

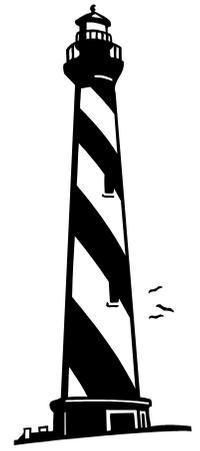
THE BEACON BEAM

June 2019

IN THE PURSUIT OF TRUTH

PUTTING FIRST THINGS FIRST (PART II)

By Thaddeus J. Williams



TEN MARKS WE HAVE LOST THE FIRST THING

We have seen that the proper way to affirm that social justice as “a gospel issue” is to say that Social Justice A is an existential implication of the good news of the death and resurrection of Jesus. In Lewis’ categories, the gospel is “the first thing,” social justice is not. But this talk of first and second things can become all too abstract. How, concretely, can we tell whether we have replaced the gospel with social justice as our first thing? The litmus test is when the second thing—social justice—starts to morph into something antithetical to a biblical worldview and thereby ceases to be justice. I briefly sketch ten examples.

1. *If by “social justice” we mean an ideology that inspires in its followers a quickness to take offense, then we have lost justice.* A Christian worldview champions a love that “is not easily offended.”

2. *If by “social justice” we mean an ideology that inspires self-righteousness, i.e., I am not a bigot because I hold these particular political views or am a member of this or that identity group,*

then we have lost justice. A Christian worldview confronts us with the humbling reality that our self-righteousness is like filthy rags and Christ is the only ground for our righteous standing.

3. *If by “social justice” we mean an ideology that blames all evil on external systems of oppression, then we have lost justice.* A biblical worldview sees evil not only in “systems,” where we ought to seek justice, but also within the twisted hearts of those who make those systems unjust. All the external activism in the world will not bring about any lasting justice if we downplay our need for the regenerating, love-infusing work of God through the gospel.

4. *If by “social justice” we mean an ideology that deconstructs relationships in terms of “power-differentials” that must be abolished in the name of “equality,” then we have lost justice.* A Christian worldview opposes the sinful abuse of power, including the evil of “those who frame injustice by statute” (Ps. 94:20). It also sees many power hierarchies (e.g., the Creator-creature, parent-child, rabbi-disciple,

elders-congregation, teacher-student, and more), as part of God’s good design for human flourishing, character formation, and discipleship.

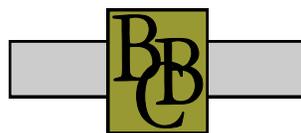
5. *If by “social justice” we mean an ideology that interprets all truth, reason, and logic as mere constructs of the oppressive class, if it encourages us to dismiss someone’s viewpoint on the basis of their skin tone or gender, then we have lost justice.* A Christian worldview calls us in its Greatest Commandment to love God with our whole minds. This includes evaluating ideas based on their biblical fidelity and truth-value rather than the group identity of those articulating it. It also includes acknowledging real oppression and listening well, while refusing to interpret all of God’s world as a mere power play of oppressors versus the oppressed.

6. *If by “social justice” we mean an ideology that breaks people into group identities, generating a spirit of mutual suspicion, hostility, fear, labeling, and preoccupation with one’s subjective feelings, then we have lost justice.* A Christian worldview offers us the fruit of the

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Gregory N. Barkman, *Senior Pastor*
Michael R. Karns, *Minister of Christian Education*
Robert F. LaTour, *Minister of Families*
Gregory L. Phillips, *Minister of Music*

Sunday

Morning Worship...9:30 AM
Sunday School.....11:10 AM
Evening Worship.....6:00 PM

Wednesday

Prayer Meeting.....7:00 PM
IMPACT Clubs.....7:00 PM
Teen Ministry.....7:00 PM

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Spirit like joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, and self-control. The Bible teaches that Jesus destroyed the wall of hostility between Jew and Gentile to make for Himself “one man,” uniting people from every tongue tribe, and nation and making them ambassadors of reconciliation. Family and reconciliation, not inter-group warfare, is the Bible’s model for Christian living.

