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Faith

Special Events

Being an agent of mercy

Luke 6:36 "Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful."

Luke tells us Jesus was looking at his disciples when he spoke these words. Mercy was an important ministry to Jesus. There are very practical ways to live out his message provided by the examples from how he lived his life.

The four principles of mercy shown by Jesus are: 1. Start looking and listening for other people's needs; 2. Don't be offended by their sins; 3. Choose your words carefully; and 4. Value saving people over keeping rules.

When you show mercy to other people, it is an act of worship. Showing mercy builds fellowship. It is a ministry to other people. You become more like Jesus. The world is against Christians. When the world has beaten us up all week long, what a blessing to come into the sanctuary and receive mercy. The world is becoming self-serving and focused on "me." We are recipients of God's mercy and we are to be his agents of mercy to others. Have a Christian heart this Christmas and be an agent of mercy.

Start looking and listening for other people's needs. Agents of mercy are aware. They look and listen for the needs of others. Philippians 2:4 "Look out for others interests not just your own." Look for people 1) in crisis; 2) in need; 3) in grief; 4) in need of friends; and 5) in need of a second chance.

Don't be offended by their sins. An agent of mercy can't be offended by their sin. Grace and mercy are unconditional love. Jesus wasn't offended by the sins of the people he ministered to. There were thieves, prosti-

tutes, murderers, and tax collectors. We need to call the sin a sin but not let it make the sinner unacceptable to our grace and mercy and the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ. Accept them as a person. Don't tell them to clean their life up and come to Jesus. Tell them to come to Jesus and he will help them clean their life up. The sinner may deny you and your God, but an agent of mercy cannot deny the sinner.



THE REV. RANDALL WOODARD This is the day

1 Peter 4:8 "Love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins." Love has a way of looking at the person, and not the sin. What better way to become more like Jesus than to answer his calling to look past their sins? Ephesians 4:2 "Be patient with each other making allowances for each other's faults." In a nut shell, don't expect unbelievers to act like believers until they are. When they are, walk with them.

Choose your words carefully. Colossians 4:6 "Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone."

You are never persuasive when you are abrasive. In today's world people often pick the most public places to be abrasive. Ephesians 4:29 "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs that it may benefit those who listen."

You may at times need to get somewhere alone with Jesus to confess your weakness with words and ask his wisdom and help to come into your heart and teach you the feelings and the words to show other people mercy. You can be an agent of mercy without accepting or approving what they say and do. The Lord gives to you freely. Learn to give to others freely.

Value saving people over keeping rules. Jesus is much better at cleansing people than we are at bringing them to the cross. Matthew 23:23 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices - mint, dill and cummin. But, you have neglected the more important matters of the law - justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practiced the latter, without neglecting the former." These are the words of Jesus.

There are five places we can be agents of mercy: 1. Look for people in crisis and show support; 2. Look for people with unmet needs and help them; 3. Look for people who are grieving and comfort them; 4. Look for people who need friends and show hospitality; and 5. Look for people who need a second chance and guide them to an opportunity.

Being an agent of mercy requires taking the four principles out of the sanctuary and into the five places where people need mercy. Pray, "Lord, take me into the places needing mercy and make me into an agent of mercy."

Randall Woodard is the pastor of First Baptist Church in Robersonville. He may be reached at randallwoodard69@yahoo.com.

Church announcements are published each week in the Bertie Ledger-Advance. The deadline to submit news items for this listing is 10 a.m. each Monday. Submissions may be emailed to twhite@ncweeklies.com.

Dec. 2

Home for the Holidays

OAK CITY - Home for the Holidays 5 is planned for 5 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 2 at St. Paul Baptist Church.

The pre-Christmas celebration will be presented by The Gospel Five of Oak City, and will feature Resurrection of Greenville, The Gospel Impressions of Lewiston, The Hassell Gospel Singers, The Williams Chapel Male Chorus of Scotland Neck and Mary Brown and the Spiritual Singers of Windsor.

Dec. 3

Musical Festival

AHOSKIE - The G.N. Calviness Gospel Chorus will celebrate its annual Musical Festival at 3 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 3 at Calvary Missionary Baptist Church.

There will be many choirs and groups performing. The church is located at 600 Catherine St. in Ahoskie. The Pastor, the Rev. Dr. J.V. Moody, and congregation invite the public to attend.

