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Ben Guerry's Sermon – "To the End of the Earth"

Ben Guerry, Tom Guerry's son, was our guest speaker July 14, 2013. His sermon follows:

"It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the survivors of Israel; I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth."

So Jesus was pretty frustrated with his progress and accomplishments and **this** was God's response. Basically, God is saying, *"Hey, this is great and all, but it's not enough. I want you to spread my salvation throughout the whole world, not just Israel."*

It's a good thing that I was not in Jesus' shoes at this time because if I was I would have probably looked at God and said, *"Umm, were you even listening...? I just said I wasn't getting anywhere with what I'm already working on and you want me to take on the whole world?"*

How many times have you been faced with a task so daunting that you didn't believe that there was any way you could ever make a dent? To give you an example on a very small scale, this summer I decided, in my infinite wisdom, to overhaul the garage at my parents' house, starting with the ceiling.

This included scraping off the crumbling "popcorn" ceiling cover, patching the holes and imperfections, sanding it and painting it to make it a solid, smooth white surface. I am pretty much done with the ceiling now after enlisting the help of not only my father but also my girlfriend to help me finish this ridiculous job, and I have not even begun to start working on the floor, which is sure

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to be a job rivaled only by the building of the pyramids.

In reality, we are faced with tasks like this all the time. Whether at work, at school, at church, or at home, we have things to accomplish that seem almost impossible. Granted, most of us are not attempting to single handedly solve the problems of hunger, poverty, disease, crime, and death all over the world, but hey, if you are, I'm sure we're all rooting for you!

Since I was in sixth grade I have been fortunate enough to go on what is called a "short term mission trip" at least once almost every year. In addition to getting to travel to exotic destinations such as New York, Chicago, D.C., Miami, and North Charleston, I got to see some things and meet some people that would have otherwise been completely foreign to me.

The effectiveness, or even harmful effects, of the "short term mission trip" is an issue that is constantly debated. The idea that a group of people, often teenagers, can show up somewhere, fix everything in a week and head home with some cool pictures and funny stories is a bit ridiculous if you really think about it. Unfortunately, the

problems that our world faces are not so simple that they can be fixed in a week and sometimes more harm than good is done when these groups show up for a week at a time.

Anytime I have gone on one of these trips I have met people in their hometown, sometimes in their home itself, if they are fortunate enough to have a place to call their own. In this situation I am the foreigner; I am the thing that is out of place and throwing off the rhythm of their life. It took me several years to realize that I was not some great savior that deserves a pat on the back for helping these poor people, what I really needed was probably a smack on the back of the head to wake me up to what was really going on.

I was on that trip for ME. I was there because it made ME feel good. It made ME feel good to come back and tell the members of the church all about what we did and have them praise us for being such good kids.

What about the people who we left behind in Welch, West Virginia? Yes, they had the holes patched in their floor and some steps built out back, but are they really better off now that we're gone?

What about the people in Allendale, South Carolina? They may have a new wheelchair ramp, but is their life that much better? Or how about the kids in the after school programs in Miami, New York, or Chicago?

Are these people better off now that a bunch of rich kids came for a week and left? That is something that is being debated and a question that I can't answer for you. What I do know is that I am better off. Years ago, when I realized that I was going on these trips for me I almost stopped going, but then I took the time to reflect on the experiences that I have had and who they have

helped me to become and I decided that I would still go, but with a different outlook altogether.

I was determined to show respect and be mindful of the fact that I was a guest in these people's homes and to always remember how humbling or even humiliating it is to have a bunch of people come into your house or neighborhood and clean it up or repair it because you are unable to take care of it yourself. As a person who has never had to seek shelter or food from a ministry or government agency, it is not my place to judge those who are in that situation, no matter what led them there. These people are my sisters and brothers in Christ and I have to remind myself of that constantly to keep from distancing myself emotionally or pitying them, which is the last thing that they need. I receive no more of God's love because of the clothes on my back, or the diploma on my wall, or even the fact that I am on a "mission trip."

On each one of these trips I was fortunate enough to meet another type of person that I haven't yet mentioned.

