



Irondale Church News Christmas

Three weeks and one day; 22 increments of 24 hours, 528 total hours: that's how long we have until Christmas. Minus your sleep, your meal time and the time spent at work; the actual time remaining to find those perfect gifts is reduced to about 108 hours. From that we should minus some driving time to the mall, finding a parking space, standing in line to check out, searching for the car you were certain you parked in the second row under the street light. The same car which apparently was towed to the forth row and is now parked next to the shopping cart rack. A sick joke played by some tow truck drivers during the holiday season.

From the remaining time we also must deduct the allotted time for the annual pre-Christmas dinner at Grandma Joan's house and don't forget the annual unannounced visit by the Robertson family. There is also the Christmas pageant at the public school, the nativity

play at church, the Candlelight Service on Christmas Eve (the Pastor always does such a good job with that service). There is also a concert by Josh & Sarah Snodgrass at 6:30 on Friday December 11 at Irondale Church, you won't want to miss. So by my best estimation there is actually about 45 minutes remaining for effective Christmas gift shopping.

This means there can be no actual shopping taking place. You will simply have to walk in the store and toss 47 on-sale objects into your shopping cart. Then enter the line to check out, perhaps aisle number 8, the shortest long line and wait patiently while every other line moves faster than yours. You do this until you grow so frustrated that you move to line number 26, only moments before aisle 4 is opened leaving you too far away to move back to the new empty aisle. Fortunately, you have the advantage of the faster big box store checker in the history of

the world. People are shooting through your line 2 to 1 faster than anywhere else. That is until the manager brings in Maria the new trainee who barely speaks English. Now every line is 3 to 1 faster than yours.

Once at the checkout Maria sweetly asks, "Dos you fine evertink you needs?" You are not exactly sure what she said and as you are pondering that you hear, "will zat be deebit or credit?" Your response is a blank stare. "Deebit or Credit?" with that you find second gear in your brain replying, "Check." Maria says, "Si we can canzel your zheck right here, I will need zee blank zheck az the mazhine will full in everyzing." Leaving the checkout you wonder what you paid for and what she did with the blank check.

Once in the parking lot you set out to find your car which is mysteriously located over by the tire shop, even though you distinctly recall parking it near the pharmacy. Finally you are on the

Pray Always

- *Pastor David and Colleen*
- *Community Soup*
- *Irondale Bible Institute*
- *Our outreach and witness to our community*
- *Busy Hands*
- *People struggling with illness*
- *Young families and single parent families*
- *Those struggling with addictions*
- *Schools: students, staff, administrators*
- *Missionaries*
- *Homeless, helpless, hopeless and hungry*
- *Salvation for the lost*
- *Law enforcement professionals*
- *The military serving at home and abroad*

Christmas, continued

road home. You will have just enough time to wrap your gifts before this evening's event. As you merge onto Hwy 3 your cell phone buzzes, a text letting you know the bridge is closed to vehicle traffic for the next hour. As you sit there and the line grows long behind you, you think, "Well I'll just have to wrap the gifts in the morning." Not wanting to lose your Christmas spirit you recall and are grateful for the plastic barrel full of gift wrapping papers your aunt Estelle gave you. A lifetime supply...of... wrapping...paper. Your thoughts become halted as you remember that last spring you discovered that a mouse had turned your barrel of new wrapping paper into a tub of mouse scented shredded confetti which was thrown away. Realizing you will have to return to the store, you place your forehead on the steering wheel and you begin to firmly beat your fists on the dashboard. As you do this you wonder if you turned around right now how long would you have until the bridge opens? With that thought horns start honking behind you. The line in front is gone and the guys behind you want to get going. All the way home you won-

der, how am I going to get all this done?

Your stress level is increasing by the second, maybe the radio will be a good distraction. Dialing in 105.3 you hear Andy Williams singing, "It's the most wonderful time of the year!" With that your face falls into your hand and you hear yourself quoting, "Good grief Charlie Brown."

All you've just read is an important part of our Christmases. But don't let the hustle and bustle overwhelm you and cause you to lose sight of what Christmas is all about.

"And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. And the angel said to them, "Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the

heavenly host praising God and saying, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!" (Luke 2:8-14 ESV)

Merry Christmas! You know it's really not about the gifts we get or give, it really is all about God's Son, Jesus, who came to take away the sin of the world.

-Pastor David

Fellowship Events

The Harvest Dinner held on November 21st was a great success, with 230 people served! Many thanks to all the helpful hands who came together to put the dinner on this year.