7. *If by “social justice” we mean an ideology that teaches that the human telos (i.e., our ultimate purpose and meaning) is defined by the creature, and that anyone who challenges our self-defined telos is an oppressor, then we have lost justice.* A biblical worldview teaches that our telos is defined by the Creator and the sinful refusal to live within that God-defined telos brings oppression to ourselves and those around us. Real authenticity and freedom do not come from defining yourself and “following your heart,” but from letting God define you and following His heart.

8. *If by “social justice” we mean an ideology that credits guilt on the basis of one’s skin tone, condemning people based on their group identity, then we have lost justice.* A Christian worldview assesses everyone of every ethnicity as guilty based on our group identity “in Adam.” This guilt can be erased not by oppressed group affiliation but only by finding our new and deepest group identity in Jesus, “the second Adam.” Rather than condemning people for ethnic or gender group identity, “there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

9. *If by “social justice” we mean an ideology that sees “heteronormative” sexual and gender distinctions as oppressive and seeks to liberate all forms of sexual behavior and gender expression from such “cisgender constructs,” then we have lost justice.* A Christian worldview envisions the male-female differences relationship

as “very good”—distinctions that cannot be erased without losing something precious—and highlights the male-female sexual union within the covenant of marriage as the only proper and life-giving context for human sexual expression.

10. *If by “social justice” we mean an ideology that celebrates abortion as an expression of female liberation from patriarchal oppression, then we have lost justice.* A Christian worldview ascribes full humanity and worth to precious, unborn image-bearers of God, and calls us to love and protect those women and their offspring who are exploited or terminated by the abortion industry.

In sum, when we put social justice ahead of the gospel as our first thing, Social Justice A slowly morphs into Social Justice B. I have offered ten diagnostics to help determine whether that tragic exchange has occurred. Of course, this list is not exhaustive. I have blind spots, and I suspect that there are a hundred more points where a Christian worldview offers something more redemptive, humanizing, and God-glorifying than what is often called “social justice” but will only bring more oppression to the 21st century. I hope others will add to my meager list of ten.

I leave you with one closing thought. One of the marks of Jesus, according to the prophet Isaiah, is that, “He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth” (Isa. 11:3-4). Our Messiah does not seek justice at the level of headlines and hearsay. He calls us to true justice, not knee-jerk activism. The Bible does not merely command us to execute justice, but to “truly execute justice.” (Jer. 7:5). The God who commands us to seek justice is the same God who commands us to “test every-

thing” and “hold fast to what is good” (1 Thes. 5:23). If we really care about the oppressed and, more foundationally, the God who cares about the oppressed, then we must carefully distinguish between true justice and what often masquerades as “social justice” in the 21st century. Otherwise, we will not only lose the gospel—the first thing—we will also end up unwittingly hurting those the Bible calls us to help.

Thaddeus Williams serves as Associate Professor of Theology for Talbot School of Theology at Biola University in La Mirada, CA. He also serves as Affiliate Faculty of Jurisprudence at Trinity Law School. Professor Williams also serves as a lecturer for the Blackstone Legal Fellowship, a Senior Fellow of the TruthXChange Thinktank, and has lectured for the Federalist Society in Washington, D. C. along with Francis Schaeffer’s L’Abri Fellowships in Holland and Switzerland.

Musings of a Septuagenarian

by Greg Barkman

OK, I've actually been a septuagenarian for awhile, having turned seventy in April of last year, but it's taken a few months to wrap my mind around this new reality. I'm not sure what to think. I really don't feel any older than I did, say five or six years ago, but the calendar declares that I've moved into a new category. It's often said that you are only as old as you feel, but somehow that big seven keeps whispering that something has changed. Here are a few thoughts regarding my new status in life.

