

# The Lakeview Lamp

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

**December 18, 2005**

## *Taking Christ Back out of Christmas*

Troy Nicholson

Normally the message we hear this time of year from various religious groups is to "Put Christ back in Christmas." This year the trend seems to be the reverse. These same groups are now taking Christ back out of Christmas. A recent front-page article in *The Tennessean* ("Some churches will skip Christmas Day services," 12-8-05) talked about the situation in the Nashville area.

This year Christmas Day happens to fall on a Sunday, and many religious groups have decided that they would rather be with their physical families celebrating Santa Claus that day than with their spiritual families celebrating Jesus Christ. How sad.

While some people who object say that the problem is not celebrating Christ's birth on Christmas Day, the real problem is not celebrating His death on Sunday. The Bible never authorizes the celebration of His birth on any day; but it does authorize the celebration of His death (**1 Cor 11:23-26**), and we see it being done on the first day of the week (**Acts 20:7**).

The article said, "With the popularity of Christmas Eve services, and Christmas falling on Sunday, church leaders wanted to give their congregations more flexibility to juggle the holiday's demands." What exactly does the holiday "demand" of us, and who has created these demands? One group gave as an excuse for not meeting on Sunday "how frenzied families would be that weekend." Again, who has created the frenzy? What it boils down to is people putting the things of this world ahead of God. How many people this Christmas Day will put being with family ahead of celebrating Christ's death? Jesus says if you do that you are not worthy of Him (**Matt 10:37**).

The "founding pastor" of one group said, "We're not legalists. Most people will be there Saturday, so why do they have to come back on Sunday? We do not think it is a sin to make church convenient to go to." Webster defines a legalist as one who strictly adheres to law or to a code. James said that "*whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it*" (**James 2:10**). We had better be legalists when it comes to God's law, even if it is not always "convenient."

In case you haven't figured it out by now, we will be assembling as usual next Sunday – even if it is Christmas Day. Will you be?

## *Encouraging or Coddling*

Glen Young, edited

It is not uncommon to hear someone say, “Brother Lukewarm and Sister Wayward need encouragement!” Is this the end-all solution to unfaithfulness? Someone throws a childish tantrum and quits the church. Another gets angry over something said in Bible class or a sermon and forsakes the Lord. Still another is not given the job he wanted; and thus he feels he is not needed, gets mad, and makes sure others suffer for treating him so badly. Is it just a matter of needing to be encouraged or is there something else needed?

Please don't misunderstand. I agree that discouragement is a problem for many individuals and congregations. I accept that Christians have both a privilege and responsibility to encourage one another. The Hebrew writer instructs us to assemble for the purpose of provoking one another unto love and good works (**Hebrews 10:24-25**). Paul tells Christians to restore those who have sinned and to bear one another's burdens (**Galatians 6:1-2**). We obviously have a responsibility to do all that is in our power to aid one another to make it to Heaven. However, the question is, are we encouraging one another to a higher plain of spiritual service (**Romans 12:1-2**), or are we coddling immature Christians and tolerating sin?

One sin that will condemn many souls to Hell is the sin of failing to grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord (**2 Peter 3:18**). When Peter closed his second epistle he gave this command. Notice I said command! He didn't give a suggestion! This makes our growing up in grace and knowledge necessary to salvation as much so as baptism for the remission of sins (**Acts 2:38**). The Hebrew writer rebuked those who had failed to grow in grace and knowledge of the Lord (**Hebrews 5:12-13**). Their failure to grow had caused them to remain babes. In this state, they could not teach others nor spiritually digest the “meat” of God's word. There were things they needed to hear but because of their immaturity were unable to spiritually digest (:11).

We all need to be encouraged from time to time. Let us be diligent to do so. But, we cannot coddle the immature and get them into Heaven. Only those who bear their cross (**Matthew 16:24**) will enter into the eternal rest promised to the faithful.

*“Make glad the soul of Your servant, for to You, O Lord, I lift up my soul.” – Psalm 86:4*

# **Family News**

**Bonnie Sue Brown** has been sick this past week but is doing better.

**Virginia Bryant** continues to be better with less pain.

**Quinton Coppage** is doing better but is still not well.

**Metty Fain** is not doing well and is getting worse and worse.

**Donna Jan Wheeler Faulker**, Mildred Lancaster's 53-year-old niece, passed away this past week. Her funeral was on Wednesday.

The **Fultz** family used to attend here. Two of their children are sick. **Sandlyn** is in a great amount of pain from a tumor that is against the lower part of her spinal cord. She is scheduled to have surgery this Wednesday morning. Of all the different risks, possibly the greatest is that she will develop Meningitis. **Nathan** had the chest CT scan and MRI as scheduled. The results were good (no growth of the tumor on his brain stem was noted).

**Sandra Hunt** is considering new treatments for her pain. They are still waiting to hear from the heart doctor. Overall, she has had a bad week.

**John Jenkins**, Robert's father, has lung cancer. Tomorrow he is scheduled to begin a new type of chemotherapy.

**Al Johnson**, Bob's father, is doing very well.

**Amanda, Grant, Natalie** and **Courtney Johnson** have all been sick this past week. They are now all doing better.

**Richard Jones**, the Boyd's neighbor, has advanced cancer. He remains in Sumner Regional MC. He is in pain, very weak, very sick and not eating well.

**Debbie Kelley's** address is: 2608 McKinley Avenue, Claymont DE 19703

**Fran Pickens** has had more severe arthritis pain lately.

**Allen Malone** has arrived home from Vietnam. We are glad he is back! Currently he is tired from the trip and sick. Remember the Christians in Vietnam while he is here. Especially remember Dong who has cancer.

**Barbara Matish**, Bonnie Sue Brown's friend, had surgery on Tues. to replace two heart valves. The surgery went well. She should come home this week.

There is a new report from **Fred Newman** in the back of the auditorium.

**Wendy Walker**, Walter's coworker (James Hunt also knows her), passed away on Friday. Her funeral will be this afternoon. She was in her 30s with children.

**Ame White** had surgery as scheduled on Monday. It went well. She went home on Tuesday and is recovering. She returns to the doctor this Tuesday.

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*"Rejoice always; pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks" (1 Thes 5:16-18).*