

The Servant



Newsletter for Under-Shepherds and other Servants of God /5523 Newberry Drive/Raleigh, NC 27609

Vol.12 No.2

March 2002

The purpose of this newsletter is to pass along information and ideas to help the Lord's servants as they minister to others. Feel free to use any of it in your ministry

Playing Around.

There was music and excitement, a large and enthusiastic crowd engaged in religious activities, and what many might call "worship." If ever there was an example of people "playing church," it was Israel dancing before the golden calf. "*And they rose up early on the morrow...and they rose up to play.*" (Ex.32:6). There are still a lot of people playing church. They may even rise up early every Sunday and bring their offerings, but I am afraid it is all just rising up "to play."

When people are playing church they are usually very excited about what they are doing, what they have made, and what they have done. They talk a lot about "our church," or "my church." They want you to "come and visit" it. They will talk about "their pastor," or "their youth" or their "music ministry." Even if they talk about "what God is doing," what they really mean is "what they are doing." It is exciting. (*cont. on back*)

Greater than Moses


Moses broke the tablets in anger and in disappointment. He ground up the idolatrous calf into powder and made all Israel drink it. Moses, although meek, was just a man. "*The law came by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.*" Many would take our sins and force them down our throats. They are quick to point to the law of Moses and underscore the fact that "*such should be stoned*" (Jn. 8:5). Jesus would not disagree with Moses. But instead of stoning us, he saves us. Instead of grinding up our sins, (golden calf and all) rubbing our faces in it, or making us drink it, or eat the dirt, he grinds it up and drinks it for us. He took the awful cup. The cup he spoke of in the garden was an awful and loathsome thing. In a sense, my sin was in that cup, and so was yours. He tasted death for every man. He died for me. "*If it be possible let this cup pass from me, yet not my will, but thine be done,*" he prayed in Gethsemane. The name "Gethsemane" means Olive Press. The press and the weight that he felt that night cannot be imagined, except when I begin to count my own sins. He bore our griefs and carried our sorrows. Some were disappointed there was no "hanging" or stoning that day. Instead, Jesus turned to the broken hearted woman and

Foot

"I will make the place of my feet glorious." (Isa. 60:13).

Jesus is the head, and this is Headship. However, we show that we understand headship by finding a place at his feet. "I will make the place of my feet glorious." Too many times we want to push our way into the boardroom of God's corporation wanting to find out what God plans to do. We want to sit at the conference table more than at the communion table. In the church we want to be at the head more than at the feet. He said, "I will make the place of my feet glorious."

We disciples get into the most trouble when we hover too high and try to influence the plans of God. We come with our five-year and ten-year plans and roll them out before the Almighty like so many blueprints to a housing project, and then press him even with our prayers. How much better to believe that He already has plans for us, how much better to find a place at his feet, and wait on him to speak. The place of his feet is glorious. Mary knew it was so. That is where we often find her (Lk. 10:39). Martha was fuming in the kitchen trying to make Christ's supper.

May I begin each day at his feet and trust that the head knows what it is doing. "I will make the place of my feet glorious." 

SWORD

Only God can whet the edge
Of steel that's made of light
Or sharp the word that is his pledge
To pierce the wrong with right

This gleaming polished saber
This Holy Spirit sword
Is faith's most trusted neighbor
And is close, as is the LORD

Sharper still more powerful
Than any two edged sword
To us a thing most beautiful
But fear to evil's hoard

There is no other weapon
With this the only goal
To heaven sinners beckon
And save the sinner's soul

Playing Around (cont.)

The disciples were impressed with the temple. "The disciples came to him for to shew him ..." (Mt. 24:1). They were impressed because it was something they (Israel) had done. Never mind that Herod had his hand in it. Never mind it was built with "Tobacco money." Jesus was not impressed. They wanted to show him the "buildings." What a sense of pride wells up in us when we drive by the "buildings." Buildings are something "we" build. Pride is found in what "we" have done. Today, God does not dwell in buildings made with hands (Acts 17:24). "Look at these great stones," said the disciples. Jesus, unimpressed, predicted that it would all be "thrown down."

