

The Gospel Unashamed

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half-truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."

A Controversial Newsletter "The Printed Voice of Summit Theological Seminary"

~ All articles are written by Terry Carter unless otherwise stated ~

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Terry Carter, Editor



Warning... "There's a Preacher Shortage!"

By Shane Capps

Part 1... Is there a shortage of Preachers in the Christian Church/Church of Christ?

Christianity is dying in America. In Europe, Christianity is only 1% of the total population that attends church. In America Christianity is only 17% of the total population that attends church.

It has been said that within ten years church attendance will be down to 10%. If that comes to pass, it will be the worst spiritual condition our nation has been in since the Revolutionary War of 1776. Christianity and our churches in America are dying. How about our preachers in the full-time ministry?

I listened to a survey from a non-instrumental Church of Christ preacher. He asked and then answered the question, "Is there a preacher shortage among the non-instrumental Church of Christ?" He said...

1. 15% of preachers said that their next move in ministry was to retire from ministry.

2. 44% of preachers said that their next move in ministry was to quit the ministry.

This group said they were going to get out of the full-time ministry. The preacher that was giving this survey was alarmed at these findings.

That means, if these findings are right and they come true, down the road the non-instrumental Church of Christ will lose around 59%-60% of their preachers. 60% of their preachers will be gone. Only 40% of the preachers will still be standing! Only four out of every ten will be left.

That got me thinking! I have always heard that we as the Christian Church/Church of Christ were losing preachers... but are we?

Is there a preacher shortage among the Christian Church/Church of Christ? If there is, how bad is it?

That's what I set out to research, examine, and find out.

These are my findings! I hope they move you as much as they did me. I hope it moves all of us to action!!!

Part 2... What are some of our Bible Colleges saying about a Preacher Shortage?

Here are the three questions I asked the presidents or other staff members of the Bible College on our topic. (See chart below of responses.)

- How many men are in your preaching program with hopes to go into the preaching ministry after finishing their degree?
- How many graduated this year in this program?
- Do you think we have a shortage of preachers?

Before we got off the phone or in their email, I re-asked the third question and added to it.

Name of College	No. in Program	No. of Graduates	Is there a Preacher Shortage?
1. Louisville Bible College:	12	2	Yes
2. Summit Theological Seminary:	6	2	Yes
3. Northeast Ohio Bible College:	5	0	Yes
4. Mid-south Christian College:	3	1	Yes
5. Manhattan Christian College:	22	3	Yes
6. Ozark Christian College:	40	40	Yes
7. St. Louis Christian College:	10	6	Yes
8. Central Christian College:	12	4	Yes
9. Great Lakes Christian College:	?	?	Yes
10. Kentucky Christian University:	10	10	Yes
11. Johnson University:	113	36	Yes
12. Carolina Christian College:	5	8	Yes
13. Alberta Bible College:	3	3	No

Here is the question...

Do you think we have a shortage of preachers? If we do have a shortage, how bad do you think it is? What are your ideas on this topic?

The following is the list of colleges, with the names of the persons I spoke with, and what they said.

1. Louisville Bible College

Spoke to... President Kerry Allen
"Yes, there is a shortage of preachers. It is noticed more in the small rural churches. They can't pay! Churches that are conservative are finding it hard to find preachers that are conservative."

2. Summit Theological Seminary

Spoke to... President Terry Carter
"Yes, there is a shortage of preachers in the church. I get calls all the time from churches looking for a preacher. Churches are also looking for men to do internship preaching ministries."

3. Northeast Ohio Bible College

Spoke to... Dean of the College Don Cooper
"This school only focuses on training preachers for the local ministry. We have a hard time getting students. The younger students want to go to the bigger colleges that are accredited. So NEOBC gets a lot of the older students. Many don't finish the program due to churches hiring them."

"There is a big-time shortage. We are in real trouble!"

4. Midsouth Christian College

Spoke to... President Larry Griffin
"Yes, there is a large preacher shortage. Why? The push for youth ministry, which was good at the start, has now separated the youth from the preacher and church in many ways. Also, the church is no longer raising up boys to be preachers. The push in many of our churches for a great worship experience does not allow for young boys to get into the pulpits. Also not having Sunday night, and Wednesday night, does not allow the chance to get into the

pulpit." Larry often tells the church...
"You send me a man that wants to preach, and I'll train him to preach."

