

RELIGION

9 A

THURSDAY
December 30, 1993

With Jesus
1994 can be
a great year
for everyone



ROBYN GOOL

INSIGHTS

1993 was a very troubling year for so many in our city, state and nation. They are glad to see it come to an end, with a sincere hope that '94 will be better. Some have already lost hope and have taken a posture of resentment, lethargy, and depression.

But I've got good news for all that want a change, for all that want to win, and for all that are willing to try again. The Bible declares the path of the just is as the shining light that grows brighter and brighter unto the perfect day. It declares that Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today and forever. That means things can change.

Jesus preached good news to the poor - they didn't have to be poor anymore. Jesus preached good news to the sick - they didn't have to be sick anymore. He preached good news to the oppressed, afflicted and afraid, they didn't have to be oppressed, afflicted and afraid anymore. They could be loosed and walk in freedom. I contend that this same Jesus that walked the shores of Galilee, opened blind eyes, fed the hungry, raised the dead, caused the deaf to hear, the blind to see, and that raised from the dead is capable and ready to make 1994 a great year for you.

Jesus spoke to a woman named Martha as recorded in Luke 10:41-42 and said "... Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things: But one thing is needful and Mary hath chosen that good part." There are so many people troubled, worried, and full of anxiety in our city today. Searching for answers and full of despair, about to give up on life. Some have turned to crime, drugs, prostitution, gambling, etc. endeavoring to escape or make it. But one thing is needful, and one thing only -- the Word of God embraced by every individual. Jesus explained to Martha that the Word of God will cure all problems. It will bring peace to your mind, health to your body, prosperity to your life, joy to your soul, and direction for daily living.

1994 can be great. It can be better than all previous years. It can be bright, prosperous, and victorious. When everything around seems hopeless and frightening, God's Word can cause you to shine in the midst of darkness.

My advice is, give your life to the one that died for you (Jesus), and get into a good Bible teaching church to begin 1994. Jesus said "... you shall know the truth (Word) and the truth shall make you free."

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African Americans ring in the new year with prayer and hope

Local theologian says watch
night is a 'type of rite of passage'

By Cassandra Wynn
THE CHARLOTTE POST

All over in African American churches bishops, preachers, deacons and elders will lift up a simple prayer for watch meeting service, Rev. James Samuel suspects.

"It is a staple prayer, forever on the lips of African Americans. I would dare say that African Americans will be on their knees praying for the simple trinity - the gifts of life, health and strength," Samuel said.

Samuel, pastor of Little Rock AME Zion Church and dean of Hood Theological Seminary at Livingstone College, will preach at the annual watch meeting at Grace AME Zion Church, 219 S. Brevard St. Grace and Little Rock have combined watch meetings, alternating sites every New Year's Eve.

Samuel called the prayer "holistic" in that it includes all other hopes and aspirations. "Where there's life, there's hope; where there's health, there's happiness and where there's strength, there's possibility."

Despite its billing as a party night, New Year's Eve is a time when many African Americans find their way to church to watch the new year come in.

