

REDEEMER

R E P O R T

FEBRUARY 1997

This is the sixth in a series of eight articles on the core values of Redeemer.

BOTH WORD AND DEED

BY TIM KELLER

“He (Jesus) lived with, ate with, and associated with the marginalized. He called this mercy.”

Redeemer is a center city rather than an inner city church; that means that our worship services, evangelism and teaching are directed primarily to professional classes of people. However, we see our *ministry* as being focussed heavily on the poor.

We have an advantage as urban people in that the poor are visible to us here—they are continually thrust into our awareness. And that is good, for they always filled Jesus’s consciousness. He proved to John the Baptist that he is the Christ by pointing out that he healed bodies and preached to the poor (*Matt. 11:1-6*) even as the prophets predicted (*Is. 11:1-4; 61:1-2*). Jesus insisted that anyone who has truly been touched by the

grace of a merciful God will be vigorous in helping the needy (*Luke 6:35-36; Matt. 5:43-48*). God will judge whether we have justifying faith or not by looking at our service to the poor, the refugee, the sick, the prisoner (*Matt. 25:44-46*). Jesus, in his incarnation, “moved in” with the poor (*Luke 2:24; II Cor. 8:9*). He lived with, ate with, and associated with the marginalized. He called this “mercy” (*Matt. 9:13; Luke 10:37a*). The Bible demands that we emulate Him in it (*II Cor. 8:8-15; Luke 10:37b*).

The early church followed suit. As Jesus was mighty in both word and deed (*Luke 24:19*), so the church was empowered by the Holy Spirit with both word and deed gifts (*I Peter 4:10-11*) and with both word and deed leaders

(elders and deacons-*Acts 6:1-7*). Following Jesus, the apostles taught that gospel-faith inevitably showed itself in non-condescending regard for the poor (*James 2:1-23*), not just as charity but justice (*James 2:4,9*). The church is not simply a collection of individuals who are forgiven. It is a “royal nation”, a new humanity (*I Pet. 2:9*). The world must see in us the wisdom of God, namely, what family life, economic sharing, race relations, and inter- personal friendships can be in all their beauty under the kingship of Jesus Christ. We are a pilot plant of the kingdom of God.

This kind of Biblical wholistic ministry takes its shape from the gospel of grace. God became incar-

(continued on page 2)

DEFINED BY GOD: BLESSING OR CURSE?

BY KATHY KELLER

Of all the truisms of post-modern thought, none is more deeply felt than the tenet that no one must be allowed to define me except me, myself. Anyone else who attempts to tell me who I am is either overtly or covertly oppressing me by trying to manipulate my understanding of myself and therefore my potential and the possible futures available to me.

This is actually a valuable observation, though fatally incomplete. It is true that any definition that is imposed on you from cultural, social, political or other human sources will be prejudiced by its source. To

your culture you may be defined as a consumer, to your social group as a nerd or a power broker, and to your country as a voter or a taxpayer. You know yourself to be more than any and even all of these definitions, but can even self-definition supply the authoritative answer to “Who am I?”

The fatal flaw (in the belief that I alone can define myself) is that I am just as much in the dark about who I am and what it will take for me to

lead a fulfilled and happy life as anyone else. Trusting in my own self-definition will only lead to an erratic pursuit of first one goal and then another, as my priorities and passions change. In order to hear an authoritative answer to “Who am I?” I must hear from the AUTHOR.

This is tricky. Many voices claim to speak for God, but how many of them are just cultural voices disguised as the voice of the

(continued on page 2)

INSIDE:

- ASIAN-AMERICAN SEMINAR
- CORPORATE PRAYER RENEWAL
- OPEN FORUM MARCH 2
- CITY VISION VOLUNTEERS *MORE...*



(continued from page 1)

WORD AND DEED

nated as human. He moved in with us, became like us, and served us. His greatness was highest because his humility was lowest. In the same way we must come near people in need, serving and partnering with them, not lording it over them from a distance. The incarnate Lord says about us, "as the Father sent me into the world, so send I you."