5. Manhattan Christian College

Spoke to... President Kevin Ingram
"Yes, there is a shortage, and there are a lot of churches looking. Our churches are not preparing men to go into the ministry. There is a need for those who are just going to be preachers."

6. Ozark Christian College

Spoke to... President Matt Proctor
"To answer your other question, yes, I do believe there's a preacher shortage, not only in the Restoration Movement, but across the globe. Of course, many US churches try to find a well-prepared preacher (and other ministry positions) and can't seem to find one. But I'm more haunted by the fact that SO many have yet to hear the Gospel worldwide. The harvest is still plentiful, and the workers are still few. We need many thousands of more preachers, so I say: Godspeed to the work you're doing at Summit! As I pray for Ozark, I pray also for you--that the Lord would use you to send a tidal wave of Gospel workers into the harvest field. Blessings, brother."

Professor of Preaching Mark Scotts added...

"Yes and No! We have a shortage of good preachers. Normally churches can fill the pulpit, but it doesn't mean that they have good preachers. At Ozark, women are being trained as preachers and teachers, but not as "The Preacher." Women are on preaching teams, within the church today."

7. St. Louis Christian College

Spoke to... President Terry Shine
"We do have a shortage!!! There are 350 ministry openings at any given time around the world. It will be getting worse, way worse. I get calls all the time from churches needing a preacher, but I can only tell a preacher that I know who wants to change ministries. The church is not raising up preachers, elders, and deacons. This will become a great problem."

8. Central Christian College of the Bible

Spoke to... President Fincher David
"Yes, there is a shortage! Churches don't want young preachers, and young men right out of college. That's why they go into youth ministry, and one day they will move into the preaching ministry. I believe women should be the youth ministers. Yes, over the high school age. I think young men need a mom not a big brother like a male youth minister."

9. Great Lakes Christian College

Spoke to... President Larry Carter
"Yes, there is a shortage! Most go into youth ministry because they can't get a ministry as a preacher. The churches don't want a young man as a preacher, or a young man right out of Bible College. The churches are looking for older men. There is also a shortage of youth ministers! There is a growing need for preachers. The small churches and country churches are dying."

I also asked this third question to Larry's secretary who puts out the open ministry list. She said, *"There is a large preacher shortage in the church today."*

10. Kentucky Christian University

Spoke to... Vice President Calvin Lindell
"Yes, we have a shortage based on the number of churches looking for a preacher. There has become a great need for good preachers. We need bi-vocational preachers because many of the churches can't afford a preacher. I don't see the shortage getting better anytime soon."

Many times, parents don't want their kids to go into the ministry. They think, 'What will happen to their kids?' 'Can their son make a living at being a preacher?' 'Will the churches treat their son well, or destroy him?'"

(Side note... Calvin and Peggy Lindell both were baptized at the First Church of Christ Peru, IN where the author of this article is preaching. Small world!)

11. Johnson University

Spoke to... Professor of Preaching
Jeff Snell

"As you probably know, most current students preparing for ministry start in an associate role and transition at some point into preaching ministry. Economic and lifespan factors have significantly impacted how "first ministry churches" think about hiring. Churches that were student preaching points or first ministries in the 80's when I was an Ozark student are now led by retired ministers looking to augment social security or avoid drawing it before turning 70 (or, I guess, compensate for opting out). I preached or taught 5 times per week in my student ministry during my last 2 years of college and preached weekly the year prior. Most of my students are youth ministry sponsors (not weekend youth ministers) and very few have any opportunity to even consider a weekend preaching ministry. Changes in church culture and the closing of small churches have created this more than student factors (although there's probably some of that in play as well)."

"Is there a current shortage of preachers? That's not a simple question. Most US churches paying a full-time salary have numerous options, though they aren't necessarily spoiled for choice when it comes to quality. There are some, such as the church I recently concluded a four-year intern ministry with, that receive numerous applications but not from candidates they wish to hire. The evidence doesn't support the assertion that there is a shortage of available preachers for existing full-time churches, but there may be a shortage of desirable ones."

12. Carolina Christian College

Spoke to... President LaTanga
Tyson

"We do have a shortage of young preachers meaning 25 to 30 years old. We need to be telling our students about the importance of going into the ministry. I hope it doesn't get worse."

13. Alberta Bible College

Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Spoke to... President Stanley Helton
"Things are different here in Canada vs. the U.S. We have a shortage of churches not preachers in Canada. Our future in Canada is starting new churches, or church plants. The church in Canada looks compromising. Western Canada is doing well. We have 30 churches in the whole nation of Canada. We have 35 non-instrumental churches of Christ."