Now it's Christmas time, and we kick things off on Friday, Dec. 11 at 6:30 pm with a Christmas Concert performed by Josh and Sarah Snodgrass. This will be followed by a Christmas Cookie potluck in the Fellowship Hall.

On Sunday December 20 at 6:30 is our Christmas Pageant. Belinda Price and her crew are working hard to bring this program to us!

As always, everyone is invited to our events, so please invite your friends and neighbors!

A Thankful Heart

We have so much we can complain about, how rich does that mean we are?

We are rich enough to complain about the drought; disgruntled enough to complain about the pouring rain and snow. We must have been free of worry to miss our peace so much. How rich is that?

Are we rich enough, to be grateful enough to know when we have been spared the damage of fallen trees? Do we feel the presence of the Lord enough to know we are safe no matter what our situation is?

We are so rich in this country we have been allowed to live on earth in.

A little fall this past week in mere seconds has taught me so much and I am learning more all the time just how truly blessed I am and cared for by God. I shared this perspective this past week with someone, after having torn my hamstring tendon free from the bone taking a small piece of bone with it and creating a small fracture along with muscle and tendon sprains to my hip.

Their reply to me was, "If God is so great

why didn't...He keep you...from falling?"

First of all "His greatness," is not dependent on whether or not He keeps me from any form of pain calamity or disappointment. He is GREAT period!

Who I am, how am, and in what condition I am in never clarifies who God is. Never!

We were on the first leg of our journey to Oregon taking the long way as we wanted to visit our family in Skagit county and north central Washington and then head south to the District Pastors and Wives retreat in Sun River Oregon.

We were staying at our daughter and son-in-law's RV Park; we had just finished a late lunch at their camp apartment. Our daughter left to check-in a camper and Pastor David and the grandchildren left to return to our "Bunk House."

I stayed behind to wash the dishes, finishing those I headed out to cross the now almost pitch-black empty campground, so I could join them. The bunk house was about 275 feet away.

A small herd of deer had been enjoying the groomed grounds

and trees so I was looking out for them and remembered they had left quite a bit of evidence in the normal path I would have taken so thought I would just step to the side a few feet and keep my shoes cleaner. The deer are a little crankier this time of year so with these things in mind. I did just that.

What I didn't know was there was a fire-pit close to the gate I had just passed through. I thought I should probably take my cell phone out to give myself a little light. I usually carried a flashlight but had left it behind as it was broad daylight when I went over to dinner.

I had no more than pulled it from my pocket when I hit the pit with my right leg and in an instant changed the direction of our plans.

I went down so quickly I don't really remember even hitting the ground I just remember suddenly being on the ground in incredible pain and wondering why my leg would not work on the side I had hit nothing with.

I remember thinking well this is bad. Real bad... no one knows where I am, its pitch black. I could lay here for

A Thankful Heart, continued

for some time before anyone comes to look for me. I tried again to move my leg but no response except for searing pain. I yelled for help but the few campers who were on the grounds this cooler time of year were inside their cozy campers and farther away from the tenting area I walked into.

I am not sure how much time had passed not too long only a few minutes, seems longer when you're laying down looking like a "Cougar snack," in the dark and its cold hovering around 35 degrees.

All I said was, "Lord I need some help please."

I noticed that somehow in my fall I had not lost the cell phone from my hand. I was a little concerned as I had just tried to unsuccessfully make a call before I left the apartment. I dialed David's phone and thankfully he answered it. Thanks God!

I knew whatever I had done was not good and wondered what kind of consequences there would be. It just took a second, just a blink in time, just a short breath and one miss-step to change everything, all our vacation plans; we wouldn't be meeting with our fellow ministerial family at the well planned retreat some

400 hundred miles to the south in Bend Oregon. We had plans along the way to also visit family. As I lay there I wondered if I was going to be able to do the big family dinner I had planned for Thanksgiving.

Fortunately, David arrived, racing through the dark without running into the same type of obstacle as I had. I still couldn't move my leg but when I partially rolled to my side there was a loud snap. I could now move it but not stand. I am not sure how my daughter arrived but they got me up.

They took me to the apartment and propped me up brought ice and pillows and there I lay messing up the special family dinner that was planned at a new restaurant.

Those; "How do you feel? Do you need to go to the doctor; should we take you to the emergency-room?" Questions kept coming all very polite and caring. I felt sad giving them worry. They were worried and the pain seemed to be not as severe. So I asked them to just give me a little more time. I'd have them help me up and I would try to put a little weight on it. The closest doctor that time of night was 45 miles away. I said let's just go to dinner, if it's worse you can take me on to the ER. I had had enough of medical bills and hoped this would

just get better. The 8 mile drive to dinner on curvy roads convinced me this had not been a good idea, the temperature had dropped into the lower 30's and they were calling for snow. Having to cross a mountain pass in the dark to get to the ER didn't sound that great either so I said I thought I would be fine.