"The incarnate Lord says about us, 'as the Father sent me into the world, so send I you.'"

(John 20:21)

Wholistic ministry also takes its motivation from the gospel of grace, not guilt. We do not mainly move Christians to share time, money, and selves by saying, "you have so much" but by saying, "you are so little!" Only a Christian who is conscious of undeserved grace can look at even the prostitutes and criminals and say, "spiritually, I

was just like these people in God's eyes—maybe worse through my self-righteousness! I was an out-cast, and only by Jesus' free generosity to me was I delivered". The Macedonian's gift to the poor was a response, not to a ratio of income levels, but to the measure of the gift of Christ (II Cor. 8:1-5).

Wholistic ministry takes its goals from the gospel of grace. Though grace makes us complete debtors to God, the goal of his grace is not slavery but sonship (Gal. 4:5; Rom. 8:17). Traditional private charity and government bureaucracy tend to look on poor individuals as "cases", people to be helped. But wholistic ministry seeks to "reweave" whole neighborhoods, looking at them systemically to lift

up the whole community to self-sufficiency. Even the Old Testament warned that the poor were not to be given simply a "hand-out", but tools, grain (Deut. 15:12-15) and land (Lev. 25), so that they could join in the healthy social systems around them.

As Edmund Clowney has put it, "God requires the love that cannot be required". Service to those in need is commanded, but it cannot ever be simply the response to a command. This is one of the core values of Redeemer that is still in the fledgling stage of development. But the more we know God in Christ, the more the love growing within us will seek expression toward "the least of these, my brethren" (Matt. 25:40).

(continued from page 1)

DEFINED BY GOD: BLESSING OR CURSE?

Almighty? "All of them," the post-modernists would say. If that is true, then either God does not exist, or, if he (or she or it) does, then he has been totally incapable of communicating with his creatures. If God doesn't exist or can't communicate with us about his design for our lives, then our choices can neither be right nor wrong. Nothing means anything.

For the sake of argument (and shortening this article by several pages!) let's assume that there is a God (because we know that there is such a thing as right and wrong, no matter how strongly we pretend otherwise) and that, having created a world, he has not been baffled by the difficulty of communicating accurately with his creatures.

If God has revealed his character and imposed his demands on his creation, then, like it or not, we will have

to conform to his wishes in order to be in relationship with him and in harmony with the world he designed. But here's the rub: what if we don't like what God has said about who we are? What if we find that he casts himself in a masculine role, and uses masculine imagery to describe himself in relation to us (most of the time)? What if we discover that he ordained gender roles at the creation, and expects BOTH men and women to shoulder their given roles, regardless of their personal predilections or comfort level in doing so?

The most convenient response is to reject such a disagreeable voice. It couldn't be the Word of God telling me such unpleasant things. God made me this way (gay, shy, aggressive, whatever) and if this "Word" conflicts with what I know about myself, then I'm right and it's wrong. It simply can't be the Word

of God if it crosses me at such a fundamental level of my being.

Here is where I want to argue for a healthy self-distrust. Do we know ourselves to be sinners, often deluded and misled by our feelings? Do we believe God when he says "I know the plans I have for you, plans for good and not for evil"? Do we trust in both the love and the wisdom of the one who created and redeemed us? Then why not at least spend a moment wondering if the right thing to do would be to trust God's definition of who we are, and mistrust our own.

My fear is that, if we do not do this, we set ourselves up to miss the deepest blessings that God has for us. If God knows who he made us to be, then he alone knows where we will find the fulfillment and happiness that we so desper-

(continued on page 3)

REDEEMER REPORT

Kathy Keller

Shirley Dryden • Yvonne Dodd

Dave Jacobs

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OFFICE • 271 MADISON AVENUE • SUITE 1600 • NEW YORK, NEW YORK • 10016
212-808-4460 (phone) 212-808-4465 (fax)

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ALL CHURCH SEMINAR FOR ASIAN-AMERICANS FEB 23

BY JIM OM

A Church-wide seminar “How Asian-Americans can plug into Redeemer” will be held February 23 following both services.