I tried to reach out to Dallas Christian College, Lincoln Christian University, Emmanuel School of Religion, and Boise Bible College, but after five or more attempts they would not respond back!

Part 3... What are some leading men saying about the Preacher Shortage?**There were two men I found that have looked into this topic...**

1. Rick Shonkwiler - the director of CCL Network which is Christian Church Leadership Network. He is helping preachers and Christian workers find a ministry and helping churches find workers.

Rick said... *"We have a shortage of qualified preachers as well as all church staff (Associate ministers, youth ministers, Christian educators, etc.) to work in the Church."*

"Churches are calling everyday seeking all forms of ministry within the church as well as preachers. It seems the pipeline is really depleted when it comes to preachers."

Two things have happened...

- a. "Many of the baby boomer preachers are retiring from full-time ministry or getting ready to. With all the preachers that are getting ready to retire, retiring, or dying, there is a great shortage that is not being trained to take their place."
- b. "Some of the Bible colleges have closed down."

"70% of all those going into the ministry will be out of ministry within ten years."

That's not just the preaching ministry, but all those in every area of ministry.

2. Lee Mason - former editor of the CRA.

"You have this long list of churches looking for a preacher. If we have all these preachers, then where are they? We have a generation of preachers that are dying off. Lincoln used to say, 'The Preachers are coming!' Now, no one is coming! Many youth ministers are going into the preaching ministry. The problem is they are taking the fun and games into the preaching ministry. The churches are becoming immature."

Part 4... What has your author found out from his work about the Preacher Shortage?

So, it is clear to see that we do have a great preacher shortage within the Christian Church/Church of Christ. How great is it, we don't know. If all the facts were in, I would say it would be worse than we thought.

The bottom line is we have many older preachers that are retiring, getting ready to retire, or going to be with the Lord. There are large numbers of preachers that are giving up or getting ready to give up on the full-time ministry.

With all of that said, there are very few men and young men that are going off to Bible Colleges to be trained to become a preacher and to serve in the full-time ministry. Only three in ten will still be in the full-time ministry after ten years!

My question is how many of those three will still be in the full-time ministry after twenty years? The Church is not raising up leaders in the Church to one day be elders, deacons, or preachers. Parents in the Church don't want their sons to be preachers for two reasons, (1.) What is the Church going to do to my son? (2.) Is my son going to be able to make a living being a preacher?

Young men are not thinking about going to Bible College to become preachers. If the young men do anything, they will become youth ministers; maybe to one day become preachers. We have a shortage of youth ministers, as well.

So, the next big question comes to mind.

Why are our Preachers Quitting the Full-Time Preaching Ministry?

Here is Shane's top ten list!

1. Stress:

Not only does the preacher have to deal with problems in life as we all do, but he must deal with everyone else's problems in the Church, and community. This stress has a way of breaking you down.

2. Little or no support within the church:

Some churches are not encouraging, helping with the work, or praying for their preacher. What is often the problem is the elders aren't pastoring the flock but ruling over them. The deacons are not ministers of mercy calling on the Church people but are concerned about the Church building. The preacher is left to do the spiritual work alone.

3. Money:

A man who has experience, good education, and who is good at being a preacher should get paid well. What does that mean? A man with a wife should make \$65,000 plus housing. That covers his pay, health insurance, retirement, etc. Some will say, that's too much money!!! You're right, that's why he's quitting so he can get a real paycheck and take care of his family!

4. Moving:

After a preacher has been at a church (let's say ten years), he may not want to change ministries, or locations. The preacher and his family get used to their home. They will have to give up their home, friends, city, community, and they don't want to move away.

Ministry can be like a circus. You go to a town, put up your tent until the show is over, and you pack it up and go to the next town. Wives get tired of that. If the kids are in a school, they don't want to move. If the preacher has grown kids that have gotten married who live in the same location, they may not want to leave them. Think if grandkids have come. So many times, the preachers don't move! His next move is outside of ministry.

5. Attacks and criticism:

This list can be as long as you want to make it. The preacher is too young, or the preacher is too old. The preacher preaches sermons too long, or the preacher preaches too short. The preacher is too hard of a person, or the preacher is too soft.

