

The SOWER

Arthur Church of Christ

415 West 4th Street
Arthur, IL 61911

March 16, 2008

THE MIDDLE CROSS

“And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left” (Luke 23:33).

Three crosses stood erect on the brow of Mount Calvary for all the world to gaze upon. Each holds a message for us to ponder. Upon two of them were men condemned justly for their crimes. As such, they are symbolic of all men, for “All have sinned...” (Romans 3:23), and “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). One of these, unrepentant and without faith, died **in his sins**, while the other, mindful of the error of his ways, and having his eyes opened to the innocence and royalty of our Lord, sought mercy of Him, **dying to his sins**.

On the middle cross, however, was One that had done “nothing amiss” (Luke 23:41). Indeed, this was He who was “in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15b). He, unlike the thieves, was neither dying **in his sins**, nor **to his sins** (being sinless), but **for our sins**. It was by His merit, not that of the penitent believing thief, that guaranteed the thief’s place in Paradise (Luke 23:42-43). Isaiah, by the Spirit, had foreseen the coming of One who would be “wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities” when he would “make his soul an offering for sin” (Isaiah 53:5-6, 10). One thief’s cross was a cross of **rebellion**, the other’s a cross of **repentance**, but the middle cross was the cross of **redemption**. As Peter wrote, Jesus “bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed” (1 Peter 2:24).

Friend, which thief represents you? Would you die **in** your sins? or **to** your sins? Have you turned in faith to Him who took your place on that middle cross? Have you in baptism been buried with Him and risen to walk “in newness of life” (Romans 6:3-4)? Don’t go into eternity without hope, as did the rebellious thief, but fully trust Him who died on that middle cross for your redemption, as did the penitent thief.---Ron

Times of Worship

Bible Classes.....9:30 a.m.
Morning Worship.....10:30 a.m.
Evening Worship.....6:00 p.m.
Wed. Bible Study.....6:00 p.m.



Ron Bartanen, Minister

WELCOME to today’s Bible class and/or worship assembly. If you are a VISITOR, we especially appreciate your decision to meet with us. It is our hope that you will return at every opportunity.

Have you visited our website lately?
(www.arthurchurchofchrist.com)

Be sure to check out the “Christian Evidences”/“Apologetics Press” links Now in both English and Spanish.

CHRISTIANITY AS SEEN BY A NEW GENERATION

A new study by The Barna Group, conducted among 16-to-29-year-olds, shows that a new generation is more skeptical of and resistant to Christianity than were people of the same age just a decade ago. This age group today exhibits a greater degree of criticism toward Christianity than did the previous generation, fueled in part by the growing sense of disengagement and disillusionment among young people.

A decade ago the vast majority of Americans outside the Christian faith, including young people, felt favorably toward Christianity's role in society. Now, just 16 percent of non-Christians in their late teens and twenties have a "good impression" of Christianity. One of the groups hit the hardest by the criticism is Evangelicals. Such believers have always been viewed with skepticism in the broader culture, but those negative views are now crystallizing and intensifying among young non-Christians. Only three percent currently express favorable views of evangelicals.

Christians are aware of this shift. Ninety-one percent of the nation's evangelicals believe that "Americans are becoming more hostile and negative toward Christianity." Among senior pastors, half contend that "ministry is more difficult than ever before because people are increasingly hostile and negative toward Christianity." The study explored twenty specific images related to Christianity, including ten favorable and ten unfavorable perceptions. Among young non-Christians, nine out of the top 12 perceptions were negative, including perceptions that present-day Christianity is judgmental (87%), hypocritical (85%), old-fashioned (78%) and too involved in politics (75%). The most common favorable perceptions were that Christianity teaches the same basic ideas as other religions (82%), has good values and principles (76%), is friendly (71%) and is a faith they respect (55%).

Even among young Christians, many of the negative images generated significant traction. Half of young churchgoers said they perceive Christianity to be judgmental, hypocritical and too political. One third said it was old-fashioned and out of touch with reality. —Highway church bulletin, Sullivan, 10/14/07

(NOTE: While the above is disturbing, it is equally disturbing that many preachers and church leaders will seek to compromise Scripture in order to better "fit in")

"The End is Near"

A local priest and pastor stood by the side of the road holding up a sign that said, "The End is Near! Turn yourself around now before it's too late!" They planned to hold up the sign to each passing car. "Leave us alone, you religious nuts!" yelled the first driver as he sped by. From around the curve they heard a big splash. "Do you think," said one clergy to the other, "we should just put up a sign that says 'bridge out' instead?"

RULES FOR GROWING CHRISTIANS

1. Don't neglect your Bible. It is your sword for conquest, your hammer for construction, your guiding light (Rev. 1:3).
2. Don't neglect your prayer time. It is the breath of the soul (Luke 18:1).
3. Don't neglect your worship. It is your greatest opportunity to express your thanksgiving before your Savior (Philippians 3:3).

4. Don't neglect your part in the church. It is your heavenly family upon the earth, and you help it to thrive (Ephesians 4:11-16).
 5. Don't neglect your kindness to others. It is how we show the love of Christ flowing through us (Hebrews 13:16).
 6. Don't neglect your body. It is the capital on which you will do the Lord's business the rest of your life (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).
 7. Don't neglect your mind. It is the seat of creativity and inner strength (Philippians 4:8).
 8. Don't neglect your laugh. It is the medicine that will help keep your heart healthy and happy (Proverbs 17:22).
 9. Don't neglect your reputation. It is what people will be thinking of when they hear your name (Matthew 5:14-16).
 10. Don't neglect your duty of the Great Commission. It is how people are led to Christ (Matthew 28:19-20).
- Yorktown Rd. church, Logansport, IN Bulletin

“I will praise thee, O LORD, among the people: and I will sing praises unto thee among the nations. For thy mercy is great above the heavens: and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds” (Psalms 108:3-4).

- **WELCOME** to today’s Bible class and/or worship assembly. If you are a VISITOR, we especially appreciate your joining us in worship and in study of God’s word. It is our hope that you will return at every opportunity. If we can assist you in your walk with the Lord, feel free to contact us.
- **“I AM THE WAY, TRUTH AND LIFE”**—another in our series on **“John, the Theologian”**—will be this morning’s message. The reading will be John 14:1-6. The evening lesson, another in our series in **Ephesians**, will be, **“The Mystery,”** and Ephesians 3:1-13 will be the reading. For the best understanding, I suggest that you read this passage this afternoon.
- **NEXT SUNDAY morning**, the message will be another of Jesus’ **“I AM”** statements: **“I Am the Resurrection and Life”**, with John 11:19-27 as the reading. The **evening** lesson will be, **“A Prayer for Believers,”** and Ephesians 3:13-21 will be the reading.
- **BIBLE CLASSES: Wednesday** evening’s study will begin with XXXII-8 of the latest lessons sheet in our study of the history of the church. Extra copies should be available this morning on the literature table. **Next Sunday**, our study should be near the middle of Acts 17, depending upon this morning’s progress.
- **PRAYER CONCERNS:** Paul continues to have both good days and bad days. *** Lyla’s hip problem has become more painful. *** Continue to remember Dean, Inez, Doris, Lester, Woody, Boyd’s brother (Vic), Charles Moore (Tex.), Lewis Carter (Ind.), our service men and women, and our nation’s and world’s leaders as they seek a way for peace. Above all, pray that more will seek and find Him who is the Prince of Peace.

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