There are people in each of these places who have dedicated their lives to being the "light" that God was talking about: Angel and Jason Pittman in Miami at "Touching Miami With Love", Bill and Evelyn Stanfield in North Charleston at "Metanoia," Robert Brunson in New York at Metro Baptist Church. These are just a few of the people who are living out God's call to be a light to the world in every aspect of their lives. Their faith has led them to start or be a part of ministries in areas of this country that others have forsaken. For me, having the opportunity to meet these people and share in their work for a week was one of the many gifts I received on these trips.

Our reading from the New Testament today was very short, but in my opinion, very powerful. *"God is Love, and those who abide in Love abide in*



Ben Guerry and Friend

God, and God abides in them.” It is not necessary for all of us to throw down our belongings and start an “intentional community” or after school program, if we did, the world as we know it would probably collapse, but it *is* necessary for us, as Christians, to recognize what God’s Love means. William Sloane Coffin writes:

“God’s Love doesn’t seek value, it creates value. It is not because we have value that we are Loved, but because we are Loved that we have value. Our value is a gift, not an achievement...Because our value is a gift, we don’t have to prove ourselves, only to express ourselves, and what a world of difference there is between proving ourselves and expressing ourselves.”

You have nothing to prove to God in order to receive his Love, but is it not our responsibility to share this Love and “be a light to the nations?” We are all called, in one way or another, to be the hands of God, or the ears, or the mouth. We are constantly presented with opportunities to *be somebody for someone else*. It is up to us, however, to recognize these opportunities and to take hold of them, even if they seem too hard, or we really would rather be doing something else.

There are people all over the world who are in need this morning, and I feel sure that there are people in this congregation who are in need as well. If we turn our backs on those who need us, we turn our backs on God, and ultimately on ourselves.

It is too easy to get caught up in the selfishness of this world; we always want more stuff: a bigger house, a newer car, nicer clothes, and these are all normal desires, but we have to keep from letting it consume us, so that we are able to see the bigger picture.

On the first page of William Sloane Coffin’s book *Credo*, he uses the phrase “*Amo ergo sum*,” I Love therefore I am. This Love is what should consume us if we truly believe in the story of Jesus Christ and the sacrifice that he made for us. I want to close with a passage from 1st Corinthians that I have kept printed out on my mirror for the last several years.

If I speak in the tongues of mortals and of angels, but do not have love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.

If I give away all my possessions, and if I hand over my body so that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing, but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never ends. But as for prophecies, they will come to an end; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will come to an end. For we know only in part, and we prophesy only in part; but when the complete comes, the partial will come to an end.

When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known.

And now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; and the greatest of these is love.

Take this Love, and this light to the ends of the earth. **AMEN**

Benediction

May the Lord bless you and keep you. May God's face shine upon you and be gracious unto you.

May God give you the grace to put others before yourself; grace to see those who stand beside us; grace to remember that the greatest of these is love.

As you go may God take your hands and give through them; may God take your arms and embrace through them; may God take your hearts and set them on fire. Amen

ANNUAL FRENCH SERVICE – APRIL 14, 2013

Dr. James Franklin Kay was the guest preacher for our annual French service held April 14, 2013.

Dr. Kay has been the Dean of Academic Affairs at Princeton Theological Seminary since 2010 and professor of homiletics and liturgies at the seminary since 1988. Jim is a native of Kansas City, Missouri. He earned a B.A. degree from Pasadena College, a M.Div. from Harvard, and a M.Phil. and Ph.D. from Union Theological Seminary in New York City. He also spent a year of study at The University of St. Andrews in Scotland.

Jim is the author of several books and articles on preaching and theology and has had a longtime interest in genealogy and family history. He was a significant contributor to a book about the Kay family, especially in regard to the history of the Silas Wesley Kay family of Franklin County, Georgia.

His sermon from the annual French service at the Huguenot church follows:



Dear Friends in Christ!

It is a personal joy for me to be here today in this historic and authentically renovated Huguenot Church in Charleston. To be here in South Carolina is to be back in my family's ancestral home and to stand once again on ancestral soil. So I am doubly grateful for the warm hospitality extended to me by my cousins, Dr. and Mrs. Don Kay, and by your pastors, the Revs. Philip Bryant and Tom Guerry. Pastor Bryant, I have often wondered what happened to the Huguenots of old. Well, [gesturing to an overflowing congregation] now I know! As you can tell from my accent, I am only ancestrally Southern. I did grow up in southern California, but the last I heard that does not qualify anybody as a real Southerner! It's sometimes said that Princeton is the "northernmost Southern school," but, after all is said and done, Princeton is still in New Jersey!! As for my French connections, it may be that the Kay family name ultimately derives from the Normans who invaded England in 1066. But the Normans were not really French; they were Norsemen, the descendants of the Vikings. The only spoke French!

