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TAX-EXEMPT

"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" MARK 16:15

February 2019

FROM US TO YOU

It's February, the traditional month that people think about love. Valentine's Day cards, boxes of chocolate, and flowers are a sweet reminder. Little is reliably known about St. Valentine. But it is believed he was a third century Christian who was martyred for his faith. We know that the 16th century Protestant Reformation took a firm stand against saint worship (Matthew 4:10, Luke 4:8). And our prayers should only be made to God (Mathew 6:7-13), never the dead (1 Samuel 28:3-19)! However, the Bible tells us that all dedicated Christians were referred to as saints in the early church (1 Corinthians 16:15, 2 Corinthians 13:13). And the Old Testament uses the term to describe all who love and worship the one true God (Psalm 16:3-4).

For us, Valentine's Day is a nice reminder of a pleasant occurrence that took place on February 14th one year ago. For we were invited to a luncheon at the Coral House Restaurant in Baldwin, New York, the same place where we had our wedding reception in 1980. The invitation was sent to many mature couples in our county by the County Executive. The event was to renew our marriage vows. We sat at a table with several other couples and compared memories of our wedding events. It was nice to find out that there are still so many good marriages today! The bad marriages seem to get more attention. However, choosing the right marriage partner for a lifetime commitment is very important. We have known many Christians, even ministers, who have not had success at that. So what is the secret of our marriage of 38 years? It's simple. We both love and serve the Lord and put Him first, before each other!

We have heard many believers complain that their spouse wouldn't come to Christ as they did. Too often we discover the reason is the believer's lifestyle. Putting Christ first does not mean putting your church first! God views marriage as a sacred union between a man and a woman (Matthew 19:4-6, Hebrews 13:4). Christians who spend all their time socializing with their church and ignoring their spouse are creating serious problems in the marriage. The way you bring your unbelieving spouse to the Lord is not by having a haughty, condescending attitude, with preaching and accusations. It is by setting a good example and getting closer to Christ yourself. If you accuse others of sin but commit similar offenses in your own life, you are setting up a barrier of resentment. Add preaching to that, and you are what Jesus called the Pharisees, a hypocrite (Matt. 15:1-11).

Love is the way you bring others to Christ, not good works or charity alone (1 Corinthians 13:1). Your concern, patience, kindness, generosity, and all the fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-26) are what will touch the heart of your husband or wife. They will see by your love for them how much you love Christ. And they will feel His love for them through you! For example, Eric accepted Christ as his Savior the first year of our marriage. Anne had been Born Again (John 3:3) when she was ten years old, and received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit when she was twelve. A few years into our marriage Anne started to complain about Eric watching professional wrestling. It seemed so

evil to her. But Eric would not give it up. Then Anne stopped complaining about the wrestling and concentrated on getting a closer walk with Christ herself. She gave up the soap operas and similar shows. It was then that Eric saw the changes in her and gave up his wrestling. He then received the Baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 18:24 thru 19:6). We were both water baptized in the Jordan River in 1984 in Israel.

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears... And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love" (1 Corinthians 13:4-13 NIV).

Most Christians think of their church as their mediator between God and man. That is a mistake many make! *"For there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave Himself as a ransom for all men—the testimony given in its proper time"* (1 Timothy 2:5-6 NIV). The church has its place. A good church can teach God's Word and lead new people to salvation. However, good Holy Spirit filled churches are in decline in the western world today. Most have been replaced by social gospel, good works, and politics (Acts 7:48-51). Modern society has fallen so far away from Christ that some churches even have homosexual pastors.

God loves the gay man or woman, and Christ died for them too. But the sin is absolutely abhorrent to the Lord (Romans 1:18-32). As Jesus said of His day, *"These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. They worship Me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men"* (Matthew 15:8-9 NIV).

