



The New Church Newsletter

Hurstville Society December 2021

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Do We Treat the Truth Like the Oceans?

by Rev Todd Beiswenger

One of the big environmental stories of the decade has been that of how much trash has ended up in the oceans. My Australian readers know first hand how this has impacted our lives, as grocery stores no longer give out plastic bags at the checkout as a means to reduce plastic waste, and hence end up with less trash in the ocean.

A few weeks ago I came across a video on YouTube titled “Trash Eating Robot” by Mark Rober. If you’ve never seen a Mark Rober video, you should! This guy is a hoot! He’s an ex-NASA engineer who does videos that make science fun. Anyway, as a fan of his previous work, I thought I’d see what he had in store for me this time. The basic plot was that Mark and another YouTuber – Mr. Beast – created a river clean up competition to see who could get more trash out of the river and adjoining beach over the course of the next week. What made the challenge interesting was that Mark had made an arrangement to get this boat that was specifically designed for automated trash removal. It was essentially a 50 ton trash eating robot that was powered by the sun! So the competition was this robo-boat vs the other guy had a team of 1000 human volunteers.

The person who owned and designed the robot is a young man with a Greek name that I won’t try to spell, but he founded an uncreatively named non-profit organization called “Ocean Clean Up.” He had gone SCUBA diving 10 years ago and found more plastic bags than fish, so instead of just complaining on Facebook and retweeting the words of other activists, he decided to actually, well, you know, do something about it. What he’s learned since then is that 80% of the trash that is in the oceans comes from 1% of the rivers, so their solution is to place these trash eating robots in these worst offending rivers and cut the problem at its source. In the meantime their goal is to raise \$30M USD so that they can remove 30M pounds of trash from the ocean. If you want to learn more about this cause or donate to it, look up TeamSeas.

While I like and support this cause, my mind started to think about this situation from a spiritual perspective. The Writings tell us that water corresponds to truth. So if humanity is polluting our rivers and oceans, is that telling us something about how we treat the truth? It feels that way to me. Water in particular is a “natural” truth, which is like factual knowledge, so it isn’t even like we’re destroying higher level truths, but truths that are easily verifiable.

Here’s an example: you probably heard something about the Kyle Rittenhouse trial in the US. While I don’t claim to be an expert on it, the basics are that a 17 year old boy shot three men, killing two of them while he was guarding a used car lot during the Black Lives Matter protests. He was acquitted of the charges as the jury found that he was acting in self-defence. Throughout the trial various members of the media called Rittenhouse a “white supremacist,” “racist,” and a “domestic terrorist.” While you don’t have to think Rittenhouse deserved to be acquitted, the fact is there’s no evidence to support that he was any of those things.

After the verdict was revealed, a major newspaper had as the headline: “Kyle Rittenhouse cleared of murder after shooting dead two Black Lives Matter protesters. Full story: teenager shot three black men with rifle found not guilty on all charges.” I found other media outlets that had published something very similar. The error, untruth or lie here is that no black men were shot. Rittenhouse is a white male who shot three white males. While in one sense you’d like to think that getting the detail of the victim’s skin colour wrong wouldn’t be a big deal, but the fact is that it is a big deal because the media wanted people to think that this was a racially motivated shooting. What would be more sensational than a white man shooting black men at a BLM protest! However, they were distorting the truth to suit their agenda.



A river full of trash in the Dominican Republic

This is but one example of many. It got me thinking that if 1% of the world’s rivers contribute to 80% of the trash in the ocean, does 1% of the population contribute to 80% of the false beliefs that we regard as true? Is that 1% the news media? I feel it is unfair for me to say that, considering that there are good reporters and such out there, yet the media seems to have gone from fact based reporting to selling us an agenda. Most of what appears on news stations is really just opinion, not really news. Some say that it is the elites of society that are telling the media how to report things. I’m not sure with who exactly the burden lies, but it seems that there are many out there that treat the truth the same way we treat our rivers and oceans.