How wonderful this morning to hear the French language spoken so beautifully by Mme. Suzi DuRant as she leads the people of God through this classic Reformed liturgy. While I can read some theological French, and have even ventured school-boy translations, I speak it with a horrible accent ('un accent horrible')! I am comforted in this regard by President John Witherspoon of Princeton. "The old doctor" was a Scottish minister and scholar, and the only clergyman to sign the Declaration of Independence. John Adams, who could be very plain spoken when irritated, said he could hardly understand Dr. Witherspoon because of his thick Scottish brogue. When a French chevalier called on Dr. Witherspoon at the college in Princeton, President Witherspoon immediately began to converse with him in French. Unfortunately, the effect of an impenetrable Scottish brogue on the French language was more than the chevalier could bear. With Gallic directness, he asked President Witherspoon if he would please switch back to English! So, this morning, I, too, will follow the chevalier's good advice. Today, we have the privilege of rededicating this historic building, the fourth church structure on this site, in the congregation's 332 year history. This is a monument to early neo-Gothic architecture, built about the same time as another Protestant architect was designing the neo-Gothic St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City. But this building is not only an architectural monument. It stands as a sentinel, a witness to the faithful, who, amid all the ups and downs of history--and finally under terrible persecution--maintained their stalwart faith and sturdy hope in the God of Jesus Christ. So we gather today, not only to rededicate a building, but also ourselves to the witness of the gospel.

415 years ago yesterday, Henri IV issued the Edict of Nantes. This decree guaranteed his Protestant subjects freedom of conscience, freedom of worship, and the right to work in any occupation, including those touching on matters of state. But Henri's Bourbon descendants were not so wise. In 1685, Louis XIV revoked the Edict of Nantes.

Bishop Bossuet, the great court preacher of the day, paid homage to Louis as a pious new Constantine. But tragically, the result of Louis' revocation of Nantes was to give moral and religious sanction to what could only be regarded today as "crimes against humanity." One million Protestants, about 15 percent of the entire population of France, were stripped of their long-held rights of assembly, of worship, and property. Their church buildings were systematically destroyed. Indeed, the first minister of this church, M. le Pasteur Elias Prioleau, preached his farewell sermon at Pons even as the church he served was being leveled to the ground. The 1680s knew the destruction of Protestant churches, the kidnapping of Protestant girls who were forcibly taken from their families and placed in convents for re-education as forced conversions became government policy. The result: a massive emigration of Calvinists that decimated the ranks of France's hardworking, law-abiding, and entrepreneurial middle class. In hindsight, the French monarchy destroyed the very communities and values by which a civil society can flourish. Civil law in the service of justice, religious toleration--especially for minorities--political compromise in the tradition of Henri IV, and the embryonic idea of the consent of the governed, beginning at this time with respect to church life--all of these features of modern democratic societies were borne in the crucible of the French Reformation. In attempting to wipe out the Huguenot churches and the middle class that composed them, the oppression of Louis XIV actually readied the day when the monarchy itself would be swept away by the French Revolution. Those persecuted Huguenots who escaped from France at the risk of their lives brought their intelligence, industriousness, and ingenuity into England, Holland, Germany, and to the South African and North American colonies. This story, your story, is part of Charleston's story. It is one strand in the DNA of our diverse country. Today, Huguenots and their descendants, whether by birth or spiritual adoption, can say with the Psalmist,

When the Lord restored the
fortunes of Zion,
we were like those who
dream.
Then our mouth was filled
with laughter,
and our tongue with shouts
of joy;
then it was said among the
nations,
"The Lord has done great
things for them."
The Lord has done great
things for us,
and we rejoiced. (Ps 126: 1-3)

Yes, those who "sow[ed] in tears, now reap with shouts of joy." Those who went out from France weeping, "bearing the seed for sowing," have now "come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves" (Ps 126: 5-6). As Fr. David Tracy, the famed Roman Catholic theologian of the University of Chicago, once said to me, "Jim, if Louis XIV had not revoked the Edict of Nantes, the first men on the moon would have spoken French!"

