

Glad Tidings

“And we bring you good tidings of the promise made unto the fathers...” (Acts 13:32)

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“...boogity boogity boogity, Amen”

(Jerry Fite)

These were the final four words of the opening invocation of a recent NASCAR race in Nashville, Tennessee. Joe Nelms of the Family Baptist Church in Lebanon, Tennessee offered what is called NASCAR’s “*best prayer ever*”. In the one minute prayer, Mr. Nelms addressed God as his “*Heavenly Father*”. One could say Mr. Joe was thankful. He thanked God for “*Dodges*”, “*Toyotas*” and “*Fords*”, for “*Sunoco racing fuel and Goodyear tires*”, and for “*GM performance technology and RO7 engines*.” If these specific references known by the racing world were not enough to cause reverently bowed heads to begin looking up over their sun glasses, Mr. Nelms brought laughter to the faces of many when he thanked God for his “*smokin, hot wife. . . Lisa*”, and their two children Eli and Emmi, “*who we call the little E’s*”. Then, he closed it all by saying, “*in Jesus (sic) name, boogity, boogity, boogity, Amen.*”

If “pastor Joe” wanted to identify with the racing crowd, he

certainly accomplished his goal. If he wanted to show that professing Christians have a sense of humor, he certainly brought smiles, even laughter to many listeners. But if prayer is to be offered desiring that God’s name be hallowed or set apart in the minds of petitioners, Mr. Helms failed miserably.

Jesus taught us to not only recognize God as our “Heavenly Father” in prayer, but also desire God’s name be “hallowed” or set apart from that which is common. “*Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name*” (Matthew 6:9). Joe Nelms looked beyond the Holy God in order to identify with the racing crowd, instead of leading the praying public into the presence of a Holy God.

If Mr. Nelms were trying to identify with his audience, why bring in his own wife and children into the prayer? Why speak of his wife as “smoking hot”? What godly images in the minds of praying men did this promote? And what is this “boogity” business at the end of his prayer. The racing crowd understood the con-

nection. In Will Ferrell’s 2006 movie, *Talladega Nights*, his character prays at the dinner table thanking God for his “*red hot smokin wife, Carley*”. And Derrell Waltrip, the former race car driver, now turned announcer is known for his statement to get the races going: “*Boogity, boogity, boogity. Boys, lets go racin.*” Mr. Nelms went beyond leading others in prayer, to personally thanking God for his own personal blessings. The prayer was not about talking to a Holy God in reverence, but identifying with the secular racing culture with humor.

Paul became all things to all men in order to save some (*I Corinthians 9:22*). But not one time did he sacrifice promoting the Holy God for humor. The Joy of the Christian is always manifested in the context of living holy in the presence of the Holy God (*I Peter 1:8, 14-15*).

“Boogity” is the sound of galloping horses racing across the turf. In the laughter, was Jesus’ holy name revered, or did it give way to: “boogity, boogity, boogity”?