True love does not flatter people with what they want to hear (1 Thessalonians 2:5). It is to love them enough to tell them the truth, even if it makes them angry. If true Christianity were popular, they would not have crucified Christ. Many martyrs have spilled their blood and died horrible deaths down through the ages so that we can have a pure faith. If you see someone speeding on a road that will lead them right off of a cliff, it's time to call out to them, "Turn around! This road is closed! Didn't you see the signs?" Others may be afraid of offending them. But if they listen to you, it will save their lives! That's real love! To some of you who are reading this, Christ has a simple message. *"You have persevered and have endured hardships for My name, and have not grown weary. Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love"* (Revelation 2:3-4 NIV). Perhaps it is time to rekindle the flame you once held for Christ!

In Christ's love, *Eric and Anne Kaestner*



THE AMERICAN DREAM

By Anne Kaestner

I am a product of the “baby boomer generation.” The phrase refers to those individuals who were born just after World War II, or more specifically from 1947 to 1961. America, for the most part, is a nation of immigrants and their offspring. Immigrants came to this country seeking what is commonly referred to as “The American Dream.” The United States has always been thought of as a land flowing with “milk and honey” (Exodus 3:8 and Leviticus 20:24). I was born a citizen of the United States as I had an American Dad who married my mother, a British war bride, in 1948. Dad lived in England for nine years, during which time Mother had three children of which I am the eldest. It was back in the early days of “Rock ‘n’ Roll.” Elvis Presley was at his zenith, and the United States, which had just soared to new heights of admiration after World War II, began to export its culture globally to a world eager to drink in all that was American. Like most other English schoolgirls of that time, I thought of the United States as a shining star just beyond the horizon. When other children found out that I had an American father, and would soon be going to the United States myself, I was treated with awe and fascination. “Wow, America!” was the attitude, as if I was heading off to a mecca of greatness that was just out of their reach. Hollywood culture was quickly cashing in on this new excitement, and television shows like “77 Sunset Strip” painted a very worldly and glamorous picture of this land that enticed other nations with her wealth and power. Then, when I was eight years old, I finally arrived in the United States. It was in the early 1960’s and John and Jackie Kennedy reigned like royalty in the White House and on the world stage. America felt young and fresh to me, and everything in New York looked so big!

God had special plans for my life that I hadn’t even realized at the time, and a short while after arriving in New York, I was Born Again (John 3:3) at my grandmother’s church in Queens. It’s a good thing that I did come to Jesus at an early age, because the months and years that followed were tumultuous for both me and the nation! The real watershed occurred on November 22, 1963. That afternoon my teacher, Mrs. Robinson, had sent one of the other students across the hall with a note for another teacher. When the girl returned from her errand she announced to Mrs. Robinson and the rest of us, that the class across the hall was crazy. They were saying that the President had been shot! When I got home from school I discovered that everyone else had heard the news. My parents had been at the supermarket that day. Dad had taken his transistor radio with him with its ear plug. They told me later that everyone at the store seemed to be walking about like zombies. Suddenly Dad burst out in a loud voice, “He’s dead!” and all the shoppers froze in their tracks. Most stores had closed up early. People were too much in shock to work. For days after that, the whole nation was in mourning. The President’s funeral was on every television channel. Something spiritual had changed in America. The national optimism was gone and things were never the same again! Slowly the patriotism America had felt turned to inner strife as more and more body bags began returning from Vietnam. Colleges held a never ending series of protests regarding the war. Political rhetoric began to sizzle to a boiling point. Suddenly it became fashionable to hate the establishment, especially the Federal Government. Lyndon Johnson was President then, and one of the favorite chants directed at him was “Hey, Hey, LBJ, how many kids did you kill today?” It was the decade of the sixties, and the whole country seemed to be in rebellion, especially the young. They felt as if the

