

“A Week of Heavy Going” and United Mission

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When we are united in God’s mission, our United Mission will grow.

As I write these words, we are about to enter Holy Week 2012. Holy Week is a week of heavy going: beginning with a triumphant procession on the day that we know as Palm Sunday. Other events follow swiftly during the week: Jesus’ cleansing of the Temple and overturning of the moneychangers’ tables; Jesus’ last supper with the disciples; the betrayal, arrest, and trials of Jesus; his death by execution on a Roman cross. But, on the next Sunday, God raises Jesus from death. The apostle Paul reflected on the Resurrection of Jesus in these familiar words taken from the King James translation. The word style is old, but the words ring true.

Death is swallowed up in victory. O death,
where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?
The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin
is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us
the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1
Corinthians 15:54b-57)

The heavy-going week moved from triumph, to death, and finally to victory. In Jesus’ death, it plumbed the depths of the worst that humans can do. In Jesus’ Resurrection, God’s love and power prevailed. Jesus’ arose from the depths!

It was not only that Jesus became alive after his crucifixion. It is more than that. God has conquered death itself. *Death is dead!* As Paul wrote, “Death is swallowed up in victory.” It is a divine reversal.

Do we fully realize the wonders of God’s love and power, even over death? Or have we so domesticated the gospel of Jesus Christ that its meaning and power are tamed?

A few weeks ago, I went to my primary physician for a routine physical examination. By the time we had finished, it was late afternoon. Only the doctor and one nurse were still there. The lab technician had finished her work and left for the day. The normal routine at that point would have been for me to come back the next day and have my blood drawn then. I said that I was willing to do that. But my doctor had another idea. He said, “I can draw your blood.” The nurse immediately added, “I can spin your blood.” I responded, “I can give my blood.”

While he was drawing my blood, the doctor *initiated* a theological conversation. His

main point was that we need more givers in the world. My thoughts turned to Jesus' giving his blood on that Good Friday. In turn God calls us to acknowledge that gift of salvation and to give in return so that all may know of God's gift in Jesus Christ.

In my view, the most effective way we can do this financially is to give substantially to American Baptist United Mission. In this way, our giving supports our Region, ministries across our nation, and to all nations (see Matthew 28:16-20).

Help ABC ministries come alive with your support of United Mission.

THANK YOU for your support of American Baptist United Mission!

Ron

P.S. I encourage you to share this letter electronically or in print with others in your church.