SURPRISE. I'm truly surprised to have passed my seventy-first birthday. The number sounds old to me, but I'm feeling fine. In fact, I am truly feeling better than I did at age sixty nine, when I was wrestling with a chronic back condition that affected my left leg. I was never completely comfortable, and there were times when I found it difficult to walk. This condition lingered long enough for me to develop a small limp, which I still sometimes employ more from habit than from need. And now, at seventy-one, I usually have no pain at all, and even when I do, it's negligible. Where did it go? I don't actually know, but I'm grateful it has disappeared. It may return, but right now, I'm feeling really good at seventy-one.

GRATITUDE. Those who know about my battle with cancer thirty-five years ago may also know that my doctor at Duke University Medical Center gave me a sobering long range prognosis. The short term prospects were encouraging. Aggressive chemo and extensive abdominal surgery, although extremely difficult to endure, were expected to kill the rapidly

growing cancer, which it subsequently did. However, because of the severity of the chemo, I was told to expect fifteen years of good health followed by about ten years of failing health, which would likely terminate in death not much beyond sixty. Now, at seventy-one I enjoy reasonably good health, better by far than many my age. How can I not be extremely grateful!

I am grateful for life, for health, for a wonderful marriage, for four lovely daughters who all have good husbands and are followers of Jesus Christ. I am grateful for nine beautiful grandchildren, and the privilege of preaching God's Word from the pulpit of the same church for more than forty-six years. I am grateful above all else, to be a child of God, to have my name written in the Lamb's Book of Life, and the promise of life eternal in the presence of Jesus Christ. I am an extremely grateful septuagenarian.

UNDERSTANDING. I used to listen to older people talk about their aches and pains in a way that made it clear that theirs was a condition not shared by the young. I listened, and wondered. Could it really be that different? Now I understand. Yes it is. Some days you wake up stiff and sore for no known reason. It just happens. It doesn't require a contingent activity. It's part and parcel of growing older. Back then, I didn't understand. Now I do.

I used to chuckle as older folks would drop off to sleep sitting in their comfortable chairs, perhaps while watching television. No longer chuckling, I find myself sleeping! Now I understand.

I used to wonder why older folks seemed to run out of energy before bedtime. Now I share that condition. Or why older folks are content with such quiet and simple pleasures of life, as if eating out is the epitome of excitement, but now I understand. How much excitement does one need at seventy-one? I'm happy with a calm conversation with my wife or a few good friends. I've had enough excitement in my youth. Now, I cherish serenity

EVALUATION. Moving past the seventh decade of life causes one to reflect on years gone by. How well have I lived my life? How many goals have I achieved? Although there is no reason to believe my life is nearly over, it is obvious that there are fewer years ahead than those gone by. Did I make good choices? What would I have done differently? Nobody gets to redo the past, but the seventies are a time of reflection. Should I retire, or continue working? Most people my age are already retired. Should I do the same? There are some attractions to retirement. You get to set your own schedule and make your own agenda. You can sleep as late as you please, and go to bed when you choose. You can travel whenever and wherever your energies and pocketbook allow. Who wouldn't find that alluring? And yet, I love my busy life. I really don't want to sleep in, at least not yet. I'm happy to hear the clock go off at 5:45 so that I can get up early to plunge into a challenging new day. I enjoy coming home after dark, tired from meaningful work in the Kingdom of Christ, and looking forward to another full

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day on the morrow. No, as attractive as retirement looks at times, I'm happier working as long as health allows and my church desires. I have no regrets about the way I have spent my years, and am delighted with the prospect of investing a few more in the same way, God permitting.

PRIVILEGE. More than anything else, I sense my privileged position as a child of God and a servant of Christ. I am privileged to have been able to devote my entire adult life to preaching God's Word, and to continue doing so in my senior years. I am privileged to have been able to pastor one

church my whole life, instead of moving frequently from place to place. I am privileged to be able to develop strong ties with some of God's choice servants, members of our church, as we grow old together in the grace of God. I am privileged to have faithful ministry partners to assist in pastoral work at Beacon, and to have a wife, children, and grandchildren who love me and respect my calling as a minister of the gospel. I am privileged to have a church that values my work, and has supported me faithfully these many years. I am a man most blessed, and I look forward to what God may have in store for the years to come.