power of authority they had looked toward for protection, their government, had become their enemy, and their friends and neighbors were dying on a foreign field in Southeast Asia in a war they didn’t understand. The most frightening aspect of that was the common belief among young American males, that they could be next. It was a bitter-sweet time for me. There was much for which to be grateful. The school I attended had very little violence or drug sales when compared with today. Students who went there actually got an education and then went on to college! Despite this, trouble was spreading throughout the nation like a thick spiritual sludge. It reminds me of the old Cecil B. DeMille movie, “The Ten Commandments” where God was sending plagues on Egypt. There is one scene where a thick dark cloud gradually makes its way throughout the land, killing the oldest male child from each family. People see it coming and shriek in fear. Obviously, since it was a movie, this visual effect was necessary in order to convey the spiritual events that were going on at the time. In reality, it was the “angel of the Lord” that carried out God’s commands (see Exodus 3:2 and Exodus 14:19-20) and, unless they choose to be seen, angels do their work in the spirit world (Joshua 5:13-15, Daniel 4:13-23, 10:1-14, 10:20-21, and Acts 12:23). Moreover, that which is spiritual, is not tangible and cannot be visible to the human eye. As Jesus explained in John 3:8, spiritual events are like the wind (Luke 12:55-56). You can see its effect, and feel it against your skin, but it is invisible. We feel spiritual repercussions and see their effects, but we are vulnerable to their power and intimidated by their strength. Spiritually, it seemed that a severe tornado took place after President Kennedy died, and as it moved into each new area, nothing remained untouched by its gusts, except of course that which was built on the solid Rock of Jesus Christ! (Matthew 7:24-27.)



John F. Kennedy

Although there is so much talk about the Constitutional right to freedom of religion, the founders of this nation, and the writers of the Constitution, all claimed to be Christians. Other religions don’t give their people so much freedom, even the liberty to rebel from God if they choose to. God had great plans for America. He built this land of ours through the faith and trust of Christians who put their hope in Him! It’s not surprising that the national emblem of the United States is an eagle, for eagles live in high nests that are built on solid rock! (Job 39:27-28.) This nation was founded on the Rock of God! It became the Promised Land to thousands of people, just as the Hebrews in Biblical times trusted God to deliver them safely to their Promised Land (Hebrews 11:9). When they were thirsty, God provided for them, as a loving father provides for His young. He gave them living water that came out of a rock! (Numbers 20:8-12.) God has provided for the United States the same way. This nation was founded on Christian principles, by those who yearned for freedom and thirsted for truth (John 14:6). As a result God gave us spiritual water from which we should never thirst again! (Matthew 5:6 and John 4:14.) It was water that came out of the Rock. Like the Hebrews, our founders “...did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ” (1 Corinthians 10:4 KJV. Also, read through verse 12). As I was growing up during the sixties, there was a lot that I didn’t understand about the war, or the political assassinations, or the civil rights battles. Yet when I look at this period retrospectively, and with a keener understanding of the deeply spiritual events that were taking place, I see history repeating itself all over again in this Promised Land (Psalm 78). So much had

changed in our country and in the world. It was a difficult time because the hearts of the people had changed. God was trying to teach us something (Proverbs 3:5-7 and Job chapters 38 and 39), and many of those who had looked toward America for strength and protection began to feel betrayed.

The Vietnam War and the anger that ensued from it caused deep emotional pain and a sense of hopelessness. Our society ached like a root canal! This was especially true of the young, and many of them wanted to just “drop out” completely from the world and its horrible cruelty. All of this was occurring because, despite God’s great kindness toward America, she had become smug and self-satisfied, and He was hurt that He hadn’t been getting the credit for all the good things He had given us (Deuteronomy 9:4-5, 31:16-21, Isaiah 47:8-14, Jeremiah 1:16, Proverbs 14:34, and Isaiah 18:1-3). One of the first changes I noticed between British schools and those in America was the fact that Christianity had been taught in the former, while in America the huge crater that had been left after the Creator was taken out of our classrooms, had been replaced with patriotism instead. As a child in school, I spent hours copying down or singing songs about America’s greatness. Yet patriotism didn’t fill the cavity, and, like an aching tooth, our national pain increased. Today Satan wants to go even further, and courses taught on Western Civilization, which were founded on the Word of God, are under attack. As far as governmental laws are concerned, not only is Jesus Christ unwelcome in American classrooms,

