite often I’m almost brought to tears when singing those words. It’s such a beautiful thought; the language is powerful – “rescued ones” and later in the song it talks about the love that has “redeemed”. We all ‘fit’ here.</p> <p>In Revelation chapter seven we get a snapshot of God’s space – right now. An uncountable multitude of every ethnicity imaginable...none excluded so long as Jesus is their Lord. It’s a picture we will one day join, but a picture I hope we make more crowded due to the lives we touch with God’s love.</p>	<p>Respond: Revelation frequently groups items in 4’s to indicate totality. Here it is nation, tribes, peoples, and languages. The “nation” word is elsewhere translated “Gentiles” – God’s grace knows no bounds.</p> <p>Do you have songs of praise to God that compel you to action?</p> <p>If you could pick to save only one person you know of who isn’t “saved” – who would it be?</p>
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Pray: Continue to pray for God’s Word to spread rapidly (2Thess3:1) as His workers speak boldly – making the “multitude” in Rev7 even larger. Thank God we aren’t limited to Him working through us to save only one person. Pray for that person you choose in the third part of the “Respond” section.

Thursday: Preparation

Read: Isaiah 40:3-5 ³ A voice cries: “In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD; make straight in the desert a highway for our God. ⁴ Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. ⁵ And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.”

<p>Reflect: Another song from Sunday was “Days of Elijah”. Its first verse states, These are the days of Elijah; Declaring the word of the Lord...Still we are the voice in desert crying; “Prepare ye the way of the Lord!”</p> <p>In Isaiah 40:3 we also read of a voice in the wilderness. The emphasis in these verses is that nothing is going to stop God from accomplishing His purposes. He will make His way to people, bringing salvation as He comes.</p> <p>The “glory of the LORD” means the fullness of His personal presence. A fullness that was manifested in the person of Jesus. Once again, God is faithful – we can trust in His promises.</p>	<p>Respond: A nation’s infrastructure (e.g., roads) is vital to its survival. They are a way of getting things (shipping, travel, etc.) done. How well developed do you think NLCC’s infrastructure is for sharing the gospel message?</p> <p>What are “road blocks” and/or “construction zones” you see in the infrastructure of NLCC?</p> <p>Do you trust God to continue to work through NLCC for His glory?</p>
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Pray: Continue to pray for open doors to share God’s Word (Col4:2-6). Pray for the worship team; pray their practice goes well tonight and pray for their continued preparation as they serve God in this important manner. Pray for the body of NLCC to be open to God doing His work through us.