Story short- Went to the local doctor in the morning, she sent me to the ER 45 miles away for a cat scan. He just took x-rays said he didn't need to do a cat scan as he could see no break.....Go back to your daughter's, do not travel for 4 days, stay laying down as much as possible and see your family doctor on Monday. He gave a prescription for the pain and said I had a severely sprained my hip. It had snowed and closed the highway that we would have taken 4 hours to travel home on so we had to make the 7.5 hour trip over Stevens Pass on very slippery icy roads. David did a good job but I found out that I should call the highway department and ask them to consider straightening out the roads and to please also take out all the dips and rolls and pot holes for injured wimps like me.

A Thankful Heart, continued

On Tuesday the Doctor sent me for a cat scan and the damage was plain to see as well as the small fracture, torn off hamstring tendon and with a piece of bone still attached to it. Go home pile up pillows and rest, this will take weeks and possibly months to heal.

Before the fall I had went merrily on my way not even noticing I could walk sit and stand and lay down without this kind of pain. Before the fall I could pick things up off the floor, reach into cupboards, get in and out of the car pickup my little dogs, play the piano, drive my own car, shop and sew and was so thankful my shoulder was healing and I had less pain there. All of these things I simply took for granted. I could even just sit at my computer. I could sit at the dining table with my family and not be in pain. I could go help someone else out. None of these things are the same.

But as the weeks have gone by I have come to appreciate those who have long term illnesses that physically limit them in their ability to just do the everyday things I took for granted. The ones who don't give up when after multiple surgeries and unending pain continue bravely on.

This little incident, just when I felt I was getting free from the shoulder surgery pain, pushed me to a new spiritual place where I was not proud to be. I remember saying to God "Really? Really?" Did this need to happen?" I guess it did. I was saying that to Him as I lay on the ground where I had taken the fall...so you would think I would have sense enough at this point in my life to not question God...Hmm.

I get so in His way all the time. Thinking just because I have the ability to do or handle a situation that I should do it. You ever do this sort of thing? Another thing I am "good" at is hurrying and putting just one more thing on my plate. I am the person who has somewhere they need to be in 20 minutes. It will take 10 minutes to drive there but I am sure I can fit one more little thing in before I go....

Not a good way to live. God wants us to have "down time" between all the events in our lives to take time to seek Him wait on Him and wrestle-through the difficult issues in our lives. Jesus took that time even to rest and to just be quiet With God. Time we set aside to just contemplate the largeness of Gods character, where we can experience

contemplate the largeness of Gods character, where we can experience the quiet depth of His amazing all-consuming love for us and our love for Him. Without these purposeful and intentional times devoted to our relationship with Him, we can get pretty full of ourselves and definitely in God's way.

Those of you who know me know it's one of the hardest things for me to do to not complete what I feel is my responsibility and just let others do it for me. I am sorry for this self-righteous behavior, these points of pride in my life where I don't let me fail. Please forgive me for the many, many times I have yielded to this flaw in me while God refashions my heart.

This is the special blessed season we celebrate His great love for us and the sacrifice He made leaving heaven for all of us. I hope with me you will take time to nestle into the embrace of His so great love, that we will experience together the joy of knowing heaven waits.

Sharing with a special friend the other day on the phone and she asks me, "How do you hear God's voice? What does it sound like?" Do you actually hear it?"

I answered her

A Thankful Heart, continued

from my own
from my own experienc-
es and said I could not
answer for how God
would speak to her but
shared with her the
knowingness of what had
been spoken to me and
that without a doubt she
would know it was God
when He shared with
her. Sometimes I have
heard a voice not audible
to anyone's ears but my
own but very audible to
my heart. Other times I
am impressed along a
certain line of thought
and again there is that
assuredness that He is
speaking to and in-
structing me.

As I wrestled
through a deep struggle
and cried out to God
without conscious
thought a moment later
when I was no longer
thinking about it, like He
wanted me to know...a
partial phrase from His
heart to me, from the
scripture but it came as
the song. His eye is on
the Sparrow....

Nothing more,
just a calm assurance
that He was constantly
abiding and had things
under control.

I am truly thank-
ful for my husband who
has taken care of me the
many times I have had to
have his care and espe-
cially for the loving way
He says "no you are not a
burden as he gets just
one more drink of water,
and stacks up the slip-

pery pillows again. He says
you would do it for me
right? Of course, I say but
feeling guilty I cringe at
asking, (there is that
pride). I am thankful for
my family and all of you.