Is this like what Mary, Joseph and people of the ancient world experienced 2000 years ago? Well, I think it must have been worse then if God Himself had to show up to straighten things out. But what the Writings teach is that the Lord did show up on account of the truth being perverted, abused and assailed. Who was doing this to the truth? The religious

authorities, who were among the elites of society. Were they distorting it to the media of the day? I don't know.

What I do know is that when you read through the New Testament, you'll notice that Jesus says many times that the "Son of Man" will be beaten, abused and put to death. The Writings tell us that the reason why these things happen to the "Son of Man" and not to the "Son of God" is because the "Son of Man" represents the truth that comes from the Lord. The Lord had to come and set the record straight, and get the truth out there because it is from a desire to be a good person that we seek out the truth and actually learn *how* to be a good person. But if we don't have the truth, we can't regenerate. The truth is really important! This is why at Christmas we say that the Lord came to save us all, because He had to restore and clean up the truth just like we're having to restore and clean up our waterways.

Look, I get it, the truth can be such a downer at times that we really don't like it. It's uncomfortable and no fun at all to tell our friends, family and ourselves that they or we are participating in a spiritual disorder. Yet that's what the truth does. Unfortunately we don't have a fleet of sun powered 50-ton falsity eating robots to clean it all up. Thankfully we do have the Scriptures, which are loaded up with truth. God has also bestowed upon us a rational mind, which allows us to not rely on what others may perpetrate as the truth. What we have to do is be like one of the many characters in the Christmas story, whether it be Mary & Joseph who let the truth be born into their lives, or like the wise men who spend their lives seeking it out, or any other of the good people in that story... pick one that suits you! Just don't be like Herod, because he won't just throw trash into the waterways of your life, but will hunt down and try to destroy the truth so that he can maintain his power. Believe me, it isn't Herod who wants to set you free, and that's the truth.

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December Class: Apocryphal Tales of the Virgin Mary

Have you ever heard any of the Chuck Norris "facts?" Chuck Norris is an all time great martial artist, and back in the 90's people starting having some fun with exaggerating just how tough Chuck Norris was. As an example, they said that Chuck Norris didn't do push ups, he pushed the earth down. One of my favourites was "The Boogey Man checks his closet at night for Chuck Norris." The creators of these legends called them "facts," just in case anybody thought they were just some urban legend.

With that in mind, I've come to find out that Chuck Norris wasn't the first person to have exaggerated tales told about him. It turns out that the Virgin Mary was the subject of many a tall tale as well. You are probably aware that in the Catholic Church Mary is considered a saint, and she has this status because they believe she must have been pure in order for the Son of God to be born through her. Since God is so perfectly pure, how could He be born through somebody who wasn't? God abhors the evil and can't stand the presence of it they say!

Now I'm sure you could say that getting this wrong isn't a big deal, and of itself maybe it isn't. But what happens is that getting this foundational truth wrong leads us to a whole

bunch of other errors as well. It's like when we lie and have to create a whole web of lies to try and support the original lie. As a result, we find all sorts of interesting apocryphal tales about Mary that seem to exist in order to prop up the idea that Mary was perfectly pure in every way. Here's just one idea found in these tales: that Mary was so perfect, that she not only did not experience any pain during childbirth, but that the baby Jesus just "appeared" on the floor and didn't actually pass through the birth canal! I don't know about you, but I find that kind of story on par with Chuck Norris pushing the Earth down!

There are a whole assortment of tales and legends, and thankfully my dear wife compiled a number of them into an article many years ago. My plan is to take her article and turn it into our Christmas class, and so we'll cover many of them in our class on **December 13th**. We'll have a dinner at 7pm, followed by the class at 8. I do expect to offer the class online via Zoom and YouTube live stream, and I'll send out links in our regular email. If you're not on our email list, let me know or check the church website for a link.

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Christmas at Hurstville New Church

It's starting to look a lot like Christmas.... judging by the decorations in the shops, anyway! -and with the Christmas season comes special, Christmassy events at church. For starters, we're holding another collection of non-perishable food and toiletry items for **Kogarah Storehouse throughout December!** You can bring *[regular, non-Christmassy, please]* items with you to any <or all!> of our services in December, and even our New Year's service on January 2nd. They'll be delivered to the Storehouse early in the New Year, for use by grateful members in the wider community who are doing it rough.

