

The Old Hickory Bulletin

Old Hickory Church of Christ

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TOMORROW MAY BE TOO LATE!

“Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”— yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes” - (James 4:13-14)

Last week a dozen citizens of Aurora Colorado woke up to a typical Thursday, or so they thought. They went about their daily routines: work, kids to the park, grocery shopping, etc., and then they decided to go to the movies. They did what most Americans do on a daily basis. Their day was characterized by what they didn't do, nothing too risky, nothing too dangerous, just typical summertime American activities. What they didn't know, and could not fathom was that this would be the last day they would ever experience on this earth. They were brutally murdered by an evil man as they watched a Batman movie.

Events like these remind us that no matter how much control we think we have over our lives, the unexpected is lurking in the shadows. Regardless of how much we have our lives all planned and mapped out, no matter how sure we are that we know where we'll be and what we'll be doing tomorrow, the hard lesson is that life is fragile and frail. There are uncountable ways we could find ourselves at death's door. This world is full of evil, disease, trouble, tragedy and uncertainties. As James tells us, life is like a mist that appears and then is quickly gone.

There is a temptation to look at horrifying events like this and think, "*Oh, that will never happen to me. I'll be smarter than that, I'll do a better job of planning and protecting myself than they did.*" No we won't! How can we? The truth is that no one ever expects it to be them; no one ever expects their lives to completely change so suddenly and senselessly. The stark reality is that tomorrow it could be me or you.

We must constantly look at our own lives to insure that we are ready for death today because tomorrow might not ever come. Are you ready? Is your life right with God today? Don't delay! Don't let the tragedies of today take away your promise of an eternity in Heaven.

"Today is the day of salvation, tomorrow may be too late..."

- Aaron C. Andrews

AN URGENT NEED!

There is no more urgent need in the world today than for Christians who can and will speak to people about the soul-saving gospel of Jesus Christ. Ages ago, men fell out of favor with their Creator, in spite of His call to righteous living and promised blessings. He continues the call today through the gospel (2 Thess. 2:14), “not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.” (2 Pet. 3:9).

Jesus and His early disciples had a burning passion for the souls of men as He made them all “fishers of men” (Mark 1:17) and sent them “into all the world,” “to all creation,” great and small (Mark 16:15; cf. Acts 9:15). Precious little of that fervent obsession is found where it should be abundantly brimming, possibly because so many have given themselves to less than ideal pursuits in the Lord’s estimation. Jesus warned, “Many false prophets will arise and will mislead many. Because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold.” (Matt. 24:12). Has our love grown cold? Where is that intense desire for the souls of others, which was so graphically displayed by those early converts who suffered and died for the cause of our Redeemer?

The Lord hand-picked and trained His closest twelve for the purpose of making disciples of others and teaching them to do exactly the same (Matt. 28:19-20). The fields that were “white for harvest” (John 4:35) were reaped, and the church of Christ experience phenomenal growth as all nations streamed to it (Isa. 2:2). The Lord’s words indicating the value of man’s soul

(Matt. 10:28; 16:26) were fresh and repeated often as the gospel spread throughout the world. The exclamation point was placed on soul value when Christ willingly sacrificed Himself on the cross for the sinful. Only such a valuation will motivate Christians today to embrace the noblest of causes and be as their Lord, who came “to seek and to save that which was lost.” (Luke 19:10). The soul of man is indeed priceless!

The wise man said, “The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, And he who is wise wins souls.” (Prov. 11:30). Some will listen and heed the righteous message, being won to the interests of God. One who lives the righteous life of good influence and proper teaching wins souls, and this wisely. Do we possess that same wisdom and insight? “Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.” (Dan. 12:3). The glory of winning souls for the Master endures for eternity. Much is at stake: “let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins.” (James 5:20).

Of winning souls let no man say, “I can’t do it.” One may think he cannot do it exactly as someone else he knows, who has demonstrated success. But every man has his own way in his own sphere of influence. The Lord has blessed each one with the abilities he needs in order that the light of Christ may be seen in him by others (Matt. 5:13-16). The power of conversion resides in the gospel itself (Rom. 1:16). If you desire to excuse yourself, please reflect of Peter’s words: “but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always *being* ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in

you, yet with gentleness and reverence;" (1 Pet. 3:15). The Lord took men from different walks of life and used them to accomplish His purpose on earth. Cooperation on the part of His disciples today will make that a reality. The urgent need is for Christians to reply to the Lord's appeal with, "Here am I, send me!"

- GFS

"NOW, IT IS DIFFERENT!"

"It is most likely that in the Apostolic age when there was but 'one Lord, one faith, and one baptism,' and no differing denominations existed, the baptism of a convert by the very act constituted him a member of the church, and at once endowed him with all the rights and privileges of full membership. In that sense, 'baptism was the door into the church.' Now, it is different, and while the churches are desirous of receiving members, they are wary and cautious that they do not receive unworthy persons. . ." (Standard Manual for Baptist Churches, Edward T. Hiscox, p. 22.)

One does not study the New Testament without being impressed with the fact that no differing denominations existed in that age. Christ is not the author of denominationalism for He prayed for the unity of those who believe on Him (John 17:20, 21). He built only His church (Matt. 16:18) and had it been composed of a variety of denominations, one could have read of their existence then. The apostles of Christ did not build denominations. Their plea, too, was for unity and they condemned the emergence of parties that followed men (I Cor. 1:10-13).

It is equally true that the baptism of a convert made him a member of the church in New Testament times and in that sense "baptism was the door into the church." Paul identified the church as the body of Christ and said that we are baptized into it (Eph. 1:22, 23; I Cor. 12:13).

Inquirers on Pentecost were told to repent and be baptized and those who gladly received the word did that and were added to the church by the Lord (Acts 2:37-47). They joined nothing and were voted on by no one.

"Now, it is different" — and how very different it is! During the apostolic age there was but one Lord, one faith and one baptism. No differing denominations existed for there was but one church (Eph. 1:22, 23; 4:4). Now there are more than 300 denominations in existence in our country and these are divided into some 1500 different faiths. How different this is from that of the apostolic age when there was but one church and one faith.

And, may I ask, who made it different and why? Is it the Lord who has made it different because He has become dissatisfied with His original way as revealed in the New Testament? If so, where and how do I learn that it is He who has made the changes? Is it man, acting from his dissatisfaction with the Lord's way, who has made it different? If so, by what reason or right does he presume to do this? These questions merit serious consideration from all who would serve the Lord in sincerity and truth.

"Those who follow the crowd are quickly lost in it."

- Lowell Blasingame, 1981

> "The church is fairly well supplied with conductors. It shows a shortage of engineers, but an oversupply of brakemen."

THIS WEEK'S LESSONS: SUN. AM-1: Am I Wholly Following the Lord?; SUN. AM-2: Is Being an Average Christian Good?; SUN. PM: What Should I Do When God Has Let Me Down?; MON.: Seeking First the Kingdom of God!; TUES.: Beware of Satan's Trap!; WED.: Why Should I Even Bother Trying?; THURS.: Learning From Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah!; FRI.: Am I Ready to Go?