6. Unrealistic expectations:

One example is a church who said, *"We hired our preacher so the church would grow. We aren't growing! The church isn't growing because of the preacher."* The church isn't growing because in most cases, no one has served the Lord in the last twenty years within that church. This is just one example. The preacher's name is Shane, not Jesus! He can't do miracles.

7. Overworked:

He preaches Sunday morning. He teaches Sunday school, Sunday night, and again Wednesday night. He may lead small groups once or twice a week. He has to study, outline, and write sermons/lessons on each of these. He does this month after month, and year after year.

He performs weddings, funerals, and talks with people that have troubles. He also is seen, in some way, within the community. He makes time to go to nursing homes, jails, and hospitals. Remember, he still has a family at home! This doesn't even include the problems that arise unexpectedly.

8. Life in general:

This can be said for all of us. Life has a way of weighing all of us down

from time to time. You have marriage, kids, education, paying bills, and life's troubles. You throw ministry in with this, and life can turn into TNT.

9. No support in the home:

What often happens is you have a difference in spiritual growth within the home. The preacher is always studying, praying, serving, and growing. There are some preachers' wives who are not. They will say to the church, "You hired the preacher, not me!" They are right to some degree. Some wives, sadly, don't share their husband's spiritual desire. These types of women often leave their husband because they don't want to be a preacher's wife. If they do stay, they make their husband leave the full-time ministry. It happens all the time.

10. Sin:

This one I've seen too many times! The preacher gets himself into all kinds of trouble. He commits adultery. He starts drinking and getting drunk. He starts watching porn. You get the idea. What should a church do? Fire him, right? Here is a new idea, how about help him. Yes, the man has chosen to sin, and done wrong. How can we first save him as a person, and as a Christian man? He needs help! So many preachers have left the ministry over sin. Instead of helping them, the church finishes him off.

So, What Can the Church Do (RIGHT NOW!) to Raise Up Preachers for the Church Today?

1. Pray to the Lord.

Matthew 9:38 says, "Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest."

2. Renew our commitment to the Lord.

2 Chronicles 7:14 says, "If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear

from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.”

3. Start raising and training boys, young men, and men within the Church.

2 Timothy 2:2 says, “And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”

4. Give them a place to grow.

1 Timothy 1:18 says, “This command I entrust to you, Timothy, my son, in accordance with the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may fight the good fight.”

5. Be the example.

Titus 2:7 says, “In all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, with purity in doctrine, dignified.”

Fixing this problem starts with me. It starts with you. With God’s help we can raise up a new generation of Christians, Christian preachers, and Church leaders.

Out of 115 graduates from the schools we looked at, only 33 will still be full-time preachers in ten years if things don’t change!



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Camel Through a Needle’s Eye



I do not remember who was preaching, but I do remember the explanation of the passage of Scripture very well. It made quite an impression on me as a child. It explained the verse so well that I could understand what Jesus meant. Further, the application to our own lives was obvious and clearly needed.

I kept this thought in my mind for many years. By most accounts the preacher, whoever it was, had done an excellent job. He had explained the text, he had made relevant application of it to the lives of his listeners, and it was memorable.

Many years later I discovered that there was just one small problem; actually, it was a big problem. The explanation that he gave for the passage was simply wrong. The text was where Jesus said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.

It is found in all three of the synoptic Gospels. Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record the statement with very little variation between them. I don’t remember which Gospel account was being used in that sermon so many years ago, but we will quote Luke’s version for our readers today.

“For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” **Luke 18:25 (NKJV)**

The preacher was waxing eloquent as he gave the explanation for this statement. He told us that there was one gate into the city that was much smaller than the other gates. It was called the, “Eye of the Needle” because it was so small and difficult to pass through.

He went on to explain that although it was difficult, a camel could actually

pass through this gate. However, to get through the gate, the camel would have to be unloaded of all the burdens it was carrying and get down on its knees. This was fascinating to me as a child. It made so much sense and made the passage come alive. I could picture a camel with no burdens crawling through the gate on its knees.

Even to me, as young as I was, the application was obvious. If we want to enter the kingdom of God, we too must remove all the things that load us down in the world and get on our knees in humility before God. Just like the camel who could not remove his own burden, we all have a burden of sin that we cannot remove ourselves. Only God can remove that burden for us.

“What a powerful message,” I thought for years to come. How disappointed I was to find out that the whole story of the camel going through a gate called the “Eye of the Needle” was not true. I wondered how such a powerful idea that made so much sense could possibly be wrong. Then I wondered how many other explanations I had been given were wrong as well.