The woman at the well knew how to play the religion game. "You worship on this mountain, but our fathers worship on that mountain," she explained to the Jewish stranger. "The day is coming," said Jesus, "when it will be neither here nor there" (paraphrase), "but they that worship will worship in spirit and in truth." Spirit and truth is never about what we have done. It is always about what God has done. Spirit and truth is not about "our ministry," it is about our Master. The golden calf was something they did.

Golden calves make few demands on us. They are stupid and dead things. Oh yes, we might contribute a little gold, a ring or an earring, but it is all for show. Ananias and Sapphira knew how the game was played (Acts 5:2). What they didn't know was that God was not playing games. The ironic thing about playing church is that it is much more expensive than people realize. Cathedrals were never God's idea. Church spires originally said "Look at God." Soon competition to have the highest steeple began to say "Look at us." It is all very costly in the end. Golden calves reflect our experience, or our imagination, or our desires, not God's. Golden calves provide millions of people with a false assurance that everything is "alright." "Make us gods, which shall go before us," they told Aaron.

Egypt was the land of a million idols. While faith endures "as seeing him who is invisible," religion must have its icons and its idols. The crypts and tombs of Egypt are covered with

grotesque images of their gods "so-called." God is immortal and invisible. He defies all attempts to make, fashion, or contain him, and prohibits all such attempts with the second commandment.

God is a Spirit. People cannot manufacture and market a Spirit. That is why religion prefers crosses and relics, rosaries, and Saint Christophers. Money can be made by selling images of Dianna the goddess of Ephesus, or little plastic Jesus' to put on our dashboards. Religion cannot wait for God. That is why many "worship" on Saturday night so "their" Sundays are free, or go to early mass. The Lord's day is filled with our things instead of God's. "We cannot wait for this Moses fellow." Aaron had a way with words, but he had trouble waiting for God's Word.

Instead of the golden calf, how much better to wait on God who will show us the Way. How much better to wait until we hear him say "do this."

There are many assemblies, but there is only one church. I have no bone to pick with those who insist they must worship here or there as I am not the judge of another man's servant. What is the real object of another's worship is something that only God can really know. What I do know is that it is easy for me to fall into "outward form of godliness, while denying the power thereof." It is easier for me to play church than it is to worship. It is easier for me to play than it is for me to pray. It is easier for me to get more excited about what I am doing than what God has done. And so, I must come often to the foot of the mount and wait for God. I must wait for the Word to come from above. I must not become impatient and forge ahead making molten calves, even if they appear golden and impressive. I must make sure the object of my devotion is nothing less than God himself. I must look to the one who is both the Sheep and the Shepherd, the Lord Jesus. ☹

Greater than Moses (cont.)

asked, "Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee?" "Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more." May we hate the sin but love the sinner. May we know the one who is greater than Moses. May we know the law, but may we also know grace and truth. ☹

Glory? (Ex. 33:18)

Golden calves are not always made of gold. Sometimes they are of baser metals. May God help us to recognize golden calves when we see them. A golden calf can be in the form of a "ministry," or "mission." We might even embarrass God by calling it a "spiritual gift" when it is no such thing. I am aware that it can even be fashioned into a "newsletter" like this one (God deliver me from such idolatry). My words are nothing when compared to the Word. Moses had enough of golden calves. He prayed "I beseech thee, show me Thy glory." May that be every servant's prayer! ☹

He Is

He is the Alpha and Omega
The beginning and the end
The Holy Son of God
And yet the sinner's friend

He is the lily of the valley
He is the bright and morning star
He is the only begotten Son of God
Who came from heaven far

He is the bread, the doctor,
He is Salvation's door
He is the Prince of Peace
He is the end to war

He is the Root of Jesse
The King of Kings and more
He is the perfect Lamb of God
He alone fulfilled God's law

He was wounded for my transgressions
Bruised for my iniquity
He is more than all my possessions
For on the cross he died for me

He is the Rock of Ages
He is the corner stone
He was the Theme of all the Sages
And one day He'll take me Home



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