



COWLITZ CHAPLAINCY

Volume 14

Issue Number 6

November 2017

Struggling with Thanksgiving

Be joyful always, pray continually; give thanks in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. I Thessalonians 5:16-18.

These three verses are difficult verses to live; they really are. Especially for those going through a crisis in their life in our community, and those who went through crises like the shootings in Las Vegas and Sutherland Springs. The difficulty of these verses was demonstrated in a recent episode of a new television series called "The Good Doctor," based on the life of a surgical resident who is autistic. The doctor was talking to a young teenage boy who has terminal cancer.

Patient: "I'm not afraid to die."

Doctor: "Are you not afraid to die because you believe you will go to heaven?"

Patient: "No, if I believe I am going to heaven, then God gave me cancer, and that is really messed up. It is easier to believe that this is all random, and that when I die, that's it, its over."

The patient's reasoning is very sad, but it points out the difficulty of these verses. If we believe in God, and we believe in heaven, then God, and God's will for us comes along with our crises in life, and if we are willing to examine the vulnerability of our humanity for a moment, we can agree with the young patient that is pretty messed up.

However, the assumption that an all powerful God, and an all good God—and evil—can not co-exist, is wrong. In fact, for thanksgiving to exist, God and evil must co-exist. Let me explain.

It is difficult to understand how God and God's will can be in the middle of our most troubling times in life. I know that very well. Back in 1998 I was going through a marital crisis. I was the Senior Pastor of a 500 member congregation, and my family and ministry was disintegrating by the day. My quiet times with the Lord were not very quiet. From my perspective God had a lot of

explaining to do. Have you ever felt that way?

God welcomed my struggle, and he came close enough to take my blows. As I wrestled with God I began to realize that he went through the greatest crisis of all and understood what I was going through. God the Father, allowed God the Son, the heir to the throne of all creation, to suffer and die so that I can have victory in this life and the life to come. As Romans 8:32 says, He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things?

As I went through the valley I learned to fear no evil because God was with me. As the Bible says he never left me or forsook me. Verses like, "If God is for us, who can be against us," became real. God's mercies were new to me every morning, and that brought me hope.

In my denomination there is a tradition of having a worship service on Thanksgiving Day. Before that 1998 Thanksgiving Day service members wondered aloud what I was going to preach about considering my year. By God's grace I preached about I Thess. 5:16-18.

In 2002 God blessed me with a new life partner and a new ministry adventure. God allowed my train to derail, so he could put me on a different track.

The pain and the wounds did not magically disappear, and yours won't either. Healing does not come over night. But if you are going through a very difficult year my prayer for you is that you will allow God in the middle of your crisis. Voice your questions. Wrestle with the Almighty. And through that process my hope is you will be able to give thanks in all circumstances because you know this is God's will for you at this time; and it is only God who has the power and goodness to lift you up again, and put you on another path that will enable you to give testimony to others about the grace of God in your life.

Chaplain Tom Haan

Chaplain Activity

This year has broken records for requests from first responder agencies to respond to crisis events in our county. In 2014 we responded to 203 requests for assistance. This year through October we have responded to 216 calls. People ask me why there is such an increase in calls for assistance. One part of the answer is just an increase in calls for all the agencies in a busy and growing county. We have also seen an increase in the number of calls related to suicide, and we are working with other agencies to address this crisis. Another part of the answer is the agencies are learning that the Chaplains can be of assistance in several ways, not just when someone has died. Crisis come in many forms, and when agencies are working with skeleton crews, they are finding that we can be of assistance to them in ways they never thought of before.

In September we celebrated with Bob Heuer in his retirement as Chief of Police for Castle Rock Police Department. We also celebrated the retirement of Dave Shelton after 39 years serving the Kelso Police Department. Cowlitz 5 firefighter Jared Casey and his wife welcomed the birth of a healthy baby girl! Our website developer Kari Rushmer and family welcomed a baby boy!

In October the Chaplains were requested by Kelso School District to support students and staff at Cowee-man Middle School after the accidental shooting of Edgar Vazquez. This is one example of new ways the Chaplains are being asked to serve. We express our sympathy to Kelso PD officer Mark Berglund who lost his father in October.

Thanks for Supporting Us

We had our annual Golf Classic on September 9. It was a great event and we had wonderful support from both golfers and sponsors. As we prepare for next year in September, we congratulate this year's Men's Winners: David Wallis, Jarron Born, Mark Backstrom, Mark Smith - and The Mixed Team Winners: Dyann Crayne, Cody Anderson, Sharon Hutton, Brett LeFever.

With all the great support from our sponsors, golfers, and volunteers, we were able to make around \$10K. THANKS SO MUCH!

We are in the process of hiring a part-time Marketing Director. Along with coordinating our annual auction dinner, the Marketing Director will be helping to increase our monthly giving. We have done very well on our fundraising events, but our monthly giving has decreased over the last year. If you are a monthly donor, we thank you for your faithful support. If you are not yet a monthly donor, we humbly ask you to consider a monthly donation in the next year. There are a variety of ways you can donate monthly. Some send us a check. Some put us in their bank billpay. Others donate through our website. Some slip a check through our mail slot on the north side of our office. We are so thankful for everyone who remembers us each month!

Chaplains' Chili

Hearth Coffee on the corner of Commerce Ave. and Florida St. in Longview has a great chili on Friday. If you buy the Chili, we get a percentage of the sales.

Grocery Outlet

Grocery Outlet on Ocean Beach in Longview will donate 5% of your purchase if you present the card we have in our office. Please stop by our office or call us at 360-425-7222 to get your card and one for a friend!

AmazonSmile

As you do your online shopping this holiday season, please consider using AmazonSmile, and designate Cowlitz Chaplaincy as the non-profit organization to receive a percentage of your purchases.

Fred Meyer

We are also a registered non-profit with Fred Meyer. This is another way you can help the Chaplaincy.

Shop with a Cop/Firefighter

Longview PD: Dec. 1 at 7:00 a.m. 7th Ave. Walmart
CCSO & CRPD: Dec. 2 at 10:00 a.m. O.B. Walmart
Kelso Police: Dec. 9 at 7:30 a.m. at Target
Cowlitz 2 F&R : Dec. 16 at 9:00 a.m. at O.B. Walmart

Cowlitz Chaplaincy

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"Supporting those who support our communities' first responders"