Fortunately, I did not dwell on that last thought as I realized that anyone can be mistaken about some things but still be right about most things. Furthermore, they can still be sincere in their convictions and pure in their intentions. As much as I wish it were not true, even preachers can make the mistake of passing on bad information, especially when it “preaches well”.

The truth is that there has never been any discovery of a gate called the “Eye of the Needle” that dates to the time of Jesus. In the 19th century, the idea was put forward that Jesus was referring to a gate that was then called, “The Needle’s Eye”. However, it appears that it was named after the statement of Jesus rather than before it (see the Fourfold Gospel quote on next page).

There is another explanation of this passage that I have also run into before. That is, that it should read “rope”, not “camel”.

It is true that the Greek words for “rope”, (*kamilon*) and “camel” (*kamelon*) are very similar, differing only by one letter. There are some manuscripts that do use the word for “rope”, but the overwhelming majority of them have the word for “camel”.

However, the rope explanation does not really explain anything. Threading a rope through the eye of needle might be easier than a camel but it is still not possible. In fact, the impossibility of the task seems to be the point.

After Jesus made this statement, His disciples asked who could be saved. Evidently, they understood that Jesus was describing an impossible task. The answer that Jesus gave to their question, further shows this to be the case. He said that things which are impossible with men are possible with God.

“26 And those who heard it said, **Who then can be saved?**” 27 But He said, “The **things which are impossible with men** are possible with God.” **Luke 18:26-27 (NKJV)**

The real and true explanation of this passage is clear from the context. It does not require any knowledge of manuscript variants or the original language. It does not require any knowledge of ancient gates into the city or archaeological finds. All it takes is an examination of the immediate context.

Jesus made this statement after speaking with the man we call “the rich young ruler” who asked Jesus what he had to do to inherit eternal life. Jesus referred him to the commandments. The rich young ruler said he had done those from his youth. Jesus then told him that he only lacked one thing. He needed to sell what he had and give it to the poor. This made the young ruler very sorrowful because he was very rich. It was this man’s sorrow that prompted Jesus to talk about a camel going through the eye of a needle.

“24 And **when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said,**

“How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! 25 “For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” **Luke 18:24-26 (NKJV)**

Jesus was using a proverbial statement, about the impossible, in order to teach that salvation is possible only with God (see reorder of sentence). With man it is impossible. There is no need to explain how a camel or rope can go through the eye of a needle or small gate with that name. Let the passage speak for itself.

It warns us about the peril of riches to our Spiritual well-being. It tells us of our need for God in obtaining salvation. The bad news is that salvation is impossible with man. The good news is that it is possible with God.

There is no need to invent gates that did not exist in the time of Jesus. There is no need to build on flimsy manuscript evidence. Just let Jesus speak for Himself. Allow Him to use a hyperbolic proverbial saying to make His point. I say things like, “that is like trying to hold back the tide” and people understand that I am referring to an impossible task. Allow Jesus to do the same.

The following statements by various commentators are worth considering:

“It as [sic] easier for a camel. Instead of *καμηλον*, a camel, S, and four other MSS., read *καμιλον*, a cable. See the same reading noticed on the parallel place, **Mt 19:24.**” --Clarke

“This is probably a current proverb for the impossible. The Talmud twice speaks of an elephant passing through the eye of a needle as being impossible.

It is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye...Jesus, of course, means by this comparison, whether an eastern proverb or not, to express the impossible. The efforts to explain it away are... like a ship's cable...as a narrow gorge or gate of entrance for

camels which recognized stooping, etc. All these are hopeless, for Jesus pointedly calls the thing "impossible" (verse Mt 19:26). The Jews in the Babylonian Talmud did have a proverb that a man even in his dreams did not see an elephant pass through the eye of a needle (Vincent).” --Robertson's Word Pictures

“A proverbial expression denoting literally a thing impossible, but figuratively, very difficult.” --Jameison, Fausset, & Brown

“The needle's eye here is that of the literal needle, and the expression was a proverbial one to indicate that which was absolutely impossible. Lord George Nugent (1845-6) introduced the explanation that Jesus referred to the two gates of a city, the large one for beast of burden, and the small one for foot-passengers. This smaller one is now called “The Needle's Eye,” but there is no evidence whatever that it was so called in our Saviour's time. In fact, as Canon Farrar observes, we have every reason to believe that this smaller gate received its name in late years because of the efforts of those who were endeavoring to soften this saying of Jesus.” --The Fourfold Gospel