but ethnic cultures that were built on a foundation of idolatry and demonic worship are making a comeback! If you are a Christian who has accepted Christ as your Savior and been washed clean of your past, and you come from a culture that is steeped in “*Idolatry, witchcraft, ... and such like...*” (Galatians 5:20-21 KJV), flee from those things as you would run from a burning house, because “*...as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God*” (Galatians 5:21 KJV)! Please do not think that I am holding up the values of any human culture over another (Romans 3:23). The only thing that has made Europe and America great has been her acceptance of Jesus Christ and the Bible, on which these nations were anchored even down to the simple act of dating history either before (B.C.) or after (A.D.)

Christ. In fact, back in 1869, Rev. Alvan Bond, D.D., a professor of Biblical literature at The Theological Seminary at Bangor, Maine, wrote the following in a book entitled “*Young People’s Illustrated Bible History:*” In an age like the present, when error and delusion, in fascinating form, imperil the principles and morals of the young, the greatest safeguard for their protection is a knowledge of God’s Holy Word. Its sacred histories are replete with attractive and startling lessons of truth and warnings easily understood; and as a preparation for a knowledge of perceptive and doctrinal theology, they hold an important place. If Rev. Bond thought that he lived in an age of error and delusion whatever would he think of America today?

The reason why God’s blessings stopped, and the United States has been falling more into spiritual decay and decadence, is because we have fallen from the Rock of our Foundation. We today are a house that is divided (Luke 11:17). The only unity we ever had was in Christ Jesus, and now, even most Christians have backslidden away from Him, and don’t even realize it, because they are comparing themselves to the darkness instead of looking toward the Light (John 8:12)! We are no longer feeling secure as a nation, because we are no longer living on the Rock. Like an eagle’s nest that moved away from the rock of her birth, this nation has moved away from Jesus Christ, and is falling downward fast! Yet, just as Jesus pulled Simon Peter out of the water into which he was sinking, He can also pull us up and

return us to the Rock, as a fallen bird is returned to its nest. God told the Israelites who rebelled against Him, the same thing He is telling America, “*Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and how I bare you on eagles’ wings, and brought you unto Myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine*” (Exodus 19:4-5 KJV). Today we live in a land filled with idols. They are idols of sports, Hollywood, Madison Avenue, Nashville, Wall Street, politics, worldly success, and ancient ethnic gods, which are often given positions of prominence in museums and magazines, and more recently, even in private homes. As with the Hebrews in Biblical times, America has rebelled against her Creator (1 Samuel 8:7). God rejected ancient Israel (Acts 13:46 and 2 Corinthians 3:13-16), His own chosen nation, the only people on Earth who were worshiping their true Creator in those days. Therefore, if He rejected the natural branches (Israel), due to their love affair with pagan idols and cultural gods, surely He can reject this nation as well! (Romans 11:21-23.) It is not too late for America to return to God. The Lord was ready to destroy Nineveh until she repented in sackcloth and ashes (Jonah 3:4-10).

From the end of World War II until the assassination of President Kennedy, it seemed as if God really shone His grace on America! As a new widow, the former First Lady, Jacqueline Kennedy, looked back retrospectively on the era she had lived in the White House and stated pensively that it had been like a time of Camelot. Yet my generation

is not living a time of Camelot! Memories of my teenage years in the sixties and seventies recall a period when my contemporaries engaged in illegal drugs, rebellion, and free love (a pseudonym for free sex). It wasn’t long after that before the Watergate scandal broke and the already hurting American psyche took another beating. Not only were we losing a foreign war, but even on the domestic front, a deep distrust of the government moved like a dark cloud over the nation. It seemed to reinforce the already hostile attitude that many citizens had due to the war. Many young people looked around and noticed that their parents had nice houses and a middle class lifestyle, but the world had changed so much since their parents had grown up. I remember asking an elderly member of my staff about the attitudes of her generation

