



PASTOR'S CORNER

I love this season of the year when the trees begin to bloom and we begin planting in the garden. I can already taste the new tender onions and vine ripened tomatoes. The Easter season seems to rightfully belong in this season of the year. Just as the earth seems to come alive in the spring, the season of lent is a spiritually invigorating time. I do however have a concern, the way we look past Jesus interpretation of the cross to later writings and then make our own interpretation that seems to have no connection to Jesus concerns.

Men like John Howard Yoder have helped us understand how we have departed from the early understanding of the cross when we see the cross as a special altar on which Jesus was sacrificed to forgive us the sins we inherited from Adam. We have tended to follow the religions of the world who focus on salvation of their souls and making sure they will go to paradise after they die. Jesus focused on a new way of living. When Jesus spoke of himself as the way to the Father, he spoke of being united with the heart, mind and will of God in this life. As followers of Jesus we hope to be united with God in paradise one day but now we must focus on how we live on earth. The language of the cross is about a way of living that takes the necessary risks to do what is right in spite of the powers that oppose you.

The language of the cross was common language in Palestine during the time of Jesus. The Romans governed the same way all governments govern. To govern successfully a government needs the voluntary and willing compliance of most of the people. If governments do not have this compliance they will invent ways to make you afraid to disobey. The Romans used the cross, a manner of execution that made a public display of those who threatened their rule. A wide range of people became victims of the cross, from actual criminals to voices of truth. People in that time knew the risks of being hung on a cross. The risks of the cross was part of the conversation of the time. When people were being executed regularly one can know the conversation often centered on what shall we do about it. Just as now many said if I die I will die fighting. This is the context in which Jesus said, if anyone wishes to follow me he must deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow me.

The cross as Jesus spoke of it is a way of living that accepts the risks necessary to speak and do right. The cross is a way of life that absorbs the hostilities of those who have power over us or anyone who would harm us. Instead of saying I will die fighting I say I will die loving.

The cross does not so much mean dying as it means taking the risk of dying. In America the risk may only be ridicule. In other places it may be prison and in some places today it may be death. We learn the meaning of the cross from our martyrs. When the church has no martyrs the meaning of the cross is distorted.

I wish for all of you rich spiritual blessings for the next week and for Easter Sunday.

Moses Mast

Following God or Following Man by Terry Hostetler

Easter is upon us, so I've been thinking about that quite a lot. I keep thinking about those that persecuted Jesus, following their laws, thinking they were doing the right thing. I wonder if they ever realized what they had done. I wonder how many people in history have likewise done something so wrong and not even known. People who were following their laws or rules, doing in their own minds the "right" thing. One such example might be Custer, just a soldier following orders doing his job. I'm sure each of you can think of other examples.

I'm reminded of a "Crow" (Native American) saying, "Man's law changes with his understanding of man. Only the laws of the spirit remain always the same." There is a lot of truth to this statement. Think of all the laws that have changed in your own lifetime, abortion, divorce, death penalty, laws on homosexuality just to name a few. And just recently laws pertaining to cloning and stem cell research. While I'm sure God's feelings haven't changed on these subjects, man's may have.

March Revisited

The old saying goes "March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb" or is it the other way around? Either way March has been interesting. March 1&2 Moses & Sadie Mast were in Kansas for the Home Missions Committee meeting and a Reference Committee meeting.

March 8th, a group from Heston College in Kansas stayed the night at the church. Part of the group went on to Arizona to the Hopi Mission school and the rest continued to Louisiana to help people in need there.

Roy & Virginia Dick brought their granddaughter to worship with us on the 10th. Roy gave the message that morning: We are created in the image of God. Let us love as God loves. Everyone joined in a potluck dinner afterwards and enjoyed a

chance to visit with Roy & Virginia.

We started an in depth study of Romans with Robert Baker for Sunday school. I'm sure I speak for all of us in that we will never read Romans again without thinking of these classes. Even the "homework" is interesting. Come join us, we will be exploring Romans for several more weeks.

The Warkentine and Bliss families joined us on the 17th. It was very nice to see them again.

Good Friday services were opened by Terry Hostetter and continued with Moses Mast presenting a symbolic Last Supper and the events leading up to the Crucifixion of Christ.

April Events

This months worship leader will be Judy Perkins and the preaching schedule is as follows: Moses Mast - April 7 & 14, Karin Evans - April

28th. You probably noticed that the 21 was omitted - that Sunday we have been invited to Bethel Mennonite in Hammon, OK. We will be meeting at Joy Mennonite at 8:15 am that morning to caravan over to Hammon. Anyone wishing to go along please contact Sadie Mast for more info. We have close ties to the Hammon church through Judy Perkins as that is her family's home church. Hope to see you there!

Grace Roley will be holding an auction April 2nd to sell some things. More information can be obtained from Sadie Mast or from Grace. The auction will not be held at Grace's home, but at a second location. Grace is a good friend and we hope things go well at the sale.

We have tentatively planned a business meeting for the 14th to be preceded by a carry-in dinner. As always everyone is welcome.

A group from OKC who want to help the people of Afghanistan have approached Joy Mennonite to establish a fund to receive donations. All funds will be sent to Mennonite Central Committee marked for Aid to Afghanistan. A special account will be opened in a local Bank of Oklahoma to receive donations. For more information, please contact Moses Mast.



Joy Mennonite Church

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

We continue to hold Friday prayer meetings from 12-1 pm. All are welcome and even if you can't join us please take a minute to pray with us Fridays at lunch time.

Don't forget, Mennonite Relief Sale may be way off in Nov., but we all need to be thinking of items we can donate and how we can support MCC.

Final Thoughts Deborah O'Neal

No baby birds yet- false alarm maybe. I'm afraid this chilly weather may have gotten them. But on the other hand, a new neighbor WILL

be having her baby this week. My children are almost as excited as Alicia and Robert about this baby. Anna wanted to know if the Easter bunny was bringing the baby. Jack told her that rabbits don't give you babies, God does and that they are presents because He loves us. Now Anna wants a present. I think I have some more explaining to do.

I've been talking with another friend who had a baby recently. She asked me if I felt incredibly happy and sad when my children were born. I said what do you mean? She said well you look at your baby and you are so blessed and at the same time you feel so inadequate to do this job that God has given you. I do know what she meant.

I think Jesus had some of those same feelings in the Garden when He said "Not my will but Yours." To be so loved by God to be given this awesome job but at the same time to be afraid of the coming events. As parents, we love our children and will do whatever is best for them. How much larger and stronger is God's love for us that He gave His Son for us.

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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4708 OUTPOST DR
SPENCER OK 73084