



Rockwood Church of Christ

The Proclaimer

February 19, 2017

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Deacons:

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Steve McCreary

Minister:

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Service Times:

Sunday

Bible Study 10 am
Worship Service 10:45 am
Worship Service 6 pm

Wednesday

Bible Study 7:30 pm

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WHERE WERE YOU WHEN GOD WANTED TO BLESS YOU?

“Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of hosts” (Zechariah 1:3).

When a storm devastates a neighborhood, a drunk driver destroys an entire family, or a gunman kills unsuspecting children, someone is sure to cry, “Where was God when this happened?” Zechariah might answer, “Where were you when God wanted to bless you?”

Many seem to live as if they consider God their servant – a miracle worker to be on hand when troubles mount, and out of sight when life goes smoothly. But God is *“not far from every one of us” (Acts 17:27)*. His evidence is in the sky, the trees and flowers, the air we breathe, the water we drink and the food we eat. And every evidence of Him calls us to seek Him and to know Him.

When we find Him in the Book which He has given, we are taught to respect, worship and serve Him. How can we recognize the existence and power that created the earth and sustains our lives with air, food and water, and still think that He is at our beck and call?

Mother said we could have dessert after we ate our vegetables. We may not have liked it, but we understood it. Shouldn't we also believe and obey God when He calls us to turn to Him so He can bless us?

Al Pa

SACKCLOTH AND ASHES

Did you ever wear a starchy feed sack shirt? (I mean a real one, not the store-bought kind you see now-a-days). Scratchy, ain't they? Can't you just imagine one made out of tow sack? (Grass-sack, for some of us). Well, wearing sackcloth had a special meaning at one time.

King Ahab, stirred by Jezebel, was an evil man. But when Elijah told him the dogs would eat Jezebel, he *“rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly.”* And God said, *“because he humbled himself before me”* judgment upon his house will be postponed. **(I Kings 21:27-29).**

When Mordecai wished to mourn the plight of the Jews, he *“put on sackcloth with ashes, and went out into the midst of