

Purt Near vs. Brought Near

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Ephesians 2:11-18 11 Therefore, remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth and called “uncircumcised” by those who call themselves “the circumcision” (that done in the body by the hands of men)— 12 remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. 14 For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, 15 by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, 16 and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. 17 He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. 18 For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

Hear in south, and especially in Texas, we have a way of expressing ourselves that folks in the rest of the country don't always appreciate. We've got some great words and expressions that you just won't hear as much when you travel outside the Lone Star state. Words like

- Fixin'
- Tump
- Reckon
- Smack dab

One that I really like is “purt near.” You've heard it and probably used it. It is used in the sense of “just about” or “almost.” I came across a cowboy poem by a fellow named Barker with the title “Purt Near!” and I want to share it with you now.

Purt Near! By S. Omar Barker

They called him "Purt Near Perkins," for unless the booger lied,
He'd purt near done most everything that he had ever tried.
He'd purt near been a preacher and he'd purt near roped a bear;
He'd met up with Comanches once and purt near lost his hair.
He'd purt near wed an heiress who had money by the keg,
He'd purt near had the measles, and he'd purt near broke his leg.

He'd purt near been a trail boss, and accordin' to his claim,
He'd purt near shot Bill Hickock-- which had purt near won him fame!
He'd purt near rode some broncs upon which no one else had stuck
In fact he was the feller Who had purt near drowned the duck!

Now mostly all the cowboys On the Lazy S B spread,
 They took his talkin' with a grin And let him fight his head.
 But one named Tom Maginnis Sorter told it to him rough:
 "You're ridin' with an outfit now Where 'purt near' ain't enough!
 We tie our lasso ropes to the horn, An' what we ketch we hold,
 And 'purt near' is one alibi We never do unfold!
 In fact, right now I'll tell you that no word I ever hear
 Sounds quite so plain ~~damn~~ (DANG) useless As that little pair: 'purt near'!"

That's how ol' Tom Maginnis Laid it out upon the line,
 And like a heap of preachin' talk, It sounded mighty fine.
 But one day Tom Maginnis, While a-ridin' off alone,
 He lamed his horse And had to ketch some neighbor nester's roan
 To ride back to the ranch on. But somewhere along the way
 A bunch of nesters held him up, And there was hell to pay!

Tom claimed he hadn't stole the horse-- Just borrowed it to ride.
 Them nesters hated cowboys, And they told him that he lied.
 The cussed him for a horsethief And they'd caught him with the goods.
 They set right out to hang him In a nearby patch of woods.
 They had pore Tom surrounded, With their guns all fixed to shoot.
 It looked like this pore cowboy Sure had heard his last owl hoot!

They tied a rope around his neck And throwed it o'er a limb
 And Tom Maginnis purt near knowed This was the last of him.
 Then suddenly a shot rang out From somewhere up the hill!
 Them nesters dropped the rope an' ran, Like nesters sometimes will
 When bullets start to whizzin'. Tom's heart lept up with hope
 To see ol' Purt Near Perkins Ridin' towards him at a lope.

"Looks like I purt near Got here just in time," ol' Perkins said,
 "To see them nesters hang you!" Tom's face got kinder red.
 "You purt near did!" he purt near grinned. "They purt near had me strung!
 You're lookin' at a cowboy That has purt near just been hung!
 And also one that's changed his mind-- For no word ever said,
 Can sound as sweet as 'purt near', When a man's been purt near dead!"

I think most of us would agree with ol' Tom Maginnis that "Purt near ain't enough." We live much of our lives pretending otherwise, but deep down we know that "Purt Near" is not good enough. Even if you could live purt near without sin, it would not be enough. You would still be deserving of death and condemnation.

Ephesians 2:13 ¹³ But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ.

The entire message of Scripture is about us being brought near to God. Our sin causes us to be far away from God, and Isaiah 59:2 says “*your iniquities have separated you from your God.*” And those sins have consequences, as Paul reminds us in Romans that “*the wages of sin is death.*” You can try and try and try to live without sin, and even if you could “purt near” do it, you will still fall short.

Purt near is not good enough, but brought near is, when you consider the one who has brought you near, and how He did it. Paul says it was through “*the blood of Jesus Christ.*” Even though your “purt near” has fallen short of the glory of God, Jesus did not. His life of perfection was lived for you. And then that perfect life was offered as the sacrifice not just for you, but for the sins of the whole world. In that sacrifice, His blood was poured out, making the offering of His life total and complete. Luther reminds us that Jesus made this payment “*with His holy precious blood and His innocent suffering and death.*” That blood which He poured out washes you, cleanses you, makes you righteous in the sight of your heavenly Father. You have been brought near to him.

Just like ol’ Tom Maginnis, without Jesus we were all purt near dead. Without Jesus we were spiritually dead. But because we have been brought near to Him by what He did for us, we have escaped death, both spiritually and eternally. And I don’t mean that you have “purt near” escaped death, but that you have completely escaped it through faith.

The Ephesians passage talks about two groups – Jews and Gentiles – Chosen People and everyone else. Those who were near and those who were FAR AWAY - Speaks of the unity that Christ has brought, the message of peace is for us all, we have all been brought near by what He did in our place.

John 12:32 ³² But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.”

That means you, and me, and all those who were “purt near” dead forever without Christ have been brought near. You heard that message in the OT lesson (Isaiah 49:8-16) as well: God has not forgotten – those far away have been brought near. What a sweet sound for those of us who were purt near dead, to hear that we have been Brought Near!

I’m purt near done, but I have one more story to share with you today. Some of you have heard me tell it before, so you’ll just have to hear it again. A few years back, I got a call from Bob. Bob’s wife had been a member of this congregation, but she had died about a year earlier. Now his son-in-law had died and he asked if I would conduct a graveside service for him. I agreed to do so, and met him at the cemetery the next day. It was a small private cemetery right outside the gate of what used to be Texoma Lutheran Camp. When I arrived, it was just me and Bob. I asked him if his son-in-law had been a believer. He let out a big sigh, waited about 15 seconds and said, “Well, deep down, I’d like to think he was.” So that gave me a clue as to what my message might be. Soon people started trickling in to the cemetery, dressed like you would expect to see people dressed who were going to church – the men in shirts and ties, the women in dresses. And then I heard this rumbling in the distance. It was growing closer. And very soon the first Harley Davidson turned in to the cemetery, followed by a long procession of riders of those American made machines. As they parked and took their places, about half the people were dressed in their Sunday best and standing on one side, while the other half, including the widow, were decked out in leather biker gear and standing on the other side.

I stood there for a moment, my mind racing, all those people looking at me and waiting for me to speak. There was a definite tension in the air, people on both sides of the line standing with arms crossed and furrowed brows. By the grace of God, the Holy Spirit gave me the words to say, and they were something like this: “I don’t know any of you, and you don’t know me. I didn’t know the man we are burying today, either, so I can’t say anything about him. So what can I say? Well, I do know Jesus, and I’d like to talk to all of you about him for a few minutes.” And I saw their arms become unfolded and their faces soften and they were ready to give me a chance. I don’t remember everything I said, but I talked about the life and death and resurrection of Jesus that were all done so that anyone and everyone could be brought near to Him and be assured of forgiveness and life everlasting. I think purt near everyone there heard it. I hope you have today.