Psalm 96

by Scott Aniol



Oh, sing to the Lord a new song!
Sing to the Lord, all the earth.
² Sing to the Lord, bless His name;
Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day.
³ Declare His glory among the nations,
His wonders among all peoples.
⁴ For the Lord *is* great and greatly to be praised;
He *is* to be feared above all gods.
⁵ For all the gods of the peoples *are* idols,
But the Lord made the heavens.
⁶ Honor and majesty *are* before Him;
Strength and beauty *are* in His sanctuary.
⁷ Give to the Lord, O families of the peoples,
Give to the Lord glory and strength.
⁸ Give to the Lord the glory *due* His name;
Bring an offering, and come into His courts.
⁹ Oh, worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness!
Tremble before Him, all the earth.

It shall not be moved;
He shall judge the peoples righteously.”

¹¹ Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad;
Let the sea roar, and all its fullness;
¹² Let the field be joyful, and all that *is* in it.
Then all the trees of the woods will rejoice
¹³ before the Lord.
For He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth.
He shall judge the world with righteousness,
And the peoples with His truth.

¹⁰ Say among the nations, “The Lord reigns;
The world also is firmly established,

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Psalm 96 is a hymn, a song of praise in response to the nature and works of God. This psalm teaches that when we sing to the Lord, we are not just making music; we are not just doing something pretty or enjoyable: we are expressing deep affections from our hearts like joy and exultation; we are magnifying God's glory and strength and proclaiming what he has done. Singing helps us express thanksgiving, lament, contrition, praise, confession, grief, love, and so much more. In fact, singing helps us to express those things to the Lord in ways that would not be possible if we didn't have song. We can and should certainly bless the Lord with simple words, tell of his salvation, and declare his glory with just words alone. But singing helps us to do all of that in nuanced and expansive ways that words alone cannot capture. Augustine said, "The sound of jubilation signifies that love, born in our heart, which cannot be spoken. And to whom is such jubilation due if not to God; for He is the ineffable One, He Whom no words can define. But if you cannot speak Him into words, and yet you cannot remain silent, what else is left to you if not the song of jubilation, the rejoicing of your heart beyond all words, the immense latitude of the joy without limit of syllables." That's the power of singing. But also notice that these expressions of our hearts through singing are a response—a response to who God is and what He has done. We can see this just in the structure of this hymn. David raises a call to sing and then reasons for singing three times just in the opening few lines, and the pattern continues for the rest of the psalm. This is important to recognize, because it is a central mark of a good hymn. A good hymn is not simply an expression of emotion; it is not even simply expression of emotion directed

toward God. Nor is a good hymn simply a recitation of facts about God; it is not simply a collection of correct theological statements. A good hymn contains both expressions of appropriate affections directed toward the Lord and theological reasons for those expressions. A song that contains only descriptions of emotion can easily devolve into sentimentalism or emotionalism, and a song that contains only statements of theological facts defeats the whole purpose of singing and leads to dry intellectualism. A good hymn avoids these extremes by expressing both the heart's affection toward God and the reasons for those affections, as modeled in Psalm 96.

So what, then, are the reasons David gives for singing to the Lord? First, we sing because of the worthiness of God. He is great, and therefore He deserves praise (4). In fact, the pagan gods are worthless compared to him (5). Splendor and majesty are before Him; strength and beauty are in His sanctuary (6). Glory and strength are due His name (8). He is righteous and faithful (13). But not only is God's nature and character worthy, He is also worthy because of what He has done, and David lists many of God's "marvelous works" (3) in this psalm. He saved us (2), and made the heavens (5), and is coming to judge the earth (13). Each of these acts of God deserves our response, and so David proclaims such a response.