“This is a proverbial expression, denoting a difficulty altogether unconquerable by the art and power of man; nothing less than the almighty grace of God will enable a rich man to get over this difficulty.” --Matthew Henry

“To explain what Jesus means it is useless and unwarranted to try to change ‘camel’ into ‘cable’...where a real camel must have been meant – or to define the ‘needle's eye’ as the narrow gate in a city wall...Such ‘explanations’ (?), aside from being objectionable from a linguistic point of view, strive to make possible what Jesus specifically declared to be impossible.

The Lord means that for a rich man in his own power to try to work or worm his way into the Kingdom of God is impossible. So powerful is the hold

which wealth has on the heart of natural man! He is held fast by its bewitching charm, and is thereby prevented from obtaining the attitude of heart and mind necessary for entrance into God's Kingdom."

--William Hendriksen

There are some lessons to be learned from all this beyond the lessons Jesus was teaching in this passage.

First, be careful about using an explanation that preaches well but is not accurate. That is an easy trap to fall into for a teacher or preacher.

Second, look to the context first in understanding any passage of Scripture. It is most likely where you will find the correct explanation. Archaeological discoveries and manuscript evidence are useful in their place, but facts matter. Contrary to one of the current members of the House of Representatives, you cannot be morally right if you are factually wrong.

Third, preachers are human, and they sometimes make mistakes. Don't let that derail your faith. Even sincere and well-intentioned people are wrong from time to time. However, a good preacher will appreciate it when factual errors are pointed out to him. He wants to learn from his mistakes and not repeat them.

Fourth, never be satisfied with an explanation just because it is "beautiful". Make sure it is true and accurate. There are a lot of beautiful songs whose lyrics are ridiculously wrong. The truth is the most beautiful thing you can find.

Fifth, don't get so wrapped up in the details of an explanation that you overlook the main point of the passage. It is easy to miss the forest for the trees. The trees are important but so is the forest. As Jesus put it, we don't want to "strain at a gnat and swallow a camel". Maybe we shouldn't strain at a camel and swallow a fictional gate.

Finally, praise the Lord for doing what is impossible with man. Thanks to Jesus, we can all be rich in spiritual things whether we are rich in material things or not.

If you are rich in material things, don't let them hinder you from entering the Kingdom of God. Be willing to do what made the rich young ruler sorrowful. Better to enter into life and the riches of Heaven poor and ragged than to be cast into hell as a formerly wealthy man. Be sure your wealth will not follow you there. If you set your heart on riches you will lose both them and eternal life.

Student is Called Home

We are deeply grieved at the passing of one of our graduates. Many of you are familiar with the work of our dear brother, Mike



Pemberton, with White Fields World Ministries. Sadly, he passed from this life to his reward with the Lord February 24, 2022. He was 66 years old. Mike had earned a master's degree from Summit in May of 2004. His obituary says that his mission work "resulted in the establishment of 250 churches, more than 55,000 people baptized, and over 175 preachers in the field because of Mike's leadership". Certainly, Mike was a tremendous worker for the Lord.

We are very pleased that he was one of our graduates. Mike took quite a bit of material from Summit to India throughout the years. While we certainly cannot take any of the credit for all he did, we are happy to have been some small part of his ministry. We praise the Lord for him and his work. We pray for his family and the mission work that he left behind. For Mike to accomplish all that he did, he had to have the full support of his faithful wife, Faye. His passing leaves a large gap in his family and the work of missions. We see that the fields are truly white for harvest. Pray that the Lord might raise up many more like Mike with faithful spouses like Faye and pray for the work to continue.

The Glorification of Jesus

-A Communion Meditation-

The transfiguration of Jesus is recorded in all three of the synoptic Gospels. It is found in **Matthew 17:1-8, Mark 9:2-8, and Luke 9:28-36**. It is obviously an important event in the life of Christ.

In his second epistle, Peter wrote about it many years later, **II Pet. 1:16-18**. For the apostles who were there, it was a life changing event.

When Jesus was transfigured, the apostles who were there got just a glimpse of His glory. As one author put it, "*His Deity shone through the rags of mortal flesh*". Another has said, "*...from start to finish, the whole atmosphere of the Mountain of Transfiguration is glory.*"

Luke evidently agreed with these statements as he said that Moses and Elijah appeared in glory and that the apostles who were there saw the glory of Jesus.

