

Preaching That Disturbs

Most people have heard the old saying that the preacher's job is to comfort the afflicted and afflict the comfortable. But in this day of padded pews the latter has sometimes proven difficult for preachers to do. Like God's people of old in Amos 6:1, many are at ease in Zion, and they don't want it any other way. A preacher was annoyed by an unknown old gentleman who fell asleep every Sunday during the sermon. One day on the street he saw a lad who always accompanied the old man and asked the youngster who the old fellow was. "Oh, that's grandpa," said the boy. "Tell you what," suggested the preacher, "if you will keep him awake during the sermon I'll give you a quarter every week." The boy agreed and for two weeks the old gentleman stayed awake and attentive during the preaching. The third week, however, he reverted back to his old ways and went to sleep again during the preaching. After worship, the preacher spoke to the boy and asked, "Didn't you agree to keep your grandpa awake every Sunday for a quarter?" The boy replied, "Yes, Sir, I did, but now Grandpa gives me 50 cents not to disturb him."

When was the last time a preacher disturbed you? The apostle Paul was a disturbing preacher. As the old adage goes, what he preached left people either mad, sad, or glad - but it never left them alone or the same. If you don't believe that, take time to read of Paul's ministry in the ancient Asian city of Ephesus as recorded in Acts 19. That huge cosmopolitan city was a major center of trade, commerce, immorality, superstition, and false religion - an ancient version of New York City or Los Angeles or Miami, etc., with all the good and bad that goes with them. Paul's preaching and ministry there was so powerful and effective that *"All Asia heard the word of the Lord Jesus ... fear fell on them all, and the name of the Lord Jesus was magnified ... the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed"* (Acts 19:10, 17, 20). But there is a fly in the ointment, for in verse 23 we read, *"There arose a great commotion about the way."* The King James Version says, *"there arose no small stir about that way,"* and the NIV renders it, *"there arose a great disturbance about the way."* Read the account in full and you will learn Paul's preaching disturbed some who were profiting from superstition and false religion. Before the chapter is over Paul had to leave town or risk being killed by a confused, angry, unruly mob stirred up by those who were disturbed by what Paul was preaching. Acts 20:1 refers to the whole sordid thing as an *"uproar."* How about it? Has a preacher ever disturbed you by what he preached? Has a sermon ever caused a riot, at least in your heart? Preaching what the Bible says will still disturb some people. The Bible addresses such controversial topics as money, sexual behavior (and misbehavior, including homosexuality and adultery), divorce, drunkenness, etc. Preaching that emphasizes one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God disturbs those who insist there are many (or none) of each of these. The offense of Christ's cross has not ceased, and must not cease. Preaching *"the Way"* that is God's Way will always disturb a world that insists on having its own way. **God give us more preachers to disturb us!**

- Dan Gulley, via *Bulletin Digest* -

The Lord's yoke never fits a stiff neck.

News & Notes

SCHEDULE OF SERVICES: *Sunday:* Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 10:30 a.m., 5:30 p.m. *Wednesday:* Bible Study, 7:00 p.m.

FACE COVERINGS REQUIRED: For EVERYONE in ALL of our assemblies regardless of where seated.

MEN'S BIBLE STUDY: Each Tuesday at 7:00 p.m.

NEW YEAR'S BREAKFAST: Sat., Jan. 1, 2022, 9:00 a.m., Fellowship Bldg. All invited. Sign-up sheet on the desk in the foyer. Our brothers will be cooking.

PANTRY: Canned fruit and applesauce.

PICTURE GALLERY OF PAST MEMBERS: Submit pictures (black and white or color) to David Malcomson.

PRAYERS REQUESTED: Jean Varrato - covid, off of ventilator (Jason Wright's aunt). Claudette Miller, 362 Arroyo Village Road, New Cumberland, WV 26047. Cards will be delivered to her in Weston.

SICK & SHUT-IN: **STONEWALL JACKSON HOSPITAL, WESTON, WV:** Claudette Miller. **AT HOME:** Bob Riley, Willard Burdine, Sr. - covid free, Joe Rhodes - covid free (son of Jenny), Melvin "Pete" Reed, Jim Hadley, Marilyn Miller, Randy Beagle, Barb DeLong, David McCoy, Marlene Evans, Russell Martin, Emma Rine, Rick Beck. **IN FLORIDA:** Ilene Rayl.

Don't Forget to Light the Fire

In one of Jack London's short stories, he writes about a fellow who was a newcomer to the Alaska gold rush. As he outfits to go out to "stake his claim and strike it rich," a seasoned veteran gives him some advice.

"It's winter, so whenever you pause from hiking, be sure to light a fire before doing anything else...including resting."

The rookie millionaire want-a-be hikes for hours toward unclaimed land to set up his land claim. Finally, he stops. He is exhausted. So, he rests under a tree "for only a moment." He figures that a little rest before making his fire and setting up camp wouldn't hurt. He ignored the advice from the old outfitter. He drifts into a short nap.

When he awakes, he finds that his hands and feet are so numb from the cold that he cannot make his fire. His body grows cold and his first day in Alaska becomes his last.

A sad story with no happy ending. But I find in this little bit of fiction a parable for life. If you don't light a spiritual fire, you will soon grow numb and your spiritual life will fade and flicker out. How do we light such a fire? There are three important steps.

Listen to God daily. This means reading the Bible every day. If your time is limited or your eyesight is faltering, then you can listen to recordings of Bible on tape or CD. "Receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21b).

Be diligent in doing God's work. This means worshiping with the brethren and telling others about Christ. The opposite of this is described in Luke 8:14.

Pray often. This keeps the fire in our lives going as much as stoking a campfire with more wood (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18).

- Larry Fitzgerald, via *Bulletin Digest* -