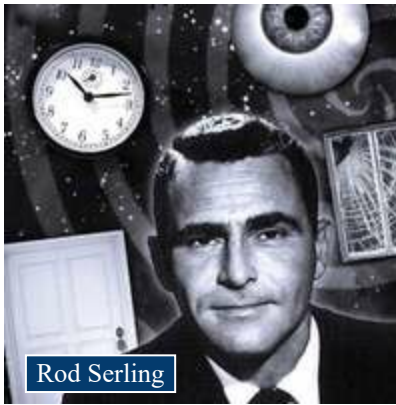


during World War II. She told me that people weren’t all that religious before the war began, but while it was going on, they got religion! It was built on the Rock of Christ (Acts 4:10-12 and 1 Peter 2:1-9). God had brought the previous two generations through horrible World Wars and a financial Depression, but those who had survived were, in most cases, rewarded for their nation’s faith. Women didn’t have to go to work. Their husbands became the sole breadwinners in the family. Most people had nice homes, some with the proverbial white picket fences, and at least one car in every driveway. It was rare in that generation for children to be born out of wedlock. Almost everyone had a family regardless of their race, and “families” in those days were defined as a father, a mother, and their children. Divorce was also rare in comparison to today’s standards. Life was different for them. They had survived a war that had changed the world, and lifestyles changed even more.

After the Second World War, the United States had become the most powerful nation on Earth. The Europeans and Japanese looked upon us with awe, as an example from which to copy. But what did they see? Was it multitudes of Americans flocking to Holy Spirit filled churches? Did they see Christ glorified in our everyday lives? Did they see our source of strength and Power being praised and worshipped daily? Did they see special missionaries greeting all new immigrants with the love and joy of Christ, (Continued On Page 4)

and offering to bring His teaching into their homes? No. They saw “I Love Lucy,” “Route 66,” and a slew of Hollywood movies that slowly increased in vulgarity as the years went by! Americans, and the world we influenced, were like frogs slowly simmering on a kitchen stove. Back then we would have balked at the slime that passes for entertainment on the tube these days, just as a frog would jump right out of a pot of boiling water. But put that frog in cold water, and turn up the heat gradually, and the frog gets cooked so slowly he doesn’t even notice the increase of heat until it’s too late! The devil has slowly turned up the heat in our society. Americans, and the world we influence, are being cooked up in a stew of perversion that Satan is saving for his ultimate cookout, in the eternal fires of Hell! So what has the Church of the living God done about any of this? “Christian” theme parks have been built. Political rallies have also been waged. Books have been written and talked about on “Christian” talk shows. And none of it has worked so far! In fact, things have only gotten worse worldwide. Why? It’s because, if we’re going to act like Christians, “...the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:4-5 KJV).

Even on the nation’s death rows, there are people from all former ranks and professions, i.e., doctors, business executives, ordained ministers. They were once considered the crème de la crème of society, the very elite. Such a paradox flies in the face of common assumptions that education or money are the answers to paradise on Earth. Many have already experienced “the good life” and have discovered that “...all is vanity and vexation of spirit” (Ecclesiastes 1:14 KJV). Consider the words of King Solomon in Ecclesiastes 2:1-11. He was one of the richest men who has ever lived. You’ve heard the term “the American dream.” Solomon had been way beyond that! No man has ever been blessed by God as he had. He had everything anyone could ever want and yet, he was still miserable. Why? It was because Solomon had placed all his priorities in the wrong place. God had supplied him with his blessings, but, as often occurs, even among mature Christians, Satan had used those very blessings as a stumbling block. Solomon, in his youth, had known and loved the Lord. As is usually the case, when Solomon had little he loved God more than after God blessed him with abundance! Before he repented, Solomon had become like the rich man in Luke 12:16-21. So “...Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man’s life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15 KJV). There are many people these days who have allowed riches and the pursuit of happiness to draw them away from their only salvation, Jesus Christ. It should be of no surprise that “the American dream” aims people toward the desire for worldly possessions and power (1 John 2:15-17), for even the “Declaration of Independence” tells us erroneously that “...We are endowed by our Creator with certain unalienable rights, among these are Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness...” Obviously, this was referring to worldly goods and success. Yet Jesus said, “For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mark 8:36-37 KJV). Furthermore, if you’re a Christian, saved by God and purchased with the blood of His own Son, “...you are not your own; you were bought at a price...” (1 Corinthians 6:19-20 NIV). You, as a Christian, do not have an “unalienable right” to do as you please (Matthew 11:29). All



