

The Lakeview Lamp

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

February 10, 2008

23, 33, 49, 57, 63, and 72

Troy Nicholson

The above numbers are not Powerball lottery drawing numbers. Instead, they are the ages of some of those killed here in Sumner County by the storm this past week. Like random lottery drawing numbers, they could have been any other combination of ages if the storm had taken a different path.

Is your present age close to any of these? If not, then we can look at the ages of the deaths in other counties and go down a little more to 20 or up to 84 or even 90. Now I know that the ages are at least getting close to anyone old enough to read this article.

So what is the point?

The point is that none of these people expected last Tuesday night to be their last upon this earth, yet each of their lives came to an abrupt end when the storm hit them. Our lives could end just as abruptly. Instead of in a storm it could be in an accident of some kind. A few weeks ago a brother in Christ and friend of the family slipped on some ice and fell, hitting his head and becoming unconscious, never to awaken. Others die every day in auto accidents, like the three who survived the storm in their county Tuesday but then died Thursday when a tractor-trailer slammed into their van. James cautioned against making plans for tomorrow, for *"you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away"* (**James 4:13-14**). When will *your* vapor vanish? No one knows.

Were the people represented by these ages ready to die? Would you have been if you had been among the number? We sing a song that speaks of "watching and waiting and ready to go" and asks, "Don't you want to be ready to go?" The apostle Paul was. He told the Philippian brethren that for him *"to die is gain"* and that he had *"a desire to depart and be with Christ"* (**Phil 1:21**). Peter wrote that we should all be *"looking for and hastening...looking forward to"* the end of life upon this earth (**2 Peter 3:10-14**). If you were not ready when this storm hit, will you be ready before the next one does? Before you see another patch of ice? Before you pass another vehicle on the road?

Remember, the next list of ages could include you.

The Joneses' Church

Frank Himmel

Keeping up with the Joneses is an old way of describing people who think they must have everything their neighbors have. Not wanting to be outdone, folks buy new houses, cars, clothes, sports equipment, electronic gizmos, and more. In some cases the old things really are worn out or obsolete; in others, we simply do not want to be (or appear to be) outdated.

There is often a problem, however:

the Joneses may make more money than we do. To solve that, we convince ourselves that these wants are needs and out come the credit cards (Are the Joneses' finances in any better shape?). And there is another problem: the Joneses don't ever quit buying. We are always aiming at a moving target. The process never ends.

Did you know that the Joneses go to church? Yes, they do. And would you be surprised to learn that church has it all, too?

Denominational churches have long known about the Joneses' church. When it started having pot-lucks, others quickly followed. It then built a multi-purpose facility in which to have them. So did others. The Joneses' church then turned to musical programs, plays, sports teams, day care, schools, exercise classes, camps, retreats, recreational outings and more. They were determined to be the biggest. But so were others. They not only kept up with the Joneses' church, they tried to outdo them. Now, anything goes. Nothing seems too far-fetched; some church somewhere has it.

Lost in all this scramble for image and size is the simple New Testament pattern for local churches. Also lost is God's approval. Merely attaching His name to a thing does not make it right (**Matt. 7:21 -23**).

Conservatives preach against the Joneses' church's innovations, yet some of us look wishfully at their swelling numbers and dabble. A few of our "gospel meetings" are looking a lot like youth rallies or marriage seminars. Sermon content is shifting away from salvation and doctrinal themes. VBS is getting increasingly playful and dramatic. So are some preachers.

There is no virtue in getting stuck in a rut. The framework of what God authorizes certainly allows for some variety in approach. But the Joneses' church will always have more to appeal to the worldly minded. Salvation is what the Lord's church is all about (**Eph. 5:23**).

News and Notes

There will be a brief **teachers' meeting** for all current and prospective teachers on Sunday, Feb 17th, after the evening worship.

David Bansemer is doing better and hopes to be out for worship.

Mary Burnett had another spell this past week but is doing better now.

Connie Cobern still has bronchitis, and the rest of her family has the flu.

Quinton Coppage remains at Imperial Manor on Due West, room 420.

Estelle Hayes has had a bad cold this week but expects to be out today.

The **Neighbours** family has been sick this past week. Brian, Sarah, and Aidan are still sick this weekend.

Nancy Read put off her follow-up procedure to her cataract surgery until this Wednesday.

Out of town, traveling, or visiting: The Nicholson children (AL - AM only).

New Reports from men we support: Sandro Corraza (Rome), Bob Nichols (Japan).

Note – If you have any news for the bulletin (out of town, sick, etc.), then please let me know by Saturday night.

Thanks! – Troy

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