Last fall Redeemer began utilizing the School of Discipleship class schedule so that we could schedule church wide special seminars on the weeks between class cycles. In October we had a presentation of the growth and vision of Redeemer. This February 23 the all-church seminar time will be used to address the challenge of one of Redeemer’s most visible blessings: multi-ethnicity.

As anyone can plainly see in the Sunday worship services, Redeemer is not only growing numerically, but it is also expanding in its ethnic diversity. However, some leaders and members of Redeemer have noticed that this multi-ethnicity seems to be bottlenecked at the worship attendance level, and there is in fact a significantly smaller proportion of ethnic minorities in small groups and on ministry teams. A thoughtful observer would ask “Why?”

We hope to provide some answers and some solutions during

an all-church seminar on Sunday, February 23, in the auditorium following the worship services instead of the usual School of Discipleship classes. Since the Asian-American community is the largest ethnic group at Redeemer (making up approximately 35% of Sunday attendance), it made sense to address some of the possible sociological, psychological and spiritual barriers that Asian-Americans might face in connecting at Redeemer. There will be a 30 minute discussion on this topic and then half a dozen or so ministry teams will give short presentations about their ministries. The ministry team leaders will be available for questions immediately after the seminar.

Following the morning presentation there will be an all-church luncheon in the third floor cafeteria of Hunter’s West Building from 1:00-2:00 p.m. Tickets will be \$7.00 each (\$5.00 for students). We hope that most of the people attending the seminar in the morning will stay for the luncheon, where more dialogue on this important issue can continue. (The seminar following the evening service will not be accompanied by a meal.) Everyone is welcome.

MARCH 2 OPEN FORUM

The first of two Open Forums this spring will occur on Sunday, March 2, at 6:00 p.m., in place of our regular evening worship service. The theme will be “*Christian Mysticism: A Guide Through The Murky Waters of Spiritual Experience.*” The music for the evening will feature the debut of the Orchestra of the Redeemer, a full orchestra composed of professional musicians from the Redeemer community under the musical direction of conductor (and Redeemer member) Miriam Burns. Miriam has served as conductor of the Bronx Opera, the Long Island Sound Symphony, and is now the conductor of the Kenosha Symphony.

Appearing with the orchestra will be Redeemerite Mark Oswald of the Metropolitan Opera, and the Redeemer Choir. The program will feature a performance of Ralph Vaughan Williams’ *Five Mystical Songs*, settings of poems by the 17th century Christian poet George Herbert, and the overture to Mozart’s opera, *The Magic Flute*. Following the music, Tim Keller will give a lecture entitled “*Christian Mysticism: A Guide Through The Murky Waters of Spiritual Experience,*” followed by an open-microphone question and answer session.

As always, we encourage you to invite friends who are skeptical of, or even hostile to, the Christian faith.

(continued from page 2)

DEFINED BY GOD: BLESSING OR CURSE?

ately seek. Heaven knows, we haven’t found it in any of the places we’ve chosen to look.

When I was in seminary and about to be married, I took a course on “Marriage and the Family,” thinking it would come in handy. For the paper that the course required, I decided to investigate all the scriptures pertaining to having children. My motive for this was that I didn’t plan on having any—Tim and I hoped for an inner city ministry, and I felt that my time would be better spent caring for the needy children who already existed than in saddling the world with any more of them. And, truth to tell, I’d never liked babies or little kids very much, and was relieved to think I’d never have to care for any of them.

To my surprise and chagrin, everywhere I turned in the Bible I discovered that children were spoken of as one of God’s best blessings, a mark of his favor, integral to the kingdom. The evidence was overwhelming, and it wasn’t what I wanted to hear. But I had to ask myself, whom do I trust—my own judgment of what will be a blessing to me, or God’s? In the end, I trusted God, and with many misgivings and even more failures, embarked on nearly 20 years of motherhood. Though some parts of it have been painful in the extreme, and none of it has come easily or “naturally,” God has been proven faithful a thousand times over.