your previous rights were surrendered to God at the foot of Calvary when you accepted His precious salvation! As for liberty, you were born a slave to sin (John 8:34, Romans 3:23 and 7:14), and if you are not willing to become a servant to Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:29, 2 Timothy 2:24, Titus 1:1, James 1:1, Jude 1:1, and Revelation 1:1), you cannot be His disciple! Your happiness should not be in this world system. You don’t go to night clubs and worldly theaters when you love Jesus. He takes first place in your life, not your favorite sports event, not your family, not your church, not your country, not even your life (Matthew 10:34-39 and 16:24-25).

Too many Christians these days have Jesus Christ mixed up with Santa Clause! God didn’t send His Son to this planet so that you can be free to go on committing all the sins you want. That’s worldliness, and we are told to shun this type of sinful activity (1 John 2:15-17)! God sent His Son here to save you from your sins, not to make it easier for you to sin (John 8:11)! As for happiness, God doesn’t want your happiness to revolve around this world! He offers you eternal joy in His Son. There’s a difference between happiness and joy. Happiness depends on circumstances and it is worldly for that reason. If someone wins the lottery they are happy. Happiness is fleeting. In fact, you won’t even find the word happiness in the KJV Bible! For worldly happiness is idolatry, therefore it is like a drug. It may feel intoxicating at first, but you constantly need a stronger fix! A woman on a game show wins a new car and is happy for a little while, until her “happiness fix” wears off and she decides she wants a new

house to go with the car. After the new house, she wants new furniture. Then she wants a fancy vacation. Then, if her husband isn’t able to keep supplying her with her regular fix of happiness, she’ll become bored with him and look for another man. Men are the same way. The richer the man is, the more he expects his wife to be skinny, beautiful, and agree with everything he says. He wants to wear her like a trinket on his arm, as if she is one of his possessions. He’ll be happy with her for a while, until someone new comes along. As with all addictions, the person eventually needs something stronger and stronger. Joy is something entirely different. It

doesn’t depend on external circumstances; you can have joy when you’re rich or when you’re poor, when you’re sick or when you’re healthy, when you have much material gain or when you have little. That’s because real Christian joy bubbles up from the fountain within (Psalm 36:5-9, John 4:10 and 7:38), from the Holy Spirit who lives in the hearts and lives of those who put Jesus Christ first in their lives. In a TV Guide article written many years ago, Rod Serling, creator of “The Twilight Zone” stated (paraphrased) “They give you a million dollars for a contract and you think you’re doing great. Then, after you get used to living on it, they threaten to take it away from you if you don’t do as they say.” The desire for material possessions is greed, which is translated covetousness in the KJV. Greed is sin (Mark 7:21-22, Luke 12:15, Romans 1:29) because it stems from idolatry (see Colossians 3:5). Therefore, it never satisfies! You want more and more. Then one day you realize that it’s not you who controls the money; the money controls you! (1 Timothy 6:10 and Hebrews 13:5.) These days, most American Christians have become like the Laodicean church Jesus warned in Revelation 3:14-22, rich and increased with goods, but poor in righteousness and humility toward God. So remember, the Word of God was not founded on the American Dream, but on the spilt blood and sacrifice of God’s own Son! Therefore, see Joshua 24:15-21, and decide whom you will serve today, God or money (Matthew 6:24). There is no peace in sin! Only Jesus Christ can give real peace, because only He is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6).