



NON-PROFIT



TAX-EXEMPT

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

May 2018

FROM US TO YOU

As we meet together again, our thoughts are on the many people who are suffering out there. Jesus would have been with those folks who need Him the most. Ordinary people who pass you by on the street can sometimes be in pain and you may never know it. But Christ knows it! And He cares. There was an interesting video on Facebook about a year ago. It was in Spanish with subtitles. A Christian customer was in a barbershop talking to the barber. He was trying to witness about Christ to the man, but to no avail. The barber said, “If there’s really a God, why is there so much evil in this world? There’s no God,” he proclaimed. (See Psalm 14:1.) The customer left the store and as soon as he walked out, he saw a man with hair down to his waist. He talked the long haired man into coming with him as he went back into the barbershop. “Look at his hair,” he told the barber. “There are no barbers!” “The barber looked at the long haired man and said, “Well if he had come to me and asked me, I would have cut his hair.” “Exactly,” said the Christian, “And if people would only come to Christ in repentance and ask Him to take control of their lives, there would not be so much evil in this world” (Luke 18:10-14).

We have been hearing a lot in the news lately about people who suddenly start shooting others in public places. Schools are one of the frequent targets. It seems that such people are out of control. They have tried everything but Christ. Maybe they have even tried to get help in a church and been treated badly. Anne remembers a young woman from Reno, Nevada, who told her how she tried visiting a church one day and felt people staring and whispering to each other about her. She left the church thinking that God didn’t love her because she had sin in her life. Churches, especially these days, can sometimes be very cliquish. The visitors are evaluated according to their social position, the clothes they wear, and the type of car they drive! But that’s not how Christ would have acted. He would have greeted that person with love and kindness. Over the years we have found that even pastors wives, are often more interested in talking to people who have children and families than the lonely person who really needs some compassion.

If you are lonely, or have a deep need in your life, go to Jesus Christ in prayer, on your knees, in contrition and repentance, and ask Him for help. Eric came to Christ for the first time many years ago when he was alone in his car. Anne accepted Christ as a ten year old child, in a church, but returned to Him after several years of backsliding in her twenties. The second time it was when she was alone in her apartment. So, those of you who have tried everything else, try Jesus! We cannot emphasize it enough. Only He has the answers! And those filled with His Spirit can lead you in the right direction. Jesus said, “*I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep. So when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. The man runs away because he is a hired hand and cares nothing for the sheep. I am the good shepherd; I know My sheep and My sheep know Me - just as the Father knows Me and I know the Father - and I lay down My life for the sheep*” (John

10:11-15 NIV).

Many people are too ashamed to come to Christ. They think that surely they are too evil for God to love them. Is there some sin in your life that you have struggled with for so long? Are you tired of the pain and shame? Have you tried everything else to no avail? Is your burden too heavy for you to bear? Perhaps you are at a crossroad in your life and you feel the tug of Satan trying to get you to do something drastic. That’s why people go berserk and start shooting others and often kill themselves. So don’t do that! Forget about everything else and come to Jesus. When all else fails, He is the only one who can help you! Do you feel someone tugging on you heart, trying to move you toward Christ? God is not judging you. Not at this time. This time, He wants to save you. Ultimately, we will all face the great White Throne Judgment in Heaven (Rev. 20:11-15). But those whose names are written in the book of life (Rev. 20:15), will be found “Not Guilty” because their sins will have been paid for through the blood of Christ.



God wants you to be in that group! He has the power to wash away your sin. The devil and those he controls may judge you, but God wants to save you. Jesus said, “*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full*” (John 10:10 NIV). “*For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through Him*” (John 3:17 NIV). We know you’re not perfect. None of us are (Romans 3:23). But if you’ve been condemning yourself for a long time and think that God doesn’t want you you’re wrong! You’re the reason why He sent His Son into this world. Jesus said, “*...It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*” (Luke 5:31-32 NIV). And those He saved from the most hideous of sins, love Him the most. Mary Magdalene is one example. Jesus delivered her from seven demons (Mark 16:9).

