

The Lakeview Lamp

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.”
- Psalm 119:105

January 9, 2005

It Takes a Tsunami

Troy Nicholson

Over two weeks ago, many people did not even know what the word “tsunami” meant. Now it has become the main event of conversation. An undersea earthquake triggered an Indian Ocean tidal wave (tsunami) that wiped out parts of 10 countries, killing over 150,000 people and leaving millions in a state of despair. Sometimes it takes a tragedy such as this one to remind us of some lessons of life.

Life is uncertain. The citizens of the countries hit were going about their normal business. Many tourists were enjoying themselves in coastal paradises. Then the tsunami hit, “without warning, on a morning of crystal blue skies. Sunbathers and snorkelers...were swept away” (“Killer waves swept in without warning,” *The Tennessean*, 12-27-04). As the rich man in **Luke 12** who thought he had “*many years*” ahead of him (:19), so probably thought those who were dead by “*this night*” (:20). We accumulate wealth, just to have “*thieves break in and steal*” (**Matthew 6:19**) or the stock market crash. We make plans for ourselves and our family, only to see disease and illness come along and change our

plans. Even the end of life as we know it will occur “*as a thief in the night*” (**2 Peter 3:10**).

We are not in control. If those hit by the tsunami produced by the earthquake had known it was coming, there was still nothing they could have done to stop it. One scientist “likened the quakes’ power to detonating a million atomic bombs the size of those dropped on Japan during World War II, and said the shaking was so powerful it even disturbed the Earth’s rotation” (“Tsunami originated deep in ocean floor,” *Tenn.*). So much of life is beyond our control. God is the one who has made all things and controls all things (**Acts 17:26**).

We need wisdom. The tsunami has definitely brought about trials in many people’s lives. James tells us that trials can produce patience and help to perfect us (**James 1:2-4**). We need wisdom to persevere in those times of trials and know that God can use them to make us better (:5) and accomplish other good things. He used a string of events – some of them bad – in the life of Joseph “*in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive*” (**Gen 50:20**). Whenever we want to question God concerning why He has permitted or prohibited certain things, we need to read His response to Job (**Job 38-39**) and be reminded of who He is and what He has done. Then we will trust in Him come what may – even a tsunami.

“My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.” – **Psalm 73:26**

Robbing the Church

Hal Hammons

We are installing a security system in our new auditorium. In fact, they're installing part of it now. I can't help but think that's pretty sad. Of course, I have heard of church buildings being burgled and vandalized. And I don't suppose stealing the church's computer is any more of a crime or a sin than stealing mine or yours. But it just seems worse, doesn't it? Maybe it's the idea that we have opened our doors to the world and invited them to come in, and some of them want to do so — but on their own timetable, and for their own selfish and greedy purposes.

But is that really all that different from the attitude of many of our brethren? Plenty of Christians, I fear, look at the assemblies of the saints as opportunities for them to enrich themselves personally, without regard to (and sometimes, in fact, at the expense of) the needs and wants of their brethren. Perhaps they come to show off their abilities and have the praises of men heaped upon them. Perhaps they come to impress their friends or family. Perhaps it's just so they'll feel better about themselves. But it isn't for the greater good. It isn't for the benefit of the church. It certainly isn't for the Lord.

I'm sure that's one reason our attendance (and the attendance of every congregation I've ever known) fluctuates so much through the week. "My personal needs are better served at home on Wednesday nights," one might say to himself, "and therefore I'll stay at home." Or, "I don't personally derive much benefit from Bible classes, and therefore I'll skip them." It's selfishness, really. It's putting our own (perceived) needs above the needs of our brethren.

The truly tragic thing, of course, is that such ones don't even serve their own personal needs by skipping services and classes. They are not only robbing their brethren by their absence, they are robbing themselves. I hope they come to realize that in time.

Guidance means that I can count on God; commitment means that God can count on me.

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"This is the day the Lord has made; we will rejoice and be glad in it"
(Psalm 118:24).