I am thankful for
God who is never taking a
break, never choosing to
"not be the Gift He is to
this world His only require-
ment is that I love Him and
believe in Him.

Thank you to all of
you who are helping with
the Christmas Pageant.
Please be sure to invite
your friends and neigh-
bors. Be sure to come to
the Christmas Concert
here at 6:30 Friday even-
ing, and invite your friends
and neighbors as well.

Happy birthday
Jesus and Merry Christmas
to us all!

Love Colleen

Operation Christmas Child

Thanks to Betty Bo-
bo and her helpers for taking
on Irondale's Operation
Christmas Child this year.

We prayed for 50
shoeboxes to be filled from
this church, and that is ex-
actly what we got! We also
were able to send on dona-
tions of over \$200.00!

Is anyone tracking
their shoebox? It would be
great to find out where they
end up this year!

Reader Board

As many of you
know, our reader board
out on Irondale Road is
quite popular with pass-
ersby. People find out
you're part of Irondale
Church and start telling
you about how much
they look forward to see-
ing what comes up on the
reader board!

We are in need of
someone to take on the
task of changing the read-
er board on a weekly ba-
sis. It only takes about 15
minutes and we have a
collection of inspirational
sayings you can use! This
will be a great way for
you to serve! Stop in the
office and talk to Kim or
Pastor David and we'll get
you set up!

Quiltmania?

Perhaps you're
one of those folks who
think the sewing wom-
en of this church are
crazy for quilts. Well,
maybe we are! What
could be better than
learning to make such a
wonderful gift for a
child who is in need?

Join the Busy
Hands crew on Saturday
Dec. 11 from 10 am on
to cut, piece, sew and
quilt for this project!
We'd love to be able to
donate a large stack of
warm quilts made with
love to children in need!
No skills required! Just
a willing heart and busy
hands-you can learn as
you go!

Relational Soup

Recently someone said they wouldn't be back to Community Soup. It just "wasn't for me." The rudeness of one person, the lack of manners in a few kids were more than they could take, and I was admonished to "make those people leave or refuse to serve them." After being in customer service for several decades, it was appalling that we serve these folks! I told the person that they would be missed, and that we had enjoyed having them; the door is open and they are welcome to return any time!

Then...my mind went to work! I noodled over this for a while. It was kind of hurtful to hear those words, and yet...we aren't about customer service, are we? We're about relationship! Yes, people can be rude, but a little kindness can diffuse that. What's behind it anyway? There is usually a reason. Yes, there are lots of children who come from dysfunctional families, and kids are not trained in the ways we may have been. There are kind and loving ways to relate to these situations, and we all work at it! One of our foundations is no strings, no sermons. What would happen if we held a standard out

late to these situations, and we all work at it! One of our foundations is no strings, no sermons. What would happen if we held a standard out for folks to measure up to? Customer service is a job one gets hired to perform, and the customer is always right! When you punch out at the end of a shift, you can treat people however you want to.

Relationship, especially Christian relationship, is a whole other animal! It starts with prayer, I believe, before we even start the day. Community Soup has survived on prayer more than anything else! We never know who will come through the door, or what to expect. All we know is that when we are covered by prayer we are equipped. No matter who comes in: clean, unclean, smelly, suffering, healthy, loud, quiet, happy, sad, disillusioned, joyful: it's our place as Christians to serve them with the love our savior extends to us. We are no better than any other human on the planet. We all have different areas of poverty in our lives, some are just more visible than others. Where would any of us Christians be without the saving grace of Jesus?

We see more people every week who have a little less loneli-

ness, hunger, or cold in their lives because they came in for a bowl or two of soup. People open up when they are welcomed and treated with kindness and smiles, and they are happier when they go back out the door with a full stomach and possibly a care package to take with them. Families come in and sit together, maybe for the only time during the week. Sometimes it can be loud and messy, but look! There is a family sitting all together at the same table at the same time! Sometimes three generations of the same family!

There have been very few unpleasant episodes during this ministry. Each time, things were handled as efficiently, quickly and quietly as possible, with very little "blowback" or "fallout." Are we covered by grace? I believe we are! Are we blessed? Indeed we are! Do we continue on? Yes, we do! God, in his Amazing Economy keeps providing and so we keep on going! He has always equipped us and I believe He will continue to do so for as long as he wants us to!

Merry Christmas to You All! Thank you for praying and showing up and serving and loving our neighbors! As Tiny Tim said, "God bless us all, everyone!"

-Kim