The creator knows his creatures; it is the creature’s job (and our highest delight, if we only knew it) to conform to the plan God had when he created us. Many of these issues have been raised in the School of Discipleship Class “*A Biblical View of Women’s Issues.*” If you are interested in pursuing any of them further, consider showing up for round two of that class, beginning March 2, from 7:30-8:30 p.m. following the evening service.

“But I had to ask myself, whom do I trust...”

HOPE FOR NEW YORK FINANCIAL UPDATE

A BIG thanks to all who donated to our special holiday parties for the needy listed above. December contributions to Hope for New York added up to over \$10,000—including many designated contributions through the United Way. These funds made a big difference in the Christmas celebrations of many people, and we are thankful for God's provision through his generous people.

OPERATION EXODUS CHRISTMAS PAGEANT

The children from the Operation Exodus tutoring program once again put on a dramatic presentation about Christmas for their families, the tutors and other interested people.

This year, one of the plays was written and directed by one of the students! Afterwards everyone enjoyed a lunch of Dominican food, prepared by the moms. About 100 people enjoyed the morning of Christmas carols, scriptures and the two plays. Thanks to the tutors who organize this event each year.

Wanted: Writers, editors, public relations and other marketing experts, graphic designers, publishers, promotional directors, media consultants and other interested parties to help think through communications and media issues at Redeemer. Call 808-4460 and leave a message for Kathy Keller at extension 10.

HOPE FOR NEW YORK CHRISTMAS UPDATE

Hope for New York ministries had the most successful Christmas season yet, thanks to the many volunteers who gave so generously of their time and finances to meet needs. Here's a capsule summary of what happened (just to let you know what you missed!)

Angel Tree

Ninety-four children and some of their parents came to our Angel Tree party where we distributed the donated gifts. In addition, puppets, clowns, face-painting, music and pizza made the party merry. We gave presents to 200 children this year, a combined effort of the Village Church, Northshore, Long Island and Trinity-Rye with Redeemer. In addition to the individual gift sponsors, over forty volunteers helped to make Angel Tree a great success.

His Toy Store

Our first year project, His Toy Store, also went well— 90 families with 250 children came to select exactly the right gift for Christmas. Damascus Christian Church in the Bronx was our host facility and we enjoyed working with them. Donated and new toys, books and stocking stuffer gifts were given to each family, along with free scripture materials. The families came from the other Hope for New York ministry partners such as Operation Exodus, Angel Tree, Bowery Women's Center and the Christian Herald children. 27 volunteers put in many, many hours to make our first toy store an abundant one. Thanks especially to the many Spanish-speaking volunteers who made communication easier.

St. Paul's Dinner for the homeless

The best part about our Christmas dinner for the homeless was the volunteer-to-guest ratio. 150 homeless joined us for dinner, along with 70 volunteers— so there was plenty of opportunity for conversation and fellowship. George Merritt provided our special music, with a sermon by Omar Reyes, so it was a spiritually-uplifting evening, too. Marie Carnivale and her volunteer team obtained gifts and set up the hall with lovely decorations. Frank and Claire Banks made sure everyone had a fabulous meal. Several home fellowship groups came together for this ministry opportunity.

Russian Christmas Party

About 75 people stayed late one Sunday afternoon to enjoy fellowship with our sister Russian Church. They provided authentic Russian food, and decorated the East Lounge with crafts and art work. Greg Zhelezny, the pastor of this new church plant, led the worship music (sometimes in Russian and sometimes in Hebrew, since these Russians are also discovering their ethnic Jewish heritage as well as faith in Christ.) The best part were the testimonies from the Russian people who are now part of the larger Christian family.

CITY VISION VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Sunday, February 2nd marks the bi-annual City Vision Ministry Fair. Held at Hunter College in the East Lounge immediately following both services, you will have the option to meet the Hope for New York mercy ministry leaders and find out which volunteer opportunity suits your schedule and interests. One ministry which will be highlighted this season is the Nursing Home Ministry. This volunteer team meets on the second Sunday afternoon of each month at the DeWitt nursing home on East 79th St. The regular volunteers conduct a worship service for the residents and visit afterwards. If you have an interest in working with the often

lonely and forgotten elderly of this city, this might be the opportunity for you. Lisa Maynard is the team leader. New volunteers could help with worship, music, prayer and distributing the programs.

