



JOY MENNONITE CHURCH NEWSLETTER
DECEMBER 2002



PASTOR'S CORNER

Just a closer walk...

In the sermon on the Mount Jesus spoke passionately about an alternative way of living, the giving of alms, and how to pray. Jesus concludes by saying we should not judge one another, rather each of us must focus on our own sins. The pattern of the sermon on the mount is what someone has called an upside down way of thinking. Jesus is pleading for an alternative to accepted practice and beliefs. Do not judge one another is an alternative to the accepted practice and thinking, just like love your enemy, and do good to them that hate you was an alternative to the normal practice and belief of their time. Just as the secular person cannot imagine what will be the outcome of loving your enemy, so it can also be difficult to imagine a people who practice a spirituality with each one focused on the splinter in their own eye. We fear that if we do not enforce a certain standard of righteousness the church will degenerate to the level of the cultural values and practices.

Let us look at this from another angle. We can name two distinct understandings of spirituality. One is to understand ourselves or our congregation or our denomination as the guardian of truth. The concern is for purity and a good image for the church. The focus tends to be directed toward others. With this understanding there arises a need to develop authority figures and with this comes the need to have power to enforce. The power to enforce has many levels. Sometimes we use persuasion, other times we have added peer pressure and to this we can add shame. So far all seems fairly harmless. When we add the power of the state then we begin to see corruption. Is it not true that with power religion becomes corrupt?

There is another understanding of spirituality, one that focuses on my own relation to God. The spiritual giants from history were those who focused on their own relationship to God. Reform movements were started by focusing on your relationship to God. Many of the orders started in the Catholic church were renewal movements that focused on personal relationship to God. Even today we know some of these orders of sisters that focus on their personal relationship with God rather than speaking about the sins of others. There is a healthy spiritual power among such people. These are the agents of change in society.

This is especially relevant for the church today. We see a trend today of wanting to set a standard and give the church power to enforce this standard. In doing this we can wound others who also sincerely seek God and God's way. If we want spiritually healthy congregations we must do as our forefathers did, encourage personal study of the scriptures. Encourage prayer with meditation, encourage discernment in the community of

faith. When we do this we must also respect peoples conviction and just as our church did in it's beginning, we must respect the decisions of each faith community. I sense some fear of the outcome if we do this. I do not believe we have to be afraid to follow this way. I believe this is the way Jesus was directing the new community of faith and that this is the way to build spiritually healthy congregations.

Moses Mast

The Kingdom of God
(From a sermon by Mike Powers)
Moses Mast & D.L. O'Neal

Christ admitted to Pilate, I was born to be a King. Modern people think of a kingdom and king as something from medieval times, certainly not

something in the 21st century. Americans particularly want freedom and think of a king as someone controlling their lives. Most would say "You ain't the boss of me!" We definitely don't want our church leaders telling us what to do and controlling our lives. We put people on pedestals, but don't want them to dictate our actions or thoughts. Do we also reject the standard of Jesus' rule as we reject the rule of others?

Defining a kingdom is not so easy. Is it geographical? A political boundary? Kingdoms are generally a place or area where the rule of the king is law. Where God's laws are obeyed, there is God's kingdom. This Kingdom is unlike any earthly kingdom. Earthly kings are not completely sovereign, they are subject to God's rule, and He rules by love.

Are the kings of the world controlled by God? Do we see things moving in God's direction? If we believe that Jesus is the King of kings, then we believe He is influencing what happens among the kings of the earth. Today we are seeing the the harvest of what has been planted - Sept. 11, Iraq, etc.. To reap a better harvest, we must plant good seed. The Kingdom of God is like seeds, unseen... but growing all the same. We are called to give "the least of these" a glass of water - this is planting seed.

These seeds will make a difference to our children and grandchildren. The actions of today will yield the consequences of tomorrow. We are responsible for following Christ's commands - LOVE ONE ANOTHER, FEED MY FLOCK, TELL OTHERS OF ME. Not really that hard a job, just do it.

Our Thanksgiving must transcend thanks for just material things, we should all give thanks for the ability to plant seeds and for God's presence in the world.

**November
Revisited**

Those of you who live in the neighborhood will have noticed our new look. Some trees are gone, some are trimmed, and the building

looks a bit more open. Thanks to all who helped with the cutting and chopping and piling.

Well, another MCC Relief sale has come and gone. Did you get your apple butter? A quilt? Something from Ten Thousand Villages for that special someone for Christmas? This years sale generated over \$100,000.00! Way to go! All that money and time and effort and let's face it...fun, for such a good cause. I can hardly wait for next year's sale.

MDS(Mennonite Disaster Services) meeting was held Nov. 15-16. Moses & Sadie Mast were in attendance.

A memorial service was held for Gary Laws , Nov. 23. Gary was a very special friend of our church and will be sorely missed. This service was held a year after Gary's passing, at his request. His wife, Sue, has many notations and margin jottings in quite a few books that Gary left for her. We will be having some of these in furture newsletters.

Mike & Darlene Powers were with us Nov. 24th. Mike gave a wonderful sermon on God's Kingdom (see article on front page) and we all had a wonderful time visiting with them.

**December
Happenings And
Coming Events**

This months preaching schedule is as follows: Dec. 1 & 29 - Moses Mast, Dec. 8 & 22 - Karin Evans, Dec. 15 will be a special treat, the DEO(Diciple, Encounter &

Outreach) team from Kansas will be here. There will be a pot-luck dinner afterward and then we have scheduled our annual Christmas caroling party after that. We plan to carol around the neighborhood and also up at the Veterans hospital.

Worship leaders will be various families during the Advent season. Brian & Charlotte Warkentine's family will have

Dec. 8th, the Mast's on the 15th, Hostetlers on the 22nd, and Sue Laws on the 29th.

We will be having a business meeting in January. A specific date has yet to be determined.

**FINAL
THOUGHTS
Deborah O'Neal**

Been to the mall lately? Seen the maddening crowd? Felt the pushing, shoving and snatching? Heard the oaths, curses and growls of our fellow man? Tis the season

to be jolly hasn't hit some of us yet. Some times I think it should be strapped to the front of a truck, it should hit HARD.

While you are out and about this holiday season, remember this - there but for the grace of God, go I. Then spread some grace around. Don't worry, you can't use it up. Grace grows and multiples - the more you give away, the more you have.

We are building an addition on the back of our house, the long awaited laundry room. The guys that are doing the work have brought up some interesting subjects. Why not hire a contractor and a professional crew? Because one guy is our neighbor and he needs some work. Why use salvaged lumber? Re-use, reduce, recycle, restore. Why? Because God only gave us one earth and we need to take good care of it. Why is a seven year old child in charge of cleaning up the job site? Because he is learning that others count on you to get a job done to the best of your ability and hard work is appreciated, not to mention the fact that he will be paid. All part of the world we live in - planting seeds and reaping harvests.

So, what seeds will you be planting this holiday season? Seeds of grace and love? I hope so.

**JOY MENNONITE CHURCH
504 NE 16TH OKC OK 73104
Sunday Services 10:00 am Sunday School 11:30
All are welcome, please join us as you able**



Joy Mennonite Church
4708 Outpost Dr
Spencer, OK 73084-2722 (405) 236-4938
Moses & Sadie Mast 771-4743

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