"30 And behold, two men talked with Him, who were **Moses and Elijah, 31 who appeared in glory** and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. 32 But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and **when they were fully awake, they saw His glory** and the two men who stood with Him." **Luke 9:30-32 (NKJV)**

Peter later spoke of seeing the majesty of Jesus and said He received honor and glory when He was transfigured.

"16 For we did not follow cunningly devised fables when we made known to you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but **were eyewitnesses of His majesty**. 17 For **He received from God the Father honor and glory** when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." 18

And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain." **II Peter 1:16-18 (NKJV)**

Each week as we partake of the Lord's Supper, it is also a glorification of Jesus. It is a time for Him to receive honor and glory in His Church. It is a place where we are to make known His majesty to the world. As His broken flesh and shed blood are remembered there, His Deity is shown to all.

There are three things we see at the transfiguration that we should ponder as we partake of our memorial of Jesus' death which He referred to as 'His glorification'.

"23 But Jesus answered them, saying, **"The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.**" 24 "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain." **John 12:24-24 (NKJV)**

"31 So, when he had gone out, Jesus said, **"Now the Son of Man is glorified, and God is glorified in Him.**" 32 "If God is glorified in Him, God will also glorify Him in Himself, and glorify Him immediately." **John 13:32-32 (NKJV)**

First, notice that only three of the apostles were invited to the Mount of Transfiguration.

Peter, James, and John were the only ones who witnessed this glorification of the Lord. When Peter saw the glory of Jesus, he said, "Lord, it is good for us to be here..."

Not everything Peter said at that time was right, but this was. I am certain that none of the three who were there would have wanted to miss that experience.

"Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, **"Lord, it is good for us to be here;** if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." **Matthew 17:4 (NKJV)**

We, as Christians, have been invited each week to come away from the world to honor and glorify Jesus at His table of remembrance. It is good for us to be there. None of us should want to miss such a wonderful thing as this. Not everybody has this privilege. Only Christians who are part of the New Covenant enjoy such communion. The world does not.

"28 **"For this is My blood of the new covenant,** which is shed for many for the remission of sins. 29 "But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when **I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom."** **Matthew 26:28-29 (NKJV)**

Second, it is a fearful thing to be present when the glory of the Lord is being seen.

All three of the Gospel writers speak of the fear that fell upon Peter, James, and John. Matthew records the fact that Jesus told them not to be afraid. It is a fearful thing to be in the presence of God Almighty. Like Isaiah before them, they were afraid.

"6 And when the disciples heard it, **they fell on their faces and were greatly afraid.**" 7 But Jesus came and touched them and said, "Arise, and **do not be afraid."** **Matthew 17:6-7 (NKJV)**

When we come to something as sacred as the Lord's Supper, we ought to have a deep sense of reverence and fear of the Lord. We are not worthy to be in the presence of Deity. The apostles understood that, and we should too. It is only the blood of Jesus that allows us to be part of such a sacred event. The Lord's Supper is not something to be taken lightly, done casually, or flippantly. This is why Paul warned the Corinthians about partaking in an unworthy manner.

"27 Therefore **whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.**" 28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the

bread and drink of the cup. 29 **For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself,** not discerning the Lord's body." **I Corinthians 11:27-29 (NKJV)**

Third, when the glory of the Lord is seen, the focus needs to be exclusively on Him.

Peter learned this after suggesting that they build three tabernacles - one for Moses, one for Elijah, and one for Jesus. God Himself corrected this wrong idea even while it was being spoken.

"4 Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, "Lord, it is good for us to be here; if You wish, let us make here three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah." 5 **While he was still speaking,** behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly **a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!"** **Matthew 17:4-5 (NKJV)**

Even great servants of the Lord, like Moses and Elijah, deserve no glory next to the Lord Himself. Similarly, when we meet for the Lord's Supper, our worship should be only for the Lord Himself. We need to block out all the other distractions and focus on Jesus and what He did for us in His death. We dare not exalt anyone to His level, not even faithful servants of His. This is supposed to be a time to remember Him and Him alone.

"And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you; **do this in remembrance of Me."** **Luke 22:19 (NKJV)**

"24 and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; **do this in remembrance of Me.**" 25 In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, **in remembrance of Me."** **I Corinthians 11:24-25 (NKJV)**