



JOY MENNONITE CHURCH NEWSLETTER
APRIL 2003



PASTOR'S CORNER

The Sunday after the beginning of the war in Iraq, the lectionary scriptures were the story of the Ten Commandments from the book of Exodus and the story of Jesus cleansing

the temple in the Gospel of John. The common thread between these scriptures passages is one of Israel finding its way and the other of Israel losing its way.

The ten commandments may be the best expression of a universal understanding of right and wrong ever written. Even the atheist who may not believe God exists can understand the terrible effects of humans who claim to be divine or claim to possess absolute understanding of the divine. The ten commandments may also be the most ancient understanding of the roots of war recorded. The first commandment reminds us that God is God and we are not. The second commandment warns us that we must not think that we can create with our hands anything that defines God. Anything we create with our hands or imagine in our hearts to declare to ourselves or the world that we have perfect and complete understanding of the divine is idolatrous. Is it not true that we regard ourselves as an enlightened generation, unlike the ancient peoples this document first addressed, yet September eleven is the result of one who claimed absolute understanding and a call from God to eliminate all those who do not share his understanding. This kind of idolatrous religious extremism is not confined to one religion, rather an amplified version of a common element in many religions, including religion in America.

The gospel of John tells the story of Jesus coming to the temple with great expectation. Jesus had deep concerns for those suffering under the Roman occupation and expected to find a ministry in the temple for these people. Instead of a spiritual ministry Jesus found a commercial enterprise set up in the temple. Spiritual leaders were enriching themselves by exploiting the poor. It was not as if some error had crept in, the religious community had completely lost their way. Jesus was not only disappointed, he was angry.

America today has a military power that cannot be challenged. Consequently we have lost the will to listen to others. With the certainty that we can win any battle we have lost the will to be reconciled. We want peace, we want security, we want to be safe, but we have lost the way. It is not surprising that a lone super power would follow this path for peace. The shocking news is, according to the pollsters, that the religious community in America is the drive behind the support of the war. According to the pollsters, opposition to the war comes from the secular community

Let me close with a quote from Gary G. Kohls printed in the

Catholic Peace Voice: "The world has waited long enough to hear the authentic body of Christ stand up and say no to those who proclaim by their deeds the existence of a wrathful God, a pro violent Jesus and the justification of war." The beauty of spring is upon us but dimmed by the suffering of war. I wish you all well. Let us not grow weary of doing good.

Moses Mast

**Peace?
By Terry Hostetler**

The opinions expressed or implied in this article are mine and not those of Joy Mennonite Church.

Peace, sounds like a wonderful thing. It seems people all over the country and even the world are talking about it. Many of them are getting downright violent about it, ironic isn't it. I want it understood, I am for peace, but that in its self won't make it happen. I can't make it happen, you can't, our president and congress can't just decide we want peace and have it. The people you want to be at peace with are ultimately the ones who have the final say. Peace has to be a mutual thing.

I have to wonder about some things though. We want peace so badly with a country whose dictator executes those who dare speak against him, who incidentally is shooting missiles at our soldiers that he not only promised to get rid of, but told the world and the inspectors he had indeed gotten rid of. Backing up a bit, here in our country so many of our people protest about the death penalty. You are opposed to executing convicted murderers and such. But you seem so nonchalant about these Iraqi people who have done no more than express themselves in the same fashion as you have. Freedom of speech is not a "God given right" in this world, it should be, but it's not. Americans are guaranteed this right, to express themselves whether they be right, wrong or just dumb, by the U.S. constitution. Because men thought it was important enough to fight for and some continue to believe and fight for. Others continue to enjoy these rights and privileges. even using them to criticize those who defend their freedom.

I must agree with our so called peace community that war /violence is never a good option. But while it may not be a "good" option, unfortunately when there is no mutual hope for peace, it can become the only option. In our churches we hear so much about sacrifice, people speak quite eloquently even. But I see little evidence that most have a clue what they are talking about. Sacrifice must be experienced not just talked or read about. Look to our military men if you want to understand sacrifice. Do you have any idea how many of those young people

believe as strongly as you that killing is wrong? Or who worry that God will no longer love them. But they still, believing as they do, make this sacrifice, for the sake of freedom, for the sake of people they don't even know and even for the sake of those who not only don't appreciate it but openly despise them for it (I'm speaking of our own people).

I have a question. If the 'Good Samaritan' had come upon the man on the road as he was being robbed and beaten, and the Samaritan were to draw his sword and defend the man, would he no longer be the 'Good' Samaritan? Does God actually expect us (as individuals or as a nation) to ignore injustice as it happens, then send money later?

Upcoming Events

Preaching schedule for April is as follows: Apr. 6th - Moses Mast, Apr. 13th - Cheryl Critchley, Apr. 20th - Easter- Moses Mast, and Apr. 27th - Karin Evans. Good Friday services will be held April 18th at 7:00pm at the church.

We have been given another \$10,000.00 in matching funds to be used towards Iraqi relief. Checks can be made out to Joy Mennonite Church and earmarked for Iraqi relief or MCC.

Those of you who have access to a computer and the Internet can still find us at www.joy-mennonite.org. We are adding stuff and if you want to contribute something for the web-site, you can contact Cheryl Critchley at storyweaver@swbell.net. Contributions for the newsletter can be sent to me at storyweaver@swbell.net

I know no one will forget Easter this year. In these times of turmoil and strife, please don't forget the central message, that Jesus Christ died for ALL people.



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March Revisited

Lots to think about last month, the war in Iraq, bizarre weather, hearing from Jake Hostetler over in Iraq, our guest speaker for the 2nd, Marcia Yoder Schrock. The pot-luck after Marcia spoke was so enjoyable, best seasoning for food - good conversation. On Mar. 3rd, the Western District Conference Ministerial Committee met with the OK Pastors & Spouses at Joy Mennonite.

If you want to learn a thing or six about MCC, Africa, North Korea, or just about anywhere MCC works, has worked, or will be working, just ask David Worth, one of our speakers for Mar. 30th. This guy can really talk and keep you on the edge of your seat the whole time. Our other speaker was Elizabeth Raid, from the MCC office in Newton, KS. It's been said that she can answer ANY question about MCC. Hmmm, I'll have to check that out, I'm always needing info on something.

Final Thoughts Deborah O'Neal

Well, spring has finally sprung and doesn't it feel good? This has been the winter of my discontent. I realized about 2 months ago that I'm tired of being cold and only seeing gloomy skies. I was thinking that this winter would never be over and then we had 2 really warm days in a row. Everything changes, Thank You God.

Guess I wouldn't appreciate the good if I didn't have the bad to compare it with.

Thank you. God.

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 are able

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