Thus, the Huguenots of France--persecuted, suppressed, and dispersed have become emblematic of all those minorities--ethnic, racial, religious, or national--who have overcome tragedy in triumph shouting for joy by the unexpected harvest. As Christians, do we not discern here the scriptural pattern embedded in the stories of Israel and Jesus?

Suffering then vindication;
Tribulation then blessedness;
Good Friday then Easter;
The slaughtered Lamb who is the Lion of Judah.

The Bible embraces both the depths and the heights of human experience. That is why it still speaks to us as God's Word today. That is why the witness of the Huguenots to that Word still speaks today.

If the story of Jesus and the people who followed him were only a tragedy, one of many in our heartbroken world and lives, we would not be gathered here this morning. If the story of Jesus were only a story of success upon

success, we would not be gathered here either, because such a story would not ring true to our own lives. Like the Huguenots of old, we, too, are not unacquainted with the "senseless sport of circumstance." Something is always going wrong--if not for us, for those we love. We need a Christ whose outstretched arms on the cross can embrace our sorrows and failures and the comforting joy of his presence and hope.

During the terrible Wars of Religion in 1636, Martin Rinkart happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. His village of Eilenburg had become the site of a terrible battle and was then overrun by thousands of refugees. Rinkart was the village pastor. One of his colleagues fled the scene immediately. "There was nothing to be done," he said. But Rinkart set to work. As famine and epidemics began to take hold and take their toll, he persuaded the Swedish army of occupation to leave. He buried his two remaining pastoral colleagues and ultimately his own wife and children. Have we not seen this horrible scene countless times in our history books and on our TV screens? "The senseless sport of circumstance." But Rinkart stayed at his post and dutifully recorded that he had personally conducted 4,480 Christian burials. (How do I know this? I "googled" it last night on Cousin Don's dining-room table.)

Now, you would think after persuading an army of occupation to move on,
And after losing those you loved--both family and colleagues,

And after 4,480 funerals,

That Martin Rinkart would have said, "Enough is enough."

But instead, in the middle of this nightmare, Pastor Rinkart went to his desk, and he wrote these very words you sang this morning:

Now thank we all our God
with hearts and hands and voices.
Who wondrous things hath done
in whom his world rejoices.
Who from our mother's arms
hath blessed us on our way
with countless gifts of love
and still is ours today.

"May those who sow in tears reap with shouts of joy. Those who go out weeping, bearing the seed for sowing, shall come home with shouts of joy, carrying their sheaves" (Ps. 126:5-6).

Thanks be to God!

Remembering our wonderful friend,

Edith Campbell Corry

November 12, 1915 – June 11, 2013



ANNUAL FALL SERVICE AND COLLATION – OCTOBER 13, 2013

Our Fall Service commemorating the 328th anniversary of the revocation of the Edict of Nantes was held October 13, 2013. A collation followed. Our guest pastor for the service was Dr. George J. Tompkins, III.

Dr. Tompkins is Rector Emeritus of Old St. Andrew's Parish Church, Charleston, SC. He was born in Lexington, VA, and earned degrees from the University of Virginia (B.A. with High Distinction), Yale University (M.A. in Religion), the General Theological Seminary of the Episcopal Church (M.Div.), and the University of the South (D.Min.). After ordination, he served as Curate of St. James Church, New London, CT (1976-1978), Curate of Bruton Parish Church, Williamsburg, VA (1978-1982), and Rector of St. Thomas' Church, Society Parish, in Windsor, NC (1982-1987). In 1987 he accepted a call to Old St. Andrew's Church, from which he retired in 2006.



Dr. George J. Tompkins, III



ANNUAL FALL SERVICE AND COLLATION – OCTOBER 13, 2013



HUGUENOT CHURCH CHOIR

Our church choir is back to full strength after the summer and continues to meet for rehearsal on Wednesdays at 6 p.m. This year we have 14 singers: 5 sopranos, 3 altos, 3 tenors, and 3 basses. Below are profiles of two of our newest choir members: Joseph Tan and Corey Campbell.



