

AColyte

October 13, 2017

A Journal of Faith, Doubt, and Other Things
at Austin College

Harvey Irma Maria Jose

Terremotos Tom Petty

LASVEGAS Nate

California Wildfires

Texas Tech Shooter

Harvey Weinstein

It's a good day for the Blues.

But every day is somebody's birthday.

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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN...

*There's something wrong, I can't get my finger on it.
I must be looking over something.
Sometimes at night I've had to fight with this emptiness.
It's been so hard to see, there's something more than this.*
--Tom Petty and The Heartbreakers, Finding Out

*When the Blues come knockin',
You better let 'em in.*
--Little Milton

You say it's your birthday?
--Beatles



I don't really know this guy.

His name is **David Grissom**. He is a world-class guitar player. I've seen him play dozens of times. He's great. And loud.

I met him in 1986 in the Harlingen, Texas airport. He was flying to Austin with the other members of the Joe Ely Band.

*(By the way, after we took off, we learned that **Johnny Rivers** was also on that plane from Harlingen to Austin. Johnny Rivers doesn't have anything to do with any of this, but he's this guy: <https://youtu.be/6iaR3WO71j4>. That was pretty cool.)*

Anyway, David Grissom.

As I think about it, David also gave me some cab money so I could get from the Camden Locks area of London back to my hotel in Windsor at about 3:00am on January 18, 1987. But that's another story.

David Grissom is on my mind these days because I've been thinking a lot recently about a song he wrote and recorded with the band Storyville back in the late '80s.

Check it out: <https://youtu.be/RLsWaysQmMs>

*Sometimes you fly so high,
You can't find a place to land.
You've got money in the bank;
A drink in your hand.
But when the love gets low
You know you're gonna have to choose.*

*'Cause our love is drifting,
And it's a good day for the blues.*

*When you shuffle the cards
You've always got a winning hand.
When the luck is on a roll
You never have to take a stand.
But when the chips get low,
Someone's bound to lose.
'Cause our love is drifting,
And it's a good day for the blues.*

*Well, it's a good day for Bobby "Blue" Bland,
For "The Thrill Is Gone" and Magic Sam
Whatever it takes, I'll do what I can do
To bridge this river that runs from me to you
'Cause our love is drifting,
And it's a good day for the blues.*

That's what it feels like to be marginally-aware participants in the world where we woke up this morning.

It's kinda been a "good semester for the blues" so far, hasn't it?

Sometimes you fly so high, you can't find a place to land

We started out pretty strong.

We were fired up for the Opening of School.

Some of us were gearing up for a glorious senior year.

Others were taking the world by storm as part of a freshman class the likes of which had never before been seen at Austin College.

Got money in the bank, a drink in your hand

We had all worked hard to get to this point, and we were ready.

But when the love gets low, someone's gonna lose

But the world intervened.

Decisions and policies about the way our government deals with immigrants affected some members of #RooNation.

Movie Producer Harvey Weinstein joined the list of prominent men in our culture (Bill Cosby, Roger Ailes, Bill O'Reilly) who have been accused of multiple counts of sexual assault or harassment.

'Cause our love is drifting, and it's a good day for the Blues.

It's not all Casino Night and kangaroo-shaped cookies.

There are 185 Austin College students whose homes are in areas affected by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Maria, Jose, or Nate.

As far as we know, they and their families are all okay. But this semester has brought a whole new level of stress to their lives in addition to all the usual things that we all deal with on a day to day basis.

In the last month, 361 people have died in earthquakes in Mexico and over 4500 have been injured.

This week, over 30 people died in wildfires in California.

Some of our fellow humans, our neighbors, are facing particularly hard times.

*When you shuffle your cards, you always have a winning hand
When luck is on a roll, you never have to take a stand*

Again, we all started the semester with clean slates, big dreams, and all the best intentions.

But then life happened.

*But, when the chips get low,
you know you're gonna have to choose
'Cause our love is drifting, and it's a good day for the Blues.*

Stephen Paddock hauled an obscene amount of legally-purchased firearms and ammunition into a Las Vegas hotel room and proceeded to kill 59 people and wound over 500 more.

That same day, four people were shot in Lawrence, Kansas. Two of them died.

Then, last Monday night a Texas Tech student shot and killed a campus police officer.

There's been a lot to process lately; multiple anxieties to deal with.

*If you've been down to your last dollar
Or even hit rock bottom
Or felt like the whole world
Just fell on you
If your woman said goodbye
And left you high and dry
Don't feel too bad
I've been there too
If you've had your heart broke
At least a time or two
You've got a right to sing the blues.
-Little Milton*

Lots of us have got a right to sing the blues.

Well, it's a good day for Bobby "Blue" Bland,

From Wikipedia:

Robert Calvin Bland (*né* **Robert Calvin Brooks**; January 27, 1930 – June 23, 2013), known professionally as **Bobby "Blue" Bland**, was an American [blues](#) singer.

Bland developed a sound that mixed [gospel](#) with the [blues](#) and [R&B](#).^[1] He was described as "among the great storytellers of blues and soul music... [who] created tempestuous arias of love, betrayal and resignation, set against roiling, dramatic orchestrations, and left the listener drained but awed."^[2] He was sometimes referred to as the "Lion of the Blues" and as the "Sinatra of the Blues".^[3] His music was also influenced by [Nat King Cole](#).^[4]

Here's my favorite Bobby "Blue" Bland song:

<https://youtu.be/iHh4wBGQZD0>

*I went down to St. James Infirmary
And I heard my baby groan
I felt so broken-hearted
She used to be my very own

I tried so hard to keep from crying
My heart just felt like lead
She was all I had to live for
I just wish it was me instead*

Think about hurricane victims, and wildfire victims, assault and harassment victims, shooting victims, and earthquake victims.