Jesus was invited to the home of a Pharisee, but Mary found out that He was there. The Bible says of her, “*When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee’s house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, and as she stood behind Him at His feet weeping, she began to wet His feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them. When the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, ‘If this man were a prophet, He would know who is touching Him and what kind of woman she is - that she is a sinner.’ Jesus answered him... ‘Two men owed money to a certain moneylender. One owed him five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. Neither of them had the money to pay him back, so he canceled the debts of both. Now which of them will love him more?’ Simon replied, ‘I suppose the one who had the bigger debt canceled.’ ‘You have judged correctly,’ Jesus said” (Luke 7:37-43 NIV). “*“Come now, let us reason together,’ says the LORD. ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool’”* (Isaiah 1:18 NIV).*

Till next time everyone, *Eric and Anne Kaestner*

Culture, Religion, and Idolatry

By Anne Kaestner

Early in our marriage my husband and I went on vacation in Vermont. We used to travel a lot because Eric had a custom van. The most memorable part of the trip was when we decided to visit the Fairbanks Museum. I roamed through displays of all the great civilizations of the world; the American Indians, Chinese, Persian, Egyptian, Japanese, and many others. Artifacts of the cultures of the people were in every exhibit. The Indians had their beaded clothing, and their moccasins and feathered headdresses, but central to it all was the totem pole that sat in the middle. I stared at the carved faces on that pole, and it gave me an eerie feeling. The eyes looked evil and penetrating. Their gaze was smug and full of hatred.

Uneasily, I moved on to the next exhibit. I saw the power and might of the Egyptian Empire depicted there, and central to it all were the Great Pyramids and the Sphinx with the body of a lion and the face of a human. Although thousands of miles apart from each other, both the Indians and the ancient Egyptians had one thing in common. The religion of the people influenced every aspect of their civilization; music, art, clothing, politics, everything! I stared at the smug, proud expression on the face of the Sphinx, and knew it was representative of one of the gods they worshipped. Even their Great Pyramids involved the worship of Egyptian gods. The pyramid is an occult symbol used even today in occult practices. And practice of the occult invites contact with spirit beings other than God the Creator. For some unknown reason, the pyramid also appears on the back of the American dollar bill, [with a piercing eye at the top!](#)

I continued on from display to display. I saw the same evil, penetrating look on the face of an embroidered dragon on a coat in the Chinese display. I saw it in the vases and pottery of the Japanese and Persians. In fact, from display to display, civilization to civilization, they all had one thing in common; the religion of the people and the gods they worshipped affected every aspect of their society! And I saw that same smug expression and those same dark penetrating eyes in so many different exhibits, it was far more than a coincidence. The people were separated by thousands of years in some cases and half a world away in others. Could it be that the religion of the American people is affecting our politics and philosophy today, and the gods worshipped in the United States are making a profound influence on the laws and life-style of this land? American idolatry has been going on for many years. But never has it been as bad as today. Do you think it was “pagan” for the Chinese to have their dragon gods embroidered onto their coats, or for the Japanese or Persians to paint their gods onto their vases and pottery? Even today people can spend thousands of dollars for baseball cards that used to come free in cereal boxes. What are these heroes but idols to them? In fact, America has gotten to the place where the term “idol” is used frequently to depict ball players, movie stars, rock musicians, etc. So this type of idolatry is prized highly in our society!

Over the years, I have received all kinds of catalogs and envelopes from large mail order companies offering all types of assorted merchandise for sale. One of them was selling a comforter for a teenager’s room. On it were the faces of a rock group called “New Kids On The Block.” As if that wasn’t enough, matching pillow cases, curtains, and stickers were also part of the set. In one of the envelopes, different products containing the pictures of “Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles” were everywhere! No segment out of society is immune from the influence of these “other gods.” The kids love their Ninja

Turtles. The teenagers wait hours on line for tickets to some rock concert. Their fathers do the same thing in horrible weather to see a football game. And, in some cases, their mothers are addicted to their favorite soap opera. So realize that this addiction that you feel toward ball players, entertainers, or cartoon characters, is a “spiritual” addiction. Because just as demon spirits (see Matthew 8:16, Acts 19:13-16) are able to use anything from an Ouija board to a totem pole to control your soul, they can do the same thing through human idolatry as well! This is nothing new. We have seen recently how much hatred these “stars” have toward Christ and anyone who promotes Christian values. For example, Vice President Pence has been widely criticized for his faith and morality. The [recent attacks by Joy Behar](#) are just one example.

