

## *Jesus Cares For Us*

1 Peter 5:7 "Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about you."

6 points I would like to make about what the kids learned in Vacation Bible School.

1. We are called to help make someone's life better.
2. We should do to others whatever you would like them to do to you (The Golden Rule)
3. We need to consider if worrying ever gets us anywhere.
4. Jesus taught us to pray for whatever is important and what we truly need to pray for.
5. Jesus provides a way when there seems to be none.
6. Jesus died and came back to life to prove the full extent of his forgiving, healing love for us. We have his love simply because we exist, not because we deserve it.

Wow! That's a lot of summing up what life is really all about. So my question becomes, what does it matter that we believe in and follow Jesus? People try to muddle through life without faith, without praying, believing, and following a higher power. And they seem to do a fairly decent job of living. But one of the differences between those people and people who follow the moral guidelines and actions of faith have an extra cushion for when life takes a nosedive. Christian in particular have been given the very Spirit of God within them to help see them through the most difficult of circumstances and coming out the other side strengthen and ready to carry on in life. Perspectives about life change when one follows Christ. One does not sink into a sense of hopelessness when Christ is at the center of their lives. Christ is the ultimate hope when things go very bad. Why? Because he becomes a source of strength that is unparalleled in this world. One can always pray to Jesus and know that they are being listened to. That is what is at the heart of our faith. Jesus cares for us! (response) So Jesus listens and responds. It is the response that we often puzzle about. We all too often cave when the response does not fit our wants and desires.

It is when we walk by faith that Jesus is responding that true faith begins to emerge. We so often do not see what God is doing in many circumstances. And sometimes that leads us to believe that God is not responding at all. But the one who believes and carries his or her faith into any circumstance, believes also in the power of God to make change and to work with our circumstances to bring about the response that is truly needed.

The people who were at the crucifixion probably had prayed that Jesus be spared, that God intervene and save Jesus. But God had a bigger purpose in mind and that is how God responded. God was giving a way for ALL people to be saved and restored to right relationship with Him. The power of resurrection was displayed in the final act of love just a few days later.

Jesus became a world force that would change the world forever. The path was cleared for all of us to approach God no matter what our circumstances.

If Jesus had not died that day, we might have a religion based on Jesus' teachings and have followers who adhere to those teachings. But something greater happened. The world has a true Savior, one who could travel with us in our individual journeys through life, a daily companion of sorts who can guide us if we listen and respond. No other faith can claim that. Jesus is the way God chose to show us how much we are cared for and will be cared for in all circumstances into the life beyond.

So why do we not believe that this God can travel with us in all the events of our lives? And why do we not believe that God responds to our prayers? We can know that because God cares for us, God will respond by answering our prayers in ways that truly meet our needs and the needs of those we are praying for. Even though we cannot see any immediate response we can be assured that God is working with and for us and for the world that He so deeply cares for.

On July 26 Father Jacques Hamel was celebrating Mass. Two French teens entered the church with knives, walked up to him and slit his throat, killing him. I am sure there are people in the congregation who prayed for his life. To think that God did nothing in those moments is to think in terms of our own sensibilities, wants and desires. "We do not want a holy man to be killed, therefore, God, save his life!" Those who prayed a prayer like that must have felt that their prayer went unresponded to. That God stood back and did nothing. And maybe that's what we see through our human eyes. But to look through the eyes of faith is to see some other possibilities. For one, the priest died doing what he loved, and it may have been the way he would have loved to die, doing what he loved best. The incident also brought to light how horrible people can be in their thinking and ideology. It might just be that someone who had been thinking of following that ideology decided that wasn't for them and changed their way of thinking. It also highlights for all of us the worse that we can be.

It is my hope that our children will grow up knowing that Jesus cares for them. Parents, grandparents, relatives look for opportunities to give them that message. And while we are at it, may it be the message that carries us through all our circumstances.