But there is also another profound reason we sing beyond the worthiness of God. According to David, this singing is not supposed to take place just in isolated conclaves of God's people. Rather, singing is supposed to take place "among the nations. . . among all the peoples." (3) Only the redeemed people of God can sing these kinds of things, and the primary

audience of this singing is God. But we are to do so among unbelieving peoples because as God's people sing to Him among the nations—as they bless His name, as they tell of His salvation, as they declare His glory—this serves as a powerful witness to the unbelieving people of the world. It leads to those same people joining in with the praise. God-centered worship in which we bless his name, magnify his glory, delight in his splendor, and recount his works *is* evangelistic. The greatest witness to the unbelieving world is when we faithfully recite the works of the Lord in our worship and respond rightly with our hearts, expressing these things verbally through singing. So, according to Psalm 96, we sing in worship because it helps us express appropriate heart affection toward God in response to the worthiness of His character and works, which both glorifies Him and is a powerful witness to the unbelieving world.

by Scott Aniol. Adapted from *Artistic Theologian*, Vol. 7, SWBTS, Ft. Worth, TX

On the Feminine Side

by Marti Barkman

As I opened my notebook at the start of the sermon last Sunday, I was surprised to see how few blank pages were left. This particular notebook has been one of my favorites, with the verse “Be still and know that I am God” printed on the cover and in the bottom corner of each page, reminding me often of something I need to remember. When this notebook is filled, it will join a growing stack of notebooks on the top shelf of my computer armoire. For years I sat through sermons without taking notes, but when the years seemed to start multiplying instead of just adding, and sitting down became synonymous with going to sleep, taking notes became the way to stay awake in church. (This is no commentary on the speakers, just the listener.) For the first few years I filled random scraps of paper, wrote around the edges of the church bulletin, and in the absence of paper, noted in the margins of my Bible. Except for those in my Bible, none of these notes were saved, and I often wished I could recall something I’d heard from one of those sermons. So I bought a notebook, and determined to use it only for sermon notes, though I devote the last page to thoughts I want to remember to use on this page, and the occasional jotting down of a main ingredient missing from Sunday dinner!

I’m always on the lookout for the next replacement notebook. As long as the binding is spiral and the pages are lined, the other features are insignificant. I grow fond of the one currently in use, and hate to give it up once it’s filled. But it’s also with fondness that I place it with the growing stack in the armoire, for these books represent truths chosen for, and needed by me at a particular time in my life.

Why is this important? I’m

sure we have all listened to sermons wondering why the preacher is preaching on this particular topic. And go ahead and admit it, we’ve possibly thought that just maybe there is nothing here that will interest me, speak to me, or ‘be for me’ in any degree. And yet...a careful listening and note taking can change that view. By the end of the sermon you may be writing down an application that is significantly for you. And what about those people in the pews around us? Their needs are as varied as the people who carry them. The sermon is for all of them as well. Since we will never be found sitting in church accidentally, but by God’s design, and surely the sermon over which the Pastor has studied and prayed is just as much by God’s design, the conclusion is obvious: This sermon IS for us!

And why is this important? We should learn something when we go to church! We should know more when we leave than when we came. I started filling this current notebook in the spring of 2017. What have I learned in the more than two years since then? We were just finishing the book of Obadiah and notes from the last message in the series are the first in my book. It’s a message about the nature of grace... “something to which we are not entitled, but receive by God’s choice.” Yet something which we take for granted! It’s a good reminder of just how gracious God is, and how great a debt of gratitude we owe him. “*Be still...and know that I am God*” seems particularly appropriate on this page.

March 17, 2017 starts the book of Ecclesiastes. Investigating the meaning of life. “To understand what most contributes to a meaningful life and how to avoid the detrimental elements.” A quick reading of the daily newspaper is a clear demonstration of how desperately man needs

this information. With distressing news all around us, it’s vital that we “remember (our) Creator, for *the increase of wisdom results only in the increase of pain and frustration unless that wisdom is informed by Divine revelation.*”

Notes from sermons on The Five Solas, the book of Joel (how to view and learn from disasters), messages for missions month and the Christmas season bring us to January 2018 and I Corinthians. And now, a year and a half later, we are finishing that instructive book of Paul’s answers to the questions from a congregation of believers. Can questions of some people who lived so long ago, so far away, and in such a different age possibly be relevant to us in 2019? Were they so different? This was a congregation of people living in a city known for its immorality, sinners chosen by God to be saints and to build a church. What’s new?

