

Thought for the Day

January 2 – January 6, 2012

January 2, 2012

A TIME TO ACT

Joe Walker of the United Methodist Board of Discipleship once stood outside a Bolivian tin mine, watching 10-year-olds descend into the dark airless shaft. They would reappear ten hours later, finishing their regular shifts. Most of them would die by age 35.

Joe said, “We can preach Christ to such lads, and we should. We can build hospitals to care for them when their lungs turn black, and we should. But God also calls someone to stand before the government of Bolivia and the American companies that own such mines and say, “In the name of God, stop!”

Jesus died to save our eternal souls, but he also bent the standards of the world to resemble those of God. One day he took a whip in hand and drove from the Temple those who were exploiting the poor.

If we really mean the words of the Lord’s Prayer—“thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven”—then we must sometimes take action!

January 3, 2012

SETTING STANDARDS

Every day a man used to walk by a jewelry store, stop and set his watch by the big clock in the window. One day the jeweler happened to be standing in his doorway. He greeted the man in a friendly way and said, “I see that you set your watch by my clock every day. What kind of work are you in that demands such precision regarding time?”

The man replied, “I’m the watchman at the plant down the street. My job is to blow the five o’clock whistle.”

The jeweler was started. “But you can’t do that,” he said. “I set my clock by your whistle.”

If we set our standards by watching what other people do, we will be in trouble. All human standards are flawed to some degree. Our standard must be God-sent. We discover it in Holy Scripture and especially in the life of Jesus Christ.

January 4, 2012

*J*UST A TINY BIT OFF

After a farmer’s barn burned down, all the neighbors gathered one Saturday to help rebuilt it. Some of the men were told to saw the rafters. They first cut a rafter and then traced around it with a pencil and cut another one. They based the third rafter on the second, the fourth on the third, and so forth. What they didn’t take into account was the width of the pencil mark. Each rafter was one pencil mark wider than the one before. After a while, this made a difference. By lunch time they looked at the barn and discovered that it was leaning at a strange angle because they had deviated ever so gradually from the original standard.

It only takes tiny deviations from biblical standards to turn a person or a culture in different and dangerous directions.

January 5, 2012

*W*HO IS THE REAL OWNER?

A father and mother and their teenage son Walter stopped for lunch at a Chick-fil-A restaurant. Since Mom and Dad were on a diet, Walter was the only one who ordered French fries. They sat down at a table, offered a prayer, and began to eat. Dad casually reached over to take a few of the French friends, but Walter said, “No, Dad. Those are mine.”

That statement was sort of absurd. After all, Dad paid for the meal. But don’t we adults do something similar? Though the Bible says, “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it” (Psalm 24:1), we see ourselves as the owners. Actually we own nothing, but God loans us certain assets to manage on his behalf. And one day we must render an accounting for how we managed God’s assets.

January 6, 2012

*S*TUBBORNESS

Between two farms near Valleyview, Alberta, you can find two parallel fences, only two feet apart, running for a half mile.

Two farmers, Paul and Oscar, had a disagreement that erupted into a feud. Paul wanted to build a fence between their properties and split the cost, but Oscar was unwilling to contribute. Since he wanted to keep cattle on his land, Paul went ahead and built the fence anyway.

After the fence was completed, Oscar said to Paul, "I see we have a fence." "What do you mean 'we'?" Paul replied. "I got the property line surveyed and built the fence, and if any of your cows sets foot on my land, I'll shoot it."

Oscar knew that Paul wasn't joking. So when he eventually decided to use the land adjoining Paul's for pasture, he was forced to build another fence, two feet away.

Oscar and Paul are both dead now, but their double fence stands as a sad monument to the high price we pay for stubbornness.