

Tomlinson Run Sets the “High Water Mark” for Congregational Health By Paul R. Blake

An interesting Wednesday evening service... to say the least. It began with a strong storm front bearing down on this region with all the gentleness of a grizzly bear with a sore tooth, heartburn, and diaper rash. Heavy downpours, strong winds, intermittent hail, and multiple lightning strikes covered this area with flooded roads, trees blown down across highways, and the electricity out at the church building. In addition, a number of members were out of town on vacation, or for business, or to care for ill kinfolk. It was song night and most of our song leaders were either away or late due to the storm. The lights were out at the building, the air conditioning was off, one of the emergency lights was broken, two of the hurricane lamps would not light, and the third lamp was smoking. On top of it all, the rain was coming down so hard it was difficult to see the parsonage at the top of the parking lot, and many of the members came in drenched. Wednesday had all of the makings of a Perfect Storm of murmuring and peevishness; at the very least it had the potential to be a service where worshipers just go through the motions and then go home un-edified.

But the storm did not reckon with Tomlinson Run. In spite of trees down, pouring rain, lightning and thunder, hail the size of kidney beans, and high winds, about seventy percent of our members came to praise God in song. Reactions to the storm: some of the sisters jumped and squealed at the lightning strikes (in a very amusing manner I might add), some of the members expressed surprise at the wind and rain when they came in, and a number of members called the building to alert us about downed trees. However, the predicted complaints never materialized. The building was dark and stuffy, yet no one seemed to notice. We had to change from our planned theme for song night to song leader's choice and did so with a limited number of song leaders, and a few members observed that it turned out to be a really good service after all. A few of our younger men grabbed a chainsaw and pickup truck and cleared the tree from the road in short order, and then came to services soaking wet (thanks guys!). By the time services ended, the storm had passed, and many of the members kept their customary practice of remaining in the parking lot to talk and visit for another thirty to forty minutes.

Someone might suggest that we were prepared to handle the storm by what we endured in the winter storm in February. Others might conjecture that we were trained for this by the years of hardship when so many of our Dear Ones were chronically ill and many of them passed away. Perhaps. In many ways, we are the sum of our experiences. However, I think that it is just the nature of the disciples here at Tomlinson Run. Healthy disciples react to crises the way we did this past Wednesday. And such health comes through sound doctrine, godly love, good works, experience driven wisdom, and perseverance. Hebrews 6:9 - “But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation... For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.”

In the midst of the worst thunderstorm to hit the area this year, the members came to midweek services, sang and prayed together, greeted each other with warmth and affection, and went home refreshed. I should have expected no less.

One Nation Under God

John Adams was America's second President, George Washington's Vice President, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and a member of the Continental Congress. He also authored the classic three volume work titled, A Defense of the Constitution of the Government of the United States.

It was Adams who urged Thomas Jefferson to draft the Declaration of Independence. It was Adams who recommended that Congress appoint George Washington to be Commander-in- Chief of the Continental Army. It was Adams who negotiated the final treaty with Great Britain ending the Revolutionary War.

In his diary entry dated February 22, 1756 he wrote: "Suppose a nation in some distant region should take the Bible for their only law book and every member should regulate his conduct by the precepts there exhibited! Every member would be obliged in conscience, to temper- ance, frugality, and industry; to justice, kindness, and charity to- wards his fellow men; and to piety, love, and reverence toward Al- mighty God... What a Utopia, what a Paradise would this region be."

On July 1, 1776, he declared before the Continental Congress, as the 13 colonies were getting ready to sever ties from Great Britain: "Before God, I believe the hour has come. My judgment approves this measure, and my whole heart is in it. All that I have, and all that I am, all that I hope in this life, I am now ready to stake upon it. And I leave off as I began, that live or die, survive or perish, I am for the Declaration. It is my living sentiment, and by the blessing of God it shall be my dying sentiment. Independence now, and Independence forever." He observed about the Constitution: "Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious people. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other."

Age

Since when has age become a disqualifying factor in human endeavor and accomplishments? Between the ages of 70 and 83, Commodore Vanderbilt added ten million dollars to his fortune. Verdi, at 83, produced his magnificent "Te Deum," his "Stabat Mater," and "Ave Maria." Oliver Wendell Holmes, at 79, wrote his "Over the Teacups," and Tennyson, at 83, wrote "Crossing the Bar." Nearly two-thirds of all the greatest deeds ever performed by human beings -- the victories in battle, the greatest books, the greatest pictures and statues -- have been accomplished after the age of sixty.

A Moments Wisdom

Measure not men by Sundays, without regarding what they do all the week after.
He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.

Preach the Gospel; if necessary, use words!

The Christian Life is about relationships, not performance.

Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle. (George Washington)

Sometimes I lie awake at night, and I ask, 'Where have I gone wrong?' Then a voice says to me, 'This is going to take more than one night.'
A proverb is to speech what salt is to food.

Worshipping God
By Tom Sutherland

Did you worship God last Lord's Day? If not, why not?

Someone once said, "When a man says he can't keep awake through a 30 minute sermon, and stays home with his 700-column newspaper, who's he kidding? When a man says Sunday is his only day to rest, and gets up at 4:30 a.m. to go fishing, or spends the day on a golf course, who's he kidding? When a man says church seats are too hard and uncomfortable, then goes on Saturday to sit on a cold concrete bleacher for hours in a drizzle watching 22 men push one another back and forth across a mud lot, who's he kidding? When a man says he doesn't have time for Christ and His church, then spends his evenings shopping, bowling, watching television, going to clubs, or playing cards, who is he kidding?"

Not God! -- That's for sure.

We need to worship God. We need to be sorely disappointed in ourselves if we do not worship Him. If you are not worshipping God, why not begin doing so this very week? You won't regret it. Remember, God has told us what He wishes, and He, being the Creator, knows what is best for each of us. Jesus said in John 4:23-24, "But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." Devote your heart to the worship of God, and truly worship Him as His word directs.