JOSEPH TAN

Joseph, who sings bass, joined our choir in April 2013. He is originally from Spartanburg, SC, and is here in Charleston as a Vocal Performance major at the College of Charleston. He also performs in the Concert Choir and in the Opera Department. Joseph loves all types of music and likes to sing different styles. Jordan Boyd, a former singer in the Huguenot Church choir, suggested that Joseph take his spot after he left to attend the University of Cincinnati for graduate school. Joseph's hobbies consist of singing, bike riding around, traveling, writing songs, and hanging out with friends. He also enjoys being a resident assistant (RA) in the George Street Apartments where he ensures the safety of his residents. He attended the South Carolina Governor's School for the Arts and Humanities in Greenville his senior year, studying voice.

COREY CAMPBELL

Corey joined the choir in the Spring of 2013 and sings bass. He was born in Gaffney, SC, but now calls Charleston his home. Growing up, he was always interested in music, and at age 13 he began playing guitar, and soon after began playing for his local church. Then he began playing the piano at age 16. He says, "By then I was too far gone on that musical rail line. There was a string attached to some inner part of me tugging me toward a musical world that I would soon immigrate to." After graduating high school, he came here to study music at the College of Charleston, where he studied piano for two years. Unfortunately he developed tendonitis which limited his activities on the piano. After he healed from the tendonitis, he began focusing more on singing and song writing. His college classmate, Tatiana Hoover, is currently a choir member and she encouraged him to join our group. He says, "Luckily enough, some time last spring I stumbled upon this wonderful church and choir, all thanks to Tatiana inviting me!" Other than playing music, Corey enjoys cooking, reading, and writing.





**BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS
NOVEMBER 3, 2013**



**BLESSING OF THE ANIMALS
NOVEMBER 3, 2013**



COCKTAILS IN THE COURTYARD – NOVEMBER 7, 2013



HELPING HANDS MINISTRY

Our Helping Hands ministry continues to be very active. Our groups of men and women are planning and delivering meals to members in need. Please let Phil, Tom, or Vickie Guerry (vickieguerry@gmail.com) know if there is a need of which you are aware. We are grateful for those who have kept us informed as to needs, and remember, if we don't know, we can't help. If you are interested in joining one of the groups, please contact Vickie. We currently have teams in the areas of East Cooper, downtown, and West Ashley/James Island.

We have been so pleased with the way people have willingly stepped in to help each other and the comments and cards that we have received demonstrate how much people have been grateful for the meals.

On Sunday, **January 26, 2014**, at 9:30 a.m., Helping Hands will gather for a short coffee/meeting/get-to-know-each-other event. All Helping Hands members are urged to attend as well as anyone interested in the Helping Hands ministry.



HUGUENOT CLASSIFIEDS

"Therefore by their fruits ye shall know them." (Matt. 7:20 Geneva Bible 1560)

- 1) Crisis Ministries service days: Contact: William Applegate william@yarboroughapplegate.com 972-0150.
 - 2) Fellowship/Social Events Committee: Interested? Join a committee to look into having a new quarterly congregational social supper. Contact: frenchhuguenotch@bellsouth.net 722-4385.
 - 3) Worship/Altar Guild: Communion Silver Polish four times per year. Communion Linens as needed. Contact: frenchhuguenotch@bellsouth.net 722-4385.
 - 4) Newsletter: Contact: Anne Blessing anneandbo@yahoo.com 860-4556.
 - 5) Collation (Ongoing): Pick a Sunday soon. Just sign up to bring a dish. Contact: frenchhuguenotch@bellsouth.net 722-4385.
 - 6) Ushers: Contact Bill Thornton sandwthornton@comcast.net 722-7630.
 - 7) Lay Reader: Contact Bill Thornton sandwthornton@comcast.net 722-7630.
 - 8) Interested in the history of the church? Volunteer to lead a tour for visitors after normal Sunday worship. Contact: Gloria Hedden 881-8831.
 - 9) Louise Carraway is available to teach beginner - intermediate piano lessons to children and adults. Anyone interested should contact her at 803-236-7249 or louisecarraway@gmail.com.
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NEW WEB SITE

We have a new web site for the church. Please visit huguenot-church.org. If you have feedback or suggestions, please send an email to frenchhuguenotch@bellsouth.net.

The French Protestant Huguenot Church is on **Facebook!**
Please "Like" us at www.facebook.com/TheFrenchChurch