The Pharaohs in ancient Egypt were thought of as gods. So were the Caesars of the Roman Empire. In fact, I have heard that even Hawaiian kings were thought of as gods, and that a person could be decapitated for stepping on the king’s shadow! So, are these entertainers, ball players, or even, in some cases, celebrity preachers (Luke 6:26), any less idols to Americans than the gods of the Japanese, Persians, or ancient Hawaiian’s were to them? The late preacher Billy Graham even has his own star on the “Hollywood Walk of Fame.” And the “Billy Graham Library” is open to the public in Charlotte,

North Carolina. Hundreds of people paid the respects to him as they filed by his casket at his restored boyhood home. And his death occupied much of the news coverage on all the news network. “The Washington Post,” one of the most liberal newspapers in America, wrote of him, “It’s rare to find consensus in the American media, but the passing of Billy Graham has provided one such moment. In outlets ranging from established newspapers such as USA Today to next-generation outlets such as BuzzFeed and Vox, from the high-culture perch of NPR to the pop-culture world of E! Online, from conservative Fox News to liberal HuffPost, one common concept ran throughout their headlines: Graham had been



“[America’s pastor.](#)”

Too bad the late Rev. David Wilkerson, one of the greatest men of God in modern times, didn’t even receive enough respect on the news to have his death mentioned. But that’s the way it should be! We who love Christ are warned, “*Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world - the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does - comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever*” (1 John 2:15-17 NIV). And Jesus said, “*Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you*” (Matthew 5:10-12 NIV). And Christ said, “*If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated Me first. If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you*” (John 15:18-19 NIV).

There was a sadness in me as I walked around that Fairbanks Museum looking at all the lost or defeated civilizations of the world and their carved or painted idols. Why would these people worship

such evil looking creatures? The answer came back immediately; it was out of fear! The Indians would dance around their totem poles hoping to please their spirit beings into giving them rain for their crops. Even today, in voodoo ceremonies practiced in Africa and various parts of the world, the people are so afraid of the spirits that they appease them by actually allowing these demon “gods” to enter into their bodies and speak through them. And the possessed person runs wild, moving his or her body into a frenzy of violent contortions. They sacrifice animals to these evil spirits, eating live chickens and drinking animal blood!

Why do some religious customs require people to spend hours on their knees in prayer to their gods? It isn’t just the fear. They also feel that by meeting with the approval of the spirit beings they worship, they will be able to work their way into the next world and receive rewards for their efforts. But the Bible states, *“But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags...”* (Isaiah 64:6 KJV). *“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).

Human sacrifice was a common practice among some of the ancient civilizations of the world. Could abortion be America’s way of sacrificing live human beings to these filthy demon spirits? And “demons” is exactly what they are! The Bible states, *“They sacrificed to demons, which are not God - gods they had not known, gods that recently appeared, gods your fathers did not fear. You deserted the Rock, who fathered you; you forgot the God who gave you birth...They made Me jealous by what is no god and angered Me with their worthless idols. I will make them envious by those who are not a people; I will make them angry by a nation that has no understanding. For a fire has been kindled by My wrath, one that burns to the realm of death below. It will devour the earth and its harvests and set afire the foundations of the mountains. I will heap calamities upon them and spend My arrows against them. I will send wasting famine against them, consuming pestilence and deadly plague; I will send against them the fangs of wild beasts, the venom of vipers that glide in the dust”* (Deuteronomy 32:17-18 and 21-24 NIV).

Regarding abortion, the Lord declared, *“...they shall have no pity on the fruit of the womb; their eye shall not spare children. And Babylon, the glory of kingdoms, the beauty of the Chaldees’ excellency, shall be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah”* (Isaiah 13:18- 19 NIV). In ancient times, these demon spirits or “gods” would cause the people to do all types of things they did not want to do, in order to satisfy their appetites. Sacrificing their babies to these “gods” was just one example. They would also mutilate their bodies as well.

Do you remember the colorful pictures that used to appear in National Geographic, of tribe members from little known cultural groups in Africa, New Guinea, New Zealand, or the Polynesian Islands, showing savages with painted faces and rings or bones in their noses? The warriors from American Indian tribes also painted their faces before worshipping their gods around the totem pole whenever they planned to go on the war path and kill or torture some other group. But painted faces aren’t anything new these days. Just look on the record and magazine covers in any store selling hard rock material, and you’ll see the war paint all over again. One such group is known as K.I.S.S. Did you know that the letters stand for “Knights In Satan’s

Service?”