Sad and tragic stories.

Sometimes we have to try hard to keep from crying.

For “The Thrill Is Gone” and Magic Sam

Here’s the great B.B. King singing “The Thrill Is Gone”:

<https://youtu.be/oica5jG7FpU>

That’s a song sung by a man who is profoundly disappointed by the way things are turning out; by the way he has been treated by someone else.

We know those feelings, too.

Sometimes we get disappointed by all different kinds of relationships that don’t turn out like we want them to.

We hurt for people who are having a hard time.

And that’s part of why I’ve been thinking about David Grissom recently.

Thinking so much about hurricanes, wildfires, earthquakes, threatened immigrants, sexual harassment, and gunshot victims wears me out. It’s hard.

Lately, we’ve all had a lot of “good days for the blues.”

David Grissom’s song is a good song because we all know what a good day for the blues feels like.

We know what it feels like when love gets lost or the chips get low.

But that’s not the best part of the song.

*Well, it’s a good day for Bobby “Blue” Bland,
For “The Thrill Is Gone” and Magic Sam
Whatever it takes, I’ll do what I can do
To bridge this river that runs from me to you
‘Cause our love is drifting, and it’s a good day for the Blues.*

That’s why I love this song.

What do you do when it’s a good day for the blues?

There's an obscure and often-overlooked verse in the biblical book of Genesis: Genesis 2:19.

It comes after the seven days of creation and the second version of the creation story in the first verses of Genesis chapter 2.

Genesis 2:18 says,

*Then the LORD GOD said,
"It is not good that the human should be alone;
I will make him a helper as his partner."*

Many of us who are familiar with this story get to Genesis 2:18 and then jump straight to Genesis 2:21 where God creates the first woman. That's certainly an interesting and important part of the whole story.

But Genesis 2:19 says,

*So out of the ground the LORD GOD formed every animal of the field
and every bird of the air,
and brought them to the human to see what he would call them;
and whatever the human called every living creature,
that was its name.*

Notice that God is not the one who names the animals.

God decides that it's not good for the human to be alone.

God makes animals, brings them to Adam, and waits to see what Adam calls them.

That might not seem like much, but I think it's huge.

Genesis 1:27 says that humankind was created in the image of God.

Genesis 2:19 contains the first suggestion of what it might mean for humans to be created in the image of God.

*So out of the ground the LORD GOD formed every animal of the field
and every bird of the air,
and brought them to the human to see what he would call them;*

That's God saying, "I don't know, man, what do you think?"

*and whatever the human called every living creature,
that was its name.*

Adam names the animals. And the names stick.

Apparently, to be created in the image of God is to have the ability to work with God in the ongoing process of creation. Adam has the capability of affecting the world around him.

God says, "Do what you can do."

Adam names the animals.

And the world is changed.

Now let's get back to "Good Day for the Blues."

*Whatever it takes, I'll do what I can do
To bridge this river that runs from me to you*

What do we do when it's a good day for the Blues?

We do what we can do.

We do what we can do to bridge the rivers that separate us.

We don't sit tight and wish somebody else would do something.

We do what we can do.

1 Peter 4:10 says,

*As good stewards of the manifold grace of God,
Serve one another with whatever gift you have.*

That's the New Testament's way of saying, "Do what you can do."

"Manifold grace" means different ones of us have different gifts. Nobody has to do all of it. But each of us can do some of it.

Over the week of September 18-22, the Austin College Service Station Board organized fundraising efforts to raise money to be used to rebuild communities and help real people whose lives were disrupted by hurricane Harvey. Hundreds of students and dozens of student organizations helped raise over \$5000.

The Student Athlete Advisory Council sold old AC athletic jerseys at home games throughout September.

The Thinking Green folks will donate all of this year's AC Unplugged prize money to the Service Station's "Helping Harvey's Heroes" effort.

Fraternalities and sororities have raised money in all kinds of creative ways.

Black Expressions began collecting hurricane relief money at the Opportunities Fair in August.

We do what we can do.

We're planning to organize some **conversations about gun violence** on campus in the coming weeks.

Jackson Katz will be here on October 24 to talk about bystander intervention and reducing incidents of sexual harassment and assault.

David LaMotte will give a concert in the Pouch Club on November 1 and then lead a workshop on "World-Changing 101" on November 2.

Austin College students might study the economics of natural disasters with **Kevin Simmons** in the coming weeks.

They might discuss public health with **Mathias Akuoko** or **Saritha Bangara**, or learn about weather patterns and prediction with **David Baker**.

We're some pretty smart and pretty sensitive people here at Austin College.

We pay attention to the world around us.

We hurt when others hurt.

We know we can't fix it all.

We know some days are good days for the blues.

But, when we're at our best, we know that—even though we can't fix it all—that doesn't mean we can't do anything.

We do what we can do.

And that's a lot.

Until next time, I remain,
Just Another Cowboy Preacher,
Tapping My Foot to “Love Me with a Feeling” by Magic Sam,

JOHN WILLIAMS
Chaplain

P.S.

Light Cummins' book, Austin College: A
Sesquicentennial History begins like this:

*Presbyterian ministers concerned about
education on the Texas frontier established
Austin College in October of 1849.*

The meeting where they decided to found the
College took place on **October 13, 1849**—168
years ago yesterday.

Those guys did what they could do.

And the world is better for it.