Stop by the tables on Sunday, February 2nd and find out which mercy ministry program most closely matches your spiritual gifts.

Relationship Ministry

7 pm February 10
Monday
at 111 East 87th Street
Church of the Advent Hope

F.Y.I.

Valentine Cookie Sale February 9 to Benefit Youth Groups

A sale of homemade Valentine Cookies will take place in the East Lounge following both services on February 9. The funds raised will benefit the youth group activities throughout the year.

Jr./Sr Hi's Plan Ski Retreat at Stowe February 14-17.

Over President's Day weekend the Junior and Senior High students of Redeemer will be skiing at Stowe, Vermont. The cost of \$150 covers accommodations, bus, food, entertainment, spiritual inspiration, and skiing. Payment and permission slips must be handed in to Kevin Kleinschmidt (481-9091) or Bev Reid (734-1064) ASAP. You may call either one of them for more information.

February 16 Family Pizza Party

Lunch should be a fun and festive affair for families on Sunday, February 16, immediately following the School of Discipleship at 1:00 p.m. Pizza will be served in Room C002 for parents and children, and the Redeemer Children's Choir will sing (to whet your appetite for the Easter Program they are currently working on for performance on March 23.) Tickets for the Pizza Party will go on sale January 26 in the Commons Level fellowship area at a cost of \$2.00 for adults and \$1.00 for children. Don't miss out on this opportunity to meet other families.

By request—an All-Day Membership Seminar Saturday Feb. 22

Most people who are joining Redeemer these days pick up their seven membership class segments after the morning or the evening services in the "Intro to Redeemer" class. For those of you who travel or who can't stay after the services for classes, we regularly offer the entire membership series (Classes 1-7) all in one day. Beginning at 9:00 a.m. and going until about 3:00 p.m. at the church office, 271 Madison (between 39/40), 16th floor, this one day marathon will fulfill all your membership requirements except your interview, which will be scheduled at your convenience. Call the Redeemer office to register: 808-4460, extension 21.

CORPORATE PRAYER RENEWAL

BY JIM OM

"Wonderful," "Refreshing," and "Powerful" are just some of the adjectives which people have used to describe CPR. Our monthly prayer services have been a source of blessing and encouragement for many, including myself. I personally feel that I am learning how to pray all over again, seeing His glory in a new way and experiencing His love on a deeper level. These past few CPR meetings have brought conviction, brokenness, and healing into my life and into the lives of many others, as we've worshiped and put our hope in Him.

The format is very simple: singing and worship is followed by large group sharing of testimonies, and then brief large group prayer. The congregation then breaks down into small groups to pray more personally, and the pastors and elders are available for the laying on of hands for special needs at this time. The conclusion of the evening is communion together. If you've never come to CPR, we really hope that you would come and experience a renewal in your prayer life. At least try to talk to someone who has attended CPR and ask about their experience there.

Please come and share in God's work of renewal through CPR on the last Monday of each month. Our next CPR is on February 24, at the Church of the Advent Hope, 87th and Park, from 7:00-9:00 p.m.

"These past few CPR meetings have brought conviction, brokenness, and healing into my life and into the lives of many others..."

Special Offering

for
International Missions
Sunday February 23rd
Both Services

MEMBERS RECEIVED IN JANUARY

10:30 Service

Sung Rno *
Vivian Ueng Fang
Mike Matheny
Kevin Barhydt *
Echi Barhydt *
Linda Dougherty
Marianne Collante
Will Collante
David Lu

** Adult Baptism*

Infant Baptisms

Isabelle JiHae Kim
Evan Raymond Tatnall
Lauren Lucille Bartholemy
Caris Julia White
Anabelle Cole Cacciatore
Deborah Leah Matheny
Sarah Noelle Matheny
Kentaro Nevin Barhydt

6:00 service

Angela Alfano
Bradly Wade
Paul Mladineo