February 20
Grace and peace to you this day.

This week we will take a break from our walk through the books of the Bible and focus on some current event topics and perhaps how we as Christians might look at them through the lens of the cross. Next week we will continue our Biblical journey with the book of Ephesians.

I normally don’t like to wade into what has become known in modern times as the “culture wars,” but what the heck, for today, and today only, I’ll make an exception. The reason I’m doing so is because it seems to me that in the last couple of weeks this cultural warfare has, in my opinion, given us an example of what spiritual warfare looks like. Let me explain.

A few weeks ago, the TV network aired the Grammy awards, which ostensibly honors those in the music industry for their achievements. In the United States, 52 million people tuned in. I must confess, I was not among them. In any case, across my newsfeed the next morning was a picture of someone I had never heard of before, Sam Smith. And not just any picture. Young Mr. Smith was dressed as a caricature of Satan as he sang a song titled “Unholy,” which is, as I understand it, about marital infidelity.

In stark contrast, the following week during the Super Bowl, which was watched by 96 million people, (including me), a series of brief ads were aired about Jesus. They were titled “He Gets Us” and were designed to introduce the authentic Jesus into modern culture. What to make of all this?

The battle of good versus evil stretches back into eternity. Don’t get me wrong. I’m a big believer in the 1st Amendment and all that it brings to a free and open society. I also like to think I’m a pretty rational guy. Truthfully, I don’t know Sam Smith from, well, Adam, and I have not listened to the song “Unholy.” Nor do I plan to.

That being said, I can only surmise that someone who would dress up as a cartoon Satan and title a song “Unholy” has no idea of the reality of evil in the world, its destructive effect, and more importantly, its source. For example, we don’t mock cancer because for too many of us, it’s all too real. We don’t make light of an earthquake that has killed over 40,000 people because those images have been brought into our homes in high definition. We don’t ridicule the victims of Russian aggression in Ukraine that number in the tens of thousands because we hear of it every day on the news. Evil and darkness is real, and so is its source. Let me suggest that people like Mr. Smith trifle with it at their own peril.

But then we have this: Jesus. He has already defeated that evil. As the ad says, He gets us. And He loves us. So much so that He saves us. Saves us from the very evil that is sin, the same evil Mr. Smith would elevate. Jesus Himself said the following...
about this spiritual battleground: “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33).

Take heart indeed. And to Mr. Smith: know that Jesus loves you.

IHS,
Pastor Lou

February 21
Greetings, DGCC Family.

I read today that former President Jimmy Carter has entered hospice care. Mr. Carter is 98 years old and is the longest living president ever.

Mr. Carter was the first president I ever voted for when I was 18 years old in 1976. He was a graduate of the United States Naval Academy and served as an officer on various submarines. He was the Governor of Georgia before being elected to the presidency. In 2002 he won the Nobel Peace Prize for his humanitarian works.

Mr. Carter was a one-term president who was often ridiculed for his Christian faith as well as his perceived weakness. I wonder, as Mr. Carter enters the final days of his earthly life, what he would consider his greatest achievements. Defeating an incumbent president? The Camp David Accords?

Or maybe he would consider something different. After his presidency, he returned to his birthplace, Plains, Georgia, and lived in the humble house he and his wife Rosalyn lived in before the world knew him. He continued to teach Sunday School at the Baptist church he had attended for most of his life. He worked to eradicate disease in equatorial Africa and was a prominent volunteer and spokesman for Habitat for Humanity.

He could have retired after leaving office and lived a life of fame and leisure. Instead, he chose to show the world what it is to not only live a life of service to one’s nation, but more importantly, to live a life of service to one’s Lord. It seems to me that he chose to follow these words from the Lord as spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

“Even to your old age and gray hairs I am he, I am he who will sustain you. I have made you and I will carry you; I will sustain you and I will rescue you” (46:4).

My wife Judy has a saying: “You never retire from the Lord’s service. Mr. Carter lived out that example. To that I say, thank you, Mr. President.

IHS,
Pastor Lou
February 22

Greetings to you in the name of Jesus the Messiah.

Perhaps you have seen reports this past week of a “revival” that is taken place at Asbury University in Wilmore, Kentucky. Asbury is described as a “small, evangelical Christian college” that had a similar event in the 1970’s. As I write this, this revival is entering its 10th day of non-stop praise. I think this is amazing. I also think it’s instructive. Here’s why.

I watched a brief video of part if this event and several things struck me. The chapel was literally packed with men, women, young, old, black, white, all on their feet (well, maybe not those with whom I share “senior status”). Arms outstretched and praising God. That’s what I saw. Here’s what I didn’t see:

There was not a projector in sight. No slides, no animation. In fact, at the front of the chapel is a full scale pipe organ (Gasp!). No soundboard, no fancy lighting, no elaborate music. Instead, this was the song being sung by a simple band of unamplified guitar, drums, and a few singers:

And all my life You have been faithful
And all my life You have been so, so good
With every breath that I am able
Oh, I will sing of the goodness of God.

Apparently, God does not need our modern “stuff” (and apparently, contrary to popular thinking, neither do young people), in order for His children to come together in pure and joyful praise. In fact, I’m sure He gives not a whit about all that stuff. Instead, what He cares about is the heart of those who worship Him, like these people at Asbury. This is what Jesus Himself said about it in His sermon on the mount:

“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God” (Matthew 5:8).

While this os one of my favorite verses in Scripture, please know that I won’t be putting it up on our screens.

IHS.

Pastor Lou
February 23.

Greetings, DGCC Family.

As many of you know, a few weeks ago I was asked to bring the message to the good people of the Taiwanese Community Church n Lombard. I have been preaching there for their occasional English language services for close to ten years, and it is always a joy to me. The greet and treat me like family.

On the day I was there, they were celebrating their 40th anniversary. It was a great testament to the Lord’s provision for His bride, the church. Their pastor, Mark Chen, explained to me that he would not be present during the service because he would be teaching their children in one of the basement classrooms. That was a bit of a surprise to me because I thought that like many churches, they only had a few children.

After the service, they gathered for a church picture in honor of their anniversary and this is what it looked like as everyone came together:

I love this picture that captures the generations. The elderly gentlemen with the white hair at the top of the picture and the young child holding his mother’s finger at the bottom. How very beautiful. And even more beautiful, one generation teaching the next about God. This is how Moses says it in the book of Deuteronomy:

“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength. Take to heart these words that I give you today. Repeat them to your children. Talk about them when you’re at home or away, when you lie down or get up” (6:5-8).

Make no mistake that pictures like this affirm God’s plan for His holy church. As I stood there that day I imagine Jesus being in the room and telling these people, ““Let the children come to me. Don’t stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to those who are like these children” Matthew 19:14).

IHS, Pastor Lou
February 24

Happy Friday, everyone.

Our musical devotional this week comes to us from the “Asbury Revival.” Turn up the volume and enjoy!

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IizkXcvr-lk

IHS,

Pastor Lou