The worship service on the Sunday prior to Christmas Day has, in recent years, been earmarked as a *different* one, usually an evening vespers, often accompanied by a pageant or projected photos of the nativity story. This year we're doing something different again: on **Sunday, Dec 19th at 7pm** we'll have **Carols by Candlelight** at our own little church! We'll sing festive songs, listen to advent passages from the Word and celebrate with tasty nibbles at the end.

On **Christmas morning, Saturday, Dec 25th**, we'll have our **traditional family-style worship** service at the usual 10am to celebrate the reason for the season, the birth of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

You are cordially invited to join us at any or all of these events. In fact, these are great opportunities to bring a friend! -And bring a bag or two of donations for Kogarah Storehouse, while you're at it: even a little thing from us can mean a whole lot to someone in need.

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Kogarah Storehouse Collection

Once again, this Christmas, we will be holding a collection of non-perishable food items and toiletries for members in the wider community, c/o Kogarah Storehouse! This collection will span the Christmas season, which means that you can drop off items at all our December worship services, including the Carols by Candlelight service on the 19th and the Christmas Day family service on the 25th. Not only that, you can donate at our first service of the new year, on January 2nd, too! - What a great way to launch a new year for folks in need: receiving a hamper full of desperately-needed items. *Please note that, because this collection won't go to people until January, we request regular old-fashioned non-perishable food & toiletry items, **NOT Christmas- or holiday-specific.***

We took a very impressive boot-full of donations to the Storehouse last time; let's do it again, and then some. [...Do you do advent calendars, leading up to Christmas? You could try a reverse advent calendar, this year: set aside an item per day for donation! e.g.: Dec 1: a box of cereal; Dec 2: a jar of peanut butter; etc. - then bring it all in on Christmas morning!] Thanks so much for your gifts; they'll really help someone out!

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Letter to the Editor

Todd, I like your idea of the "Church of the Unregenerate" [see December 2021 Newsletter]. I've heard something similar from people in 12 Step Programs - they called it the "Church of Sinners." It works when, as you said, people drop their social facades, and are "real" with each other. They are expected to share their struggles and their successes with the group, and in return they get total support from the group.

The ninth step is when you make amends to all those whom you have harmed, except when to do so would injure them or others. A great example is the one you gave about spousal attraction (or worse) to a cafe worker.

We do a little of this in the Home Church in Bryn Athyn. Everyone is invited to share something that has helped them in their relationship with the Divine. Sometimes that involves sharing some unregenerate behaviour or thinking, and then sharing what the Divine provided to help them. Small groups focused on this kind of sharing could be an adjunctive way to provide the "Church of the Unregenerate."

Ros Taylor

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Virtual Retreat January 6-9

Are you missing our annual summer retreats/camps? While there won't be any water slides, beaches or swimming pools, **Rev David Moffat** has organized a virtual retreat to quench your doctrinal thirst. There will be a variety of sessions, led by David, Rev Julian Duckworth, Joe Vandermeer, Sarah Walker, Ros Taylor, and possibly others. Dates are January 6-9, with the precise schedule still a work in progress. Anyone who is interested should in the first instance register with David (d_a_moffat@yahoo.com.au) and he will

make sure you get the relevant information, Details and registration information will also get sent around on the New Church Google Group.

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Car Rally & Free Lunch Sunday 23rd January 2022

This is a booked event. **Please call Owen Heldon on 0407 647 280**

Schedule for the day

8 – 8.30 am: Church Service, optional

8.30 – 9 am: Obtain instructions for car rally.

9 am – 11.30: Car rally, destination Audley Dance Hall

12.00 – 2.00 pm: Lunch. A menu will be provided when you book.

4th January: Last date for booking and menu choices.

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Birthdays

Happy Birthday to **Gai Kennedy** (2nd), **Beryl Laidley** (14th), **Ken Horner** (16th), **Patricia Walsh** (19th), **Kristen Johnson** (29th)

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