In a Spring 1990 issue of the National Enquirer, an article written by James McCandlish discussed a recent fad that has taken place in California, body piercing. I mean not just ears, but the pictures in the article showed individuals with jewelry worn through their noses (in the photograph the young man wore a bone), their eyebrows, and even their tongues! You might be thinking, “at least we don’t have our totem poles” Wrong! Americans are actually bringing in such items from other countries, and museums are displaying them as “works of art!” In fact, in some decorator magazines, items from pagan cultures, including wall or table top carvings, masks, and statues of pagan gods, have become very trendy items to have in the home.

The Media, especially on television, has been promoting this type of idolatry into our homes for years. I remember seeing a magazine with a full page advertisement of “An Officially Authorized Tribute To Lucille Ball,” in doll form. It sold for \$95.00 through “The Hamilton Collection” in Jacksonville, Florida. So now, you can have your own little Lucy shrine at home, and make the idolatry complete. And celebrity preachers and their wives are just as bad! The “Lucy” doll was bad enough, but at least Lucy never referred to herself as a

Born Again Christian, Baptized in God’s Holy Spirit. I was appalled back in the days of the “PTL” television show when a documentary showed scenes of the inside of “Heritage USA” during its heyday.

Christianity’s critics have been claiming for decades that most of the television evangelists are just a bunch of charlatans. They accuse them of putting on a big act in order to deceive people, and get their money. Terms such as “showmanship” and “commercialism” have been used frequently. No wonder the critics have so much fuel for their fire, when a place like Heritage USA would be selling little “Tammy Fay” dolls for the children. From what I could see, the doll was just about the same size as the “Lucy” doll, and dressed in a bridal gown. The doll’s resemblance to her namesake just made sales of the product that much more lucrative. Tammy Faye Bakker Messner died of cancer on July 20, 2007. One of her books was entitled “I’ve Got To Be Me” (compare with



1 Corinthians 15:49 and Philippians 1:20-21).

This reminds me of a situation mentioned in Acts. Back in the days of the Apostle Paul’s ministry in Ephesus, the true Christian church was referred to as “The Way.” So many people were coming to Christ as a result of Paul’s ministry that they were no longer buying the little statues of the goddess “Artemis.” *“About that time there arose a great disturbance about the Way. A silversmith named Demetrius, who made silver shrines of Artemis, brought in no little business for the craftsmen. He called them together, along with the workmen in related trades, and said: ‘Men, you know we receive a good income from this business. And you see and hear how this fellow Paul has convinced and led astray large numbers of people here in Ephesus and in practically the whole province of Asia. He says that man-made gods are no gods at all. There is danger not only that our trade will lose its good name, but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be discredited, and the goddess herself, who is worshiped throughout the province of Asia and the world, will be robbed of her divine majesty’”* (Acts 19:23-27 NIV). Also, see the words of Christ in His message to one of His end-time churches in Revelation 2:18-23. The “adultery” referred to here is spiritual. Christians are to be married to Christ (Continued On Page 4)

Culture, Religion, and Idolatry (Continued From Page 3)

(Ephesians 5:28-32). Idolatry in a Christian, therefore, is regarded as “spiritual adultery” by God. *“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry”* (Colossians 3:5 NIV).

Speaking of idols or “graven images” (Deuteronomy 7:5, 7:25, and 12:3) I was watching the old Charleton Heston movie, “The Ten Commandments” on television. It dramatically illustrated how God had spectacularly delivered His Hebrew people from their Egyptian slavery, even making a pathway through the Red Sea for them to cross, and drowning the soldiers who had pursued them. But their gratitude didn’t last very long. For while Moses was on the mountain top receiving the Ten Commandments from God, the Hebrews were fashioning a golden calf out of their jewelry. And when Moses came down from the mountain there was mass worship of this “pagan image” going on! About three thousand men were put to death as a result of this (see Exodus 32:28).

During the advertisements I flipped channels and watched a portion of the news. The camera focused on a huge crowd of people in California who had been waiting on line for hours in order to see the Academy Awards. After they were allowed into the building, they moved up an escalator to another floor. And there, against the wall stood a row of huge golden Oscar statues, roughly about the same size, and exactly the same color, as the “golden calf” I had seen worshipped on the “Ten Commandments” just seconds before! But “idols” and “pagan images” don’t always have to be cast in gold, as evidenced by the huge statue of Elvis Presley in Memphis. Or even that most sacred of shrines, “The Statue of Liberty” in New York Harbor! Can you imagine the anger it would create if anyone ever attempted to have that statue taken down? It is a symbol of our society, right? Then why is it that the inscription on the statue reads, “Give me your tired, your poor huddled masses yearning to breathe free. The wretched refuse of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to me. I lift my lamp beside the golden door.”

Is God welcoming the immigrants to the United States? Is the credit for the safe trip to America given to God our Creator? If so, why is God represented as a woman when the Bible always refers to God in the masculine gender? No. It’s a pagan image created to symbolize the god we are giving credit to! But it’s not our Creator! Even statues of Jesus and Mary are wrong! After He got them safely out of Egypt, God our Creator got the credit for saving His people. The Bible says, *“In Your unfailing love You will lead the people You have redeemed. In Your strength You will guide them to Your holy dwelling”* (Exodus 15:13 NIV). Was credit given to a pagan image? No! It was given to the God who created them, their Redeemer!

And they were given a list of ten special commandments, second of which states, *“You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God...”* (Exodus 20:4-5). Moses later reinforced this by saying, *“You saw no form of any kind the day the Lord spoke to you at Horeb out of the fire. Therefore watch yourselves very carefully, so that you do not become corrupt and make for yourselves an idol, an image of any shape, whether formed like a man, or a woman, or like any animal on earth or any bird that flies in the air, or like any creature that moves along the ground or any fish in the waters below. And when you look up to the sky and see the sun, the moon and the stars - all the heavenly array - do not be enticed*

into bowing down to them and worshiping things the Lord your God has apportioned to all the nations under heaven. But as for you, the Lord took you and brought you out of the iron smelting furnace... to be the people of His inheritance, as you now are” (Deuteronomy 4:15-20 NIV). This scripture also applies to Gentiles who are Born Again in Christ (John 3:3).

That day in the museum God taught me a lot. I had been feeling sad as I strolled around looking at the different displays of lost and crippled civilizations. The people of those cultures had given so much of their lives over to their religious customs, just as today in countries like Iran, the religious customs of the land set the tone for the lack of freedom the people receive from their government, especially women. I could feel the fear of the people in each of the displays I’d seen. Then suddenly, I saw something that didn’t seem to fit in with the mood of anything else I’d seen so far. I stared at a picture of people all grouped together, they had dark skin, frizzy hair, and very little clothing on. They wore beads and primitive jewelry, and most people would probably consider them savages, judging from their looks and attire. But there was something different about them.

Their faces shone with a radiance I had not seen in a long time. There was no fear in their eyes. They looked joyful and serene at the same time. Then I looked over next to the picture and saw a small book, badly worn out from use. The title of the book was written in another language but it looked vaguely familiar. Then I read the little card that explained the exhibit. The book was the Gospel of Matthew, which had been translated into the language of the tribe by missionaries who had gone to their land and lived with them. Tears filled my eyes, and I felt the Presence of God. I realized that He had not abandoned these people. Even in the darkest parts of the world, the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ was reaching into the lives of this formerly pagan tribe, and their eyes and faces lit up with the joy that comes from knowing Him!

You may say Americans don’t worship other gods. That this is a country filled with churches. Yes, there’s lots of churchianity around. But Jesus stated, *“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter into the kingdom of Heaven, but only he who does the will of My Father who is in Heaven”* (Matthew 7:21 NIV). Even those who have gone through the “Born Again” experience have, in many cases, reverted back to their former ways (see Mark 4:17 and 2 Peter 3:17) because they have had so few good examples to teach them how to live for God! Yes, many preachers give a “good salvation message” to their congregations. But the majority of those hearing it think they are already on their way to Heaven, and the message was for “the other guy.”

Many years ago, a black prison inmate wrote to me stating that Christianity is just a white man’s religion. However, the United States hasn’t been so blessed by God because it was founded by men and women of the white race, but because it was built on the solid Rock of Christ Jesus! And a reverence for God that in our culture today, has become almost a thing of the past. In closing this article, I would like to call your attention to the words of a former television anchorman as he went off the air on Tuesday, July 9, 1991. The last news segment had been about President Bush honoring two famous baseball players, Joe DiMaggio and Ted Williams. The anchorman stated, “Baseball gods of tomorrow will be on the field tonight for the Sixty-Second Annual All-Star Game. You can see it here on this CBS station, followed only in these same stations by your late local news. Dan Rather for the CBS Evening News. See you tomorrow. Good night.”

