

**MT. OLIVET BAPTIST CHURCH, 3500 Edwards Mill Road, Raleigh, NC 27612**

**NEWS & EVENTS – July 2023**

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This month's newsletter provides a platform for selective processing. The month of July seems to represent a time of heatwaves and heartbreaks for me. Heatwaves can make us uncomfortable in the physical realm. And heartbreaks, especially the death of a loved one, can render a person inconsolable, especially in the spiritual part of life. In the month of July, I am reminded of the sudden death of Samuel Elijah Gore. Son to Sam & Sharon... Brother to sister Lisa. Not that any of our family forgets that time. It's always in our reality. But July seems to bring those memories out more intensely. It's been nearly 28 years. Sometimes it seems like long, long ago. At others, it seems like I'm just hearing the news. It's as though we're connected to his death while still living through it. A Psalm I read recently seemed to reveal this mystery to me. Consider the Word of the Lord in **Psalm 116:1-4**.

*I love the Lord, because He hears My voice and my supplications. Because He has inclined His ear to me, therefore I shall call upon Him as long as I live. **The cords of death encompassed me and the terrors of Sheol came upon me; I found distress and sorrow. Then I called upon the name of the Lord: "O Lord, I beseech You, save my life!"***

How is it that those of us who are called *survivors* in obituary articles seem to be so connected to the memories of the one who has left the land of the living? What is it that we are surviving? Is it the loss of life of someone so close you can still almost feel it? Could it be the possibility of life beyond death? The phrase, *The cords of death encompassed me* reveals the connection. The Hebrew word that is translated **cords** can also be understood as **sorrows, pain, union, destruction**. We are connected to loss of life while death takes its toll while we live. We are bound to our grief. The bondage that we are experiencing is the bondage of the soul that was never meant to know death. The soul was meant to only know life. Then came sin. And its judgment of death. Adam's bondage was passed on through the generations of humanity even to this present day. We are the children of Adam. That's why we feel the loss of life so grievously. Life is what we yearn for and cling to when we survive the death of the ones we love. We are children of Adam until we become children of God. That part is God's doing. And it is marvelous in His eyes. Children of Adam have hope when they are children of God. Born again.

The mercy of the Most High God is evident even in the judgment of death. The Word of God informs us that even while in that bondage of sin, which destined Adam and Eve to death, the Lord clothed their nakedness, he covered their shame, and barred them from the possibility of becoming irredeemable. He banished them in their sinful state from the Tree of Life. You can't really live after you've lost your life. And that is what we are born into. A lostness of Life. How do we recover? There was only one way for humanity to return to the Presence of Life, to the Presence of God. Man, who had lost his life, must follow the God of Life, who will save his life. The Living God became a Living Man who would willingly offer His Life as a righteous sacrifice to redeem in exchange for the life of the Dying Man. What would you give in exchange for your soul? What did God give?

The bondage of grief is real and recurring. Some heartbreaks bring people to the brink of despair, distress, and sorrow. Many will find themselves despairing of life itself. The survivors of the tragedy of death can be traumatized at the level of the soul. The cords or sorrows of death, the sorrows that strangle out life, can be our reality unless our source of hope is the Man of Sorrows who is acquainted with grief. King Jesus felt the pain of the death of humanity. He Himself took the blow we feel as we survive someone's loss of life or faced with death ourselves. Our reality is the living soul encompassed by the dying man. There is no hope of living life beyond the grave unless we die to our dying self and live unto Jesus, the Living Lord. He put death to death. He loved us to death. Our gift is the gift of eternal life. Given to us by a God who lived to die. And live again. So are you *Dying a living death...or Living a dying life?*

Blessings to you,  
Pastor Sam

**(If you are unable to attend Mt. Olivet's 11 AM Sunday worship service in person, can go to website [www.mabc.org](http://www.mabc.org) and click on "Worship Services" for live streaming or prior messages.)**