Dec. 9-10

Christmas Cantata

WILLIAMSTON - The annual Christmas Cantata titled Emmanuel is planned for Dec. 9 and 10 at Back Swamp Church.

The services will begin at 4 p.m. each evening. The cantata will feature The Voices of Back Swamp and guest soloists and accompanists. The event will be directed by Dr. Michael E. Bunch. The congregation invites the public to attend.

Dec. 16

Evening Prayer

ROXBEL - Evening Prayer will be observed at 5 p.m. Saturday, Dec. 16 at St. Mark's Episcopal Church.

Light refreshments will be served following the service.

The church is located at 206 West Church St. in Roxobel.

The Rev. Canon Sonny Browne and congregation invite the public to attend.

Dec. 24

Evening Prayer

ROXBEL - A Christmas Eve service is planned for 11 p.m. Sunday, Dec. 24 at St. Mark's Episcopal Church.

Light refreshments will be served following the service.

The church is located at 206 West Church St. in Roxobel.

The Rev. Canon Sonny Browne and congregation invite the public to attend.

Stiff Necked

"I have seen these people," the Lord said to Moses, "and they are a stiff-necked people."

Exodus 32:9

It's never a compliment to be called stiff-necked, especially by the Lord. Figuratively it refers to someone who is being stubborn, resistant, rebellious, defiant, and willful.

Only a few month old, we became concerned when the pediatrician referred our baby girl to see a neurosurgeon. We were told that we have a window of time to correct her head before the flat spot became permanent. What was the problem? She was diagnosed with torticollis, a stiff neck.

Apparently in the womb her head had become stuck in one position. Then as she slept in the crib she always favored that one side. The same was true as she was being held. Physical therapy was prescribed to strengthen the weak muscles and stretch out the tight muscles.

The sessions involved much discomfort and crying as she was initially forced to turn her head in a direction in which it did not want to go. Upon doctor's orders, sandbags were placed in the crib to keep her from rolling to the other side. Now after many months, she is

free from the stiff neck. There are no more tears when she looks the other way, and her head is taking shape.

The ord calls those of the first generation of the Exodus "stiff-necked."

As they were freed from the bondage of slavery, the people of God experienced his amazing glory. They saw the ten plagues, the sea divide in two, the great Egyptian army destroyed, manna rain down from heaven, water flowing from a rock, the pillar of cloud by day and fire by night.

However, as Moses lingered on top of Mount Sinai, the newly freed people down below became anxious and afraid. Their stubborn thoughts were turning back to their time in Egypt.

"How good we had it then!" Despite all the amazing events they had witnessed, as soon as they lost sight of their God they quickly reverted to their old ways to fill the spiritual void. They demanded that their priest make them a golden calf to worship, resembling the idols of Egypt. Like an infant with tor-

ticollis that always favors one side, they found it easier to turn back to the way that was more comfortable for them. They favored living for their visible man-made idols over trust in the God they could not see.

The apostle Paul, talking about the golden calf, warns the church, "take heed lest you fall" (1 Corinthians 10). As soon as we lose sight of God, we forget our need for him. When we stop remembering his goodness and grace, we fill that spiritual void with something else. Our stiff necks take us right back to our old ways.

There is a cure for a stiff neck. It is to remember the greatness of God and not forget all that he has done and all that he has promised. Faith is often difficult and uncomfortable. Faith requires admitting a dependence on a God you cannot see. However, when we start to walk by faith and trust in the Lord, following him becomes easier and easier. The discomfort will fade away.

"Take care lest you forget the Lord your God..." Deuteronomy 8:11

The Rev. Charlie Lanier is Pastor of Capeharts Baptist Church near Merry Hill. He can be reached via email at charlielanier@hotmail.com.



THE REV. CHARLIE LANIER Be Still



Bertie Ambulance Service

Corporate Office Bertie Co.

606 South King St., Windsor, NC 27983

252-794-9141 or Toll Free 877-757-1121

ServSafe advertisement including course details, dates (Jan 8-11, 2018), and contact information for registration.

BOARD VACANCIES advertisement listing openings for various boards and committees, including immediate openings and upcoming appointments by month.

Send all church news to Thadd White at twhite@ncweeklies.com

all seasons self storage advertisement with address (1212 N. OAKUM ST, EDENTON) and phone number (252-482-2019).

BANKRUPTCY advertisement offering legal services for foreclosure, lawsuits, and car repossession, calling Allen C. Brown Attorney.