



Joy Mennonite Newsletter May 2005

Pastors Corner

In the story of the Good Samaritan it was the Samaritan, a person rejected in the religious community who showed mercy to the wounded man. The purpose of this story was to illustrate the meaning of the commandment to love your neighbor. The story was meant to show the failure of the religious leaders who were so occupied in keeping their faith pure and had no time to show mercy to the wounded man. The Samaritan had no need for any theological reflection before he could stop to help the wounded man.

The stories of wounded people come to us from many sources. One would think it would not matter who tells the story, but to many religious leaders it does. Some tellers of the story are judged to be too political. Others are considered to be messengers of a social gospel. Why does the storyteller have to be theologically pure? We are free to respond in our own faith experience. Why can we not rejoice when someone shows concern for the wounded ones, whoever they may be?

We have to admit; today's world is much the same as the world in Jesus time. Religious leaders are too busy keeping the church machinery running. A greater concern is keeping the faith pure. Often it is those rejected by the church who respond to the call to help the wounded. Would we not do well to be less concerned about being theologically pure and focus on the commandment Jesus said included the whole law, love the Lord your God with your whole heart, mind and soul, and your neighbor as your self?

This past weekend Father Michael Lapsley was in Oklahoma City to participate in the Forgiveness Project, in memory of the tenth anniversary of the bombing in Oklahoma City. Father Lapsley is from South Africa and was deeply involved to end apartheid in South Africa. For this he was targeted to be eliminated. He received a letter bomb, which blew off both of his hands, one of his eyes, and burst his eardrums. He now needs help to dress himself for the rest of his life. In spite of this tragedy in his life Father Lapsley is a cheerful person and a pleasure to be with. One senses that he loves his neighbor, including the one who sent him the letter bomb that so destroyed his body. It did not take a theological discussion to know that we are brothers in the faith.

Like the warmth of the springtime sun renews the

earth, may your life be renewed by the warmth of your love for your neighbor.

-Moscs Mast

Faith, now there's a concept. A belief you hold onto, for no better reason than "just because". Of course it goes a little deeper than that, but it's quite unexplainable. For example, do you believe in the virgin birth, in Immaculate Conception? How about the resurrection? What about prayer, do you believe someone is really listening? These concepts are all pretty essential to being a Christian. These things can't be proven, we take it on faith that they are real. We have faith that the bible is the real word of God. What did Jesus say about Faith? And Prayer? (You thought I was going to tell you, but I'm not, this article is interactive, you have to think, or at least look it up.)

In our daily lives we sometimes must depend on faith when making decisions. We don't always have a clear, absolute, provable right answer for what we do. But we still have a vision of such clarity that we know, that this is the direction we must take, even though we don't even know where it's going to take us. I believe that's how God works at times. He somehow always finds a way to let us know what to do, where to turn, when to speed-up and when to slow down. He somehow always manages to let us know why we are where we are and what we are supposed to do. It's not our decision as to what our purpose is. Our only decision is whether or not we follow Gods direction. If you will think back to the bible, you can come up with a few examples of where men followed this line of thinking. They moved on faith knowing that God was leading. This article I hope you remember is interactive, you have to think of some examples. And now for the hard questions.

If you can believe in a God that can't be seen, in a savior that technically could not have been born that was killed and came back to life, if you can believe that a book written by many authors many, many years ago is the true word of god and that you can close your eyes and talk to god either aloud or silently and he will hear you, why is it so hard for you to accept that god is leading and we need to follow. Our mission has long been decided, by God, and he will let us know what it is in his own time.

-Terry