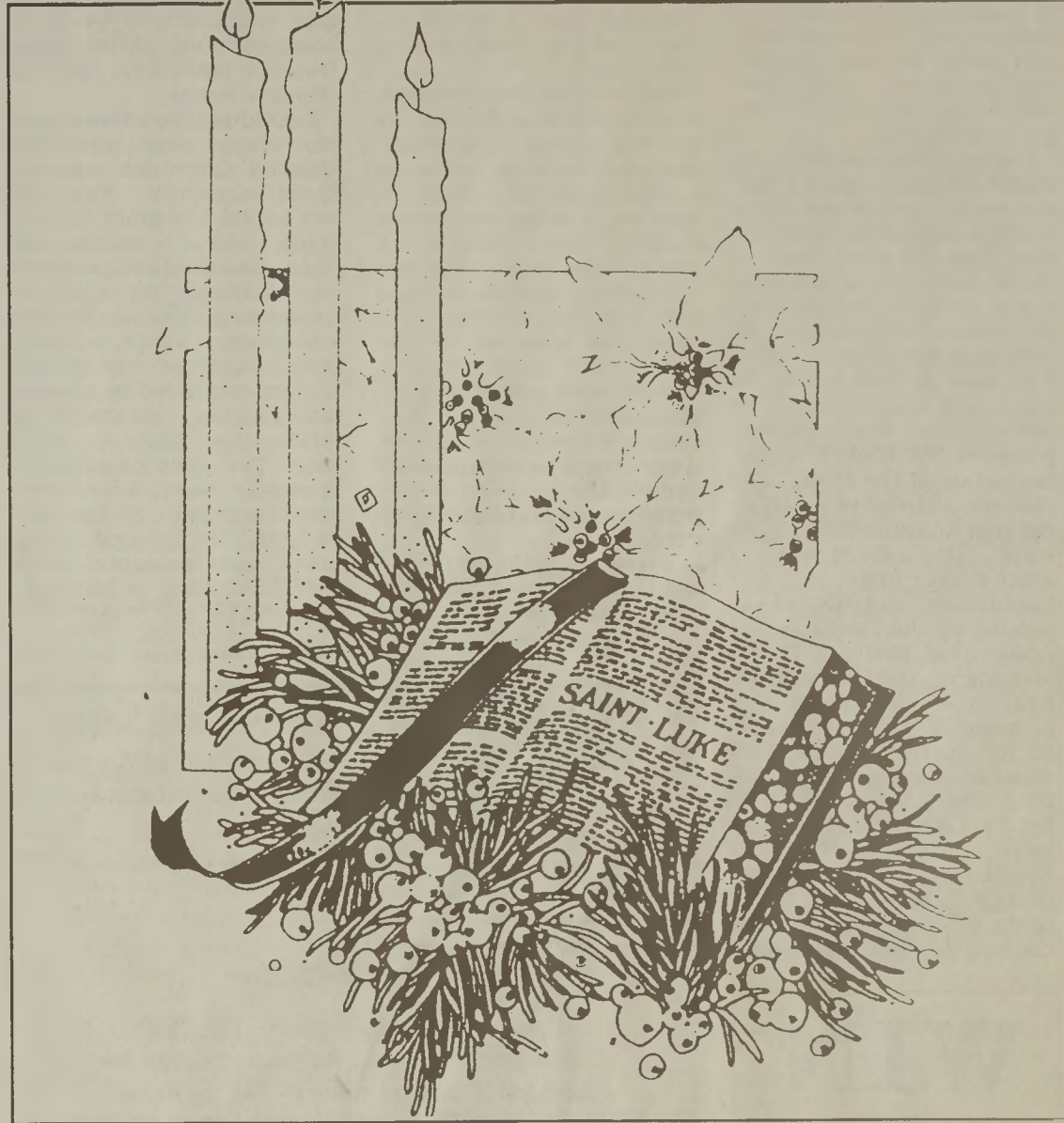
"In my experience, it is attended pretty well," said Rev. George McNeely, pastor at Greenville Memorial AME Zion Church. "Some people go to different functions before the service and some go to them afterward. We're not in church long."

For many people, attending watch meeting means observing a superstition of sorts. "Some people believe that whatever you're doing at the time the New Year comes in, you will be doing all year," McNeely said.

"My emphasis is having that as a time of reflection and rededication," McNeely said. "It is indicative of the importance of church in a person's life. It shows a person has respect for values and ethics. That's special in these times. A lot of people don't value life."

At a typical watch meeting when the clock strikes midnight, the congregation is in prayer. "We have a sermon that ends five or 10 minutes before 12," said Rev. Clinton Davis, associate pastor at Second Calvary Baptist Church. "Then we're in prayer until midnight. I have heard that you pray the old year out and the new year in."

Samuel called watch meeting "a type of rite of passage" for African Americans. "Time becomes the vortex, the central focus of our existence. It does several things. First, it commemorates the past and all of the blessings and benefits which God has bestowed. Second, it celebrates the future. It's a time to come together and look forward with a degree of faith and optimism because we're asking God to be an active, viable and visible part of our lives. And we are committing ourselves, trusting God will give us safe passage."



The service is symbolic of how African Americans deal with time, Samuel said. "We are making a visible statement about our interpretation of time. Time is one of the manifestations in which God extends His or Her benefits and blessings."

African Americans' history of oppression gives them an "apocalyptic view," Samuel reasoned. "The present is a preparing ground for a view rooted in the belief that the future will be better. It is a futuristic kind of faith."

Time, said Samuel, becomes a "vehicle to move closer to God. There no futility, but a futuristic step by step progression."

"Watch meetings are moments where time is more visibly expressed for African Americans. It is our ability to look back and see progress and development that we get empowerment. We realize we can have hope in the future. ... We see

we have made gigantic strides against the backdrop of time. ... How can people come to this point of passage and not have hope?"

A meal is often what follows the service. At Second Calvary, the service is a fellowship breakfast is planned. Grace and Little Rock also will have a meal.

Samuel said that the "hospitality meal" is important. "The meal is a Christian tradition, based on Jewish tradition. When Jews embraced strangers, the first thing they did was invite them to sit down to a meal. If you ate the meal, it forbade you from doing the host harm for seven days. That was a time a person could not worry about harm. In eating, we share our trust, our sense of commitment and our hope that in being with each other, we would become a community of one."

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON "Jesus heals the sick"

Included in the Messianic assignment Jesus accepted as the pattern for His ministry was this: "He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted." This says nothing directly about physical illness, but by implication it points to a practice that was to become prominent in His ministry. Symbolically, He accepted physician as applying to himself.

No one should be surprised, then, at the healing ministry wrought by Jesus, God's Son on earth. The marvel is in the speed with which Jesus accomplished the healings that normally require time--hours to months--for restoring disease-damaged tissues. Jesus was more than expeditor of healing; He was the healer!