I’ll have just enough space in my ‘Be Still’ notebook to finish I Corinthians. I don’t know what the next sermon series will be, and I don’t have a new notebook ready and waiting but I’m anticipating both. My challenge to you is to do the same. Whether or not you need to take notes is your decision. But learning should not be an option. We’ve never needed a knowledge of the Word and God’s wisdom to understand and use it more than we do now. Let’s learn to be still...and know!

Congratulations!



High School

Elijah Beck—*Alamance Christian School*

Cassidy Boyd—*ABSS Early College*

A'leah Whittington—*Whittington Academy*

Tong Zhou—*Alamance Christian School*

College

Timothy Kephart—*Bachelor of Science Degree in Computer Science,
Bob Jones University at Greenville, SC*

Postgraduate

Nathan Phillips—*Doctor of Musical Arts Degree in Trombone Performance
North Carolina University at Greensboro, NC*

THE BEACON BROADCAST

Monday thru Friday

WITA 1490 AM (Knoxville, TN)	9:30 a.m.
WKBA 1550 AM (Roanoke, VA)	10:00 a.m.
WKPA 1390 AM (Lynchburg, VA)	10:00 a.m.
WBAG 1150 AM (Burlington, NC)	12:15 p.m.
WTRU 830 AM (Winston-Salem, NC)	2:00 p.m.
WDZY 1290 AM (Richmond, VA)	10:00 a.m.
WDZY 103.3 FM (Richmond, VA)	10:00 a.m.
WSKY 1230 AM (Asheville, NC)	7:15 a.m.
WYYC 1250 AM (York, PA)	5:00 a.m.
WYYC 98.1 FM (York, PA)	5:00 a.m.

Sunday

WCRU 960 AM (Charlotte, NC)	9:30 a.m.
WBAG 1150 AM (Burlington, NC)	10:30 a.m.
WTRU 830 AM (Winston-Salem, NC)	10:30 a.m.
WDRU 1030 AM (Raleigh, NC)	10:30 a.m.
WLES 590 AM (Richmond, VA)	10:30 a.m.
Harbour Light of the Windwards 1400 AM/94.5 FM (Caribbean)	9:30 p.m.

Monday thru Sunday

WXTH-LP 101.7 FM (Richwood, WV)	10:05 a.m.
	10:05 p.m.

BEACON HIGHLIGHTS FOR JUNE

CALENDAR

- 02 Sunday School Promotion
- 03 Tri-State Particular Baptist Fellowship
- 05 Fellowship Meal
Teen/Parent Focus
- 08 Teen Homeplace Ministry
- 09 Summer Elective Adult
Sunday School *begins*
Lord's Table
- 11 Elders/Deacons Meeting
- 16 Father's Day
Baby Day
- 20 Silver Saints Year-End
Banquet
- 23 Members Meeting

MEMBER BIRTHDAYS

- 01 Rachel Knierim
- 03 Mary Lee Harper
Ron Massey
Melanie Moody
- 05 Cheryl Ingold
- 07 Jeff Barnt
- 15 Linda Spencer
- 17 Suzann Lynch
Christen Verroi
- 20 Nellie Hunter
- 21 Shirley Watkins
- 22 Robin Allred
- 23 Christie Carpenter
- 24 Dorothy Campbell
Gail Ellis
- 25 Gary Allred
Louise Day
- 26 Ryan Brigman
- 29 Kevin Kooy

MISSIONARY BIRTHDAYS

- 01 Isaiah Jensen*
- 05 Micaiah Bixby*
Alethea Johnson*
- 21 Tammy Honeycutt
- 30 Larrie Bunyan

*Children of Missionaries

We welcome our new members.

Marianne Freeman
3250 S NC Hwy 87
Graham, NC 27253

Matthew Phillips
300 Thompson Road
Taylors, SC 29687

We express our heartfelt sympathy to the families of:

Clifton Beard
Infant Landon Bradshaw
Jack Lloyd
Martha Rose

The Beacon Beam
Beacon Baptist Church
PO Box 159
Alamance, NC 27201

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