



108 TRAIL ONE
BURLINGTON, NC 27215

CONTACT US:

Phone: 336-227-2910
Fax: 336-227-7861
Email: office@grovesparkchurch.com
Online: www.grovesparkchurch.com

Office Hours:
Monday-Thursday
8:30am - 3:30pm

NON PROFIT ORG.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
BURLINGTON, NC 27215
PERMIT NO. 140

Return Service Request

The Messenger

MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF GROVE PARK BAPTIST CHURCH | SEPTEMBER 2022

Eliza and I love watching period shows from British television. We are particularly fond of “All Creatures Great and Small” which takes place in 1930’s and centers on a veterinary practice in the rural Yorkshire Dales. Now, I should insert at this point that I take it as a personal challenge to determine where in history the show is located as we tune in to Grantchester, Dalgleish, Endeavor, or any of these period dramas. So, I was particularly interested during this season’s “All Creatures Great and Small” to see how close they were getting to 1939 and all that year’s surrounding trauma. I quickly found out as a radio played in the background during one scene and I heard the voice of Neville Chamberlain upon his return from Munich to know that time was getting short. I suppose that is why I grew so sad during the last scene of the season finale. It had been such a joyous episode, centering around Christmas and its attendant merriment. Indeed, the episode is named “The Perfect Christmas.” And then, with the peals of laughter and frivolity echoing behind her, Mrs. Hall, the housekeeper, looks out the window and sees a bomber flying past. Immediately, the viewer knows what Mrs. Hall does not, that the new year will bring fear and pain, loss and death, despite the episode’s hopes of prosperity and joy.

It would be glorious if we could always have such insight, but alas we do not. We have zero clue from moment to moment what will befall us. How then should we go about our lives whilst fumbling in the darkness of time? The episode coyly teases out some themes that will make 1939 and what lies in store then easier to handle and offers us wisdom on how best to live out today. One of those themes is to live a life of thanksgiving. We very often will offer up blanket statements of thanks to folks for what they have done. We may even go a step beyond and express generic praises to God for a broad spectrum of things. Please do not misunderstand me, I believe all these things are great and good. However, I find it difficult to say that they fully encompass living a life of thanksgiving. The episode has two poignant scenes where Tristan takes time to thank his brother Siegfred for all that Siegfred had done to enable Tristan to become a veterinarian. Later, James, one of the other veterinarians, tells his parents that he has been remiss in not thanking them for doing the same thing for him. Each instance points to a specificity of thanksgiving that can only come when one is intimately aware of how their lives are being formed, who are not floating amongst the shallows of life, but have dived deep into knowing who they are and experiencing life at its fullest. Beloved, when was the last time you specifically thanked someone for what they have done for you and told them how it changed you? You will be amazed if you do it, how freer your life will be and how uplifting it will be to those for whom you are thankful. It will make your world and theirs much better.

Secondly, do you seek to bring joy to others even when it comes at the expense of your plans and traditions? The family that is created through the veterinary practice have made plans to celebrate Christmas, plans that had caused some level of tension because of having to choose that family over traditional families. All these plans go askew however, when James discovers the wealthy and aged Mrs. Pumphrey alone in her massive home on Christmas morning as he returns her dog Tricky Woo, who was being treated by the vets. James swiftly has an idea and phones the practice that they should move everything to Mrs. Pumphrey’s. Instantly, what had appeared as a cold and barren existence on Christmas is transformed by the arrival of everyone accompanied by a Christmas tree and Christmas dinner. Silence is replaced by Christmas carols and the joy that suddenly bursts forth is palpable as all celebrate together. The main characters could have chosen to allow Mrs. Pumphrey to experience her Christmas alone with just her dog, instead they chose to bring joy. How often do we choose to bring joy to others through the simple acts of sharing, kindness, self-denial, and remembrance? A culture as self-focused as ours drains the joy out of existence and only if we choose to pour joy on others through our selfless acts can we hope to bring relief and reverse the trajectory of the barren desert in which our culture resides. It seems perfectly reasonable that this is why Paul would tell the Philippians to “rejoice always.”

Finally, we must learn to live lives without regret. We often associate regret with what we have done, but I think that is so limiting, as very often our regrets are centered around what we have not done. We choose security over daring, the known over the unknown, the cool comfort of control over the promise of ardent abundance. We often make such choices because we have been burnt too often by choosing the daring, the unknown, the promise of abundance. Mrs. Hall has been burned by love before, prior episodes have alluded, but on this “perfect Christmas” she allows herself to express feelings for Gerald who has been attempting to woo her for some time. She allows herself to hope and let us be honest, a life without hope is a miserable existence. Beloved, we have hope in One who does all things well, it should be easy for us to live regretless lives. How else are we to live the abundant life that Jesus tells us He has come to bring if we forgo hope continuously.

I know that September 1, 1939 will forever change the history and trajectory of the world. I know the suffering that continues to ripple into today that will be unleashed because of hate on September 1, 1939. Likewise, I know acutely how the hopes of a new year can be dashed quickly. And yet, this Christmas episode has stuck with me since I first saw it earlier this year on PBS and as I have reflected on why, I keep coming back to one unalterable truth. “The Perfect Christmas” did not take place on December 25, 1938 when the world was still ignorant of the tragedies about to be unleashed. “The Perfect Christmas” occurs each and every day that we allow the hope, joy, peace, and love of the Christ of Bethlehem to be born afresh in us and shown to the world. It is how we redeem the suffering and pains of this world and it is what enables us to move forward with thanksgiving, joy, and yes the hope of regretless lives for truly we make each day then “The Perfect Christmas.”

Grace Abounds, Marc

Check us out on:

Facebook.com/GrovePark Church

Instagram: grovesparkchurch



UPCOMING EVENTS:

Mon., Wed., Thurs.

Tuesdays 7:00 pm

Wednesdays 6:30 pm

7:00 pm

7:00 pm

Thursdays 7:00 pm

September 05

September 06 11:30 am

September 07 Noon

September 10 6:30 pm

September 11 6:00 pm

September 12 7:00 pm

September 14 10 am-3pm

September 15 11:00 am

September 23

Noon Devotional on Facebook Live

Bible Study on the Maskils

Facebook Prayer Meeting

Zoom Prayer Meeting

Choir Rehearsal (unless otherwise noted)

GPBC Book Club (Searching for Sunday)

Office Closed. Labor Day.

Widow’s Support/Single Ladies Luncheon (Fellowship Hall)

ROMEO’s Lunch

Youth—Laser Tag at Ground Zero

Deacon Fellowship

Finance Committee (Zoom)

American Red Cross Community Blood Drive

Mt. Zion Association Lunch & Learn

Fifth Quarter (following Williams football game)