Jesus announced in the synagogue at Nazareth that He had come as the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy to bring healing, sight, and liberty to the oppressed. That was too much for His neighbors in the hometown. They rejected Him, violently, and He left their city. It was more than a temporary escape. "Leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum." It seems that Jesus and His family had moved their residence there some months earlier. One can only ponder the many kinds of loss suffered by Nazareth in the departure of the citizens who have become its one claim to worldwide notice.

Jesus did not allow rejection in any one place to hinder the fulfilling of the ministry given to Him by His Heavenly Father. He exemplified the principle He was

later to urge upon His disciples as they went out to announce His coming: "When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another." The work of the kingdom goes on!

From Nazareth to Capernaum is approximately twenty miles "as the crow flies." Capernaum is on the shore of the Sea of Galilee some 650 feet below the level of the Mediterranean Sea. It was a city of considerable population and radiating influence. Two caravan routes passed through it; hence it was the site of a Roman garrison and a center for the collection of taxes. There Jesus taught on several sabbath days; we are not told how many. It becomes immediately evident that He was busy on other days as well.

Jesus' authority rested in His very being, and it was seen in the self-evident truth of what He taught. He had no need to do as the scribes, who bolstered their interpretations of Scripture by quoting extensively from earlier commentators. When Jesus made quotations, even from the Old Testament, it was often to add His own authoritative amendments: "Ye have heard... but I say unto you..." In anyone else, this would have seemed insufferably arrogant; but Jesus gave convincing evidence that He had the right to speak as He did. Moreover, what He said was related clearly and forcefully to life as the people knew it.

Scripture reveals Jesus as rebuking, or calling to account and putting in their place, not only persons and

demons, but also an illness and the winds and seas. He is Lord, and all creation must obey Him.

"Quiet!" One word was enough to express Jesus' rejection of demonic testimony that would confuse the hearers and complicate the Lord's teaching ministry. The time for public proclamation of His messiahship would come later.

It is amazing how low-key Jesus was as He began His Galilean ministry. With a modern campaign manager, there would be advance men to be sure everyone in the community knew when Jesus would be arriving. The media would be alerted, and care would be given to timing things just right for the evening news. Jesus would arrive with great fanfare, meeting the dignitaries of the synagogue and town. There would be some photo-ops. Jesus' message would be carefully scripted by speech writers who had studied the issues that would appeal most to that area.

Yes, we would know how to "package" Jesus for maximum impact. Jesus, however, did things differently. He came virtually unannounced into the synagogues. He spoke "gracious words." He commanded the demons, "Be quiet!" He forbade the very thing that might have been most useful for drawing a crowd, the shout of the demons coming out of those He healed.

It seems that Jesus and others were going home with Simon Peter to the tradition-

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Newsletter - December

This Is A Paid Advertisement By J.M. Little

My dear friends,
The first Sunday in this month was our Fall Fellowship here and it found me rejoicing in the Lord. Our conversation was centered around Christ. Some professed a desire to know Christ and others expressed gladness for the Lord having brought them in contact with the truth and to deal with their hearts for salvation. I left saying, "It was good to have been there." I'm praying that the Lord will give us hearts longing after Him, and that the Lord will deliver hearts and cause them to rejoice in Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

If I can tell you just a little of what makes my heart bleed, it is too see souls go on with no concern for their soul's welfare. You care nothing about the fact that you are going out into eternity without knowing Christ as your Lord and your Saviour. But let me be just as blunt as I can, "IT'S CHRIST OR HELL." And those who sit under the light shall receive a greater damnation if you never repent and turn to Christ. Some here have been under the truth for almost three decades, but you are going farther and farther from the truth each day. You have no concern for the eternal destiny of your soul. And the truth rolls off just like water off a duck's back. Oh, how sad!

December not only brings us down to the end of the year again, but, also, to what the world calls Xmas or Yule days. The world,

religious and secular, calls it the birthday of Christ. And again lately I've heard this expression, "the true meaning of Xmas." This religious world and the secular world are both seemingly unmindful that the Lord Jesus Christ has nothing to do with this celebration. We find the very solemn command in Jeremiah 10:1-4: "HEAR ye the word which the LORD speaketh unto you, O house of Israel: Thus saith the LORD, LEARN NOT THE WAY OF THE HEATHEN, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them. FOR THE CUSTOMS OF THE PEOPLE ARE VAIN: FOR ONE CUTTETH A TREE OUT OF THE FOREST, the work of the hands of the workman, with the axe. THEY DECK IT WITH SILVER AND WITH GOLD; THEY FASTEN IT WITH NAILS AND WITH HAMMERS, THAT IT MOVE NOT." What was Jeremiah, the old weeping prophet, speaking of here? Your Xmas tree that you put up every year. What did our Lord say to do about it? LEARN NOT THE WAY OF THE HEATHEN.

Many of you didn't know that was in your Bible. So this celebration was being carried on long before Christ came as a babe in Bethlehem. In fact, Jeremiah penned these words about 600 B.C. Nimrod, the great-grandson of Noah, started this celebration. What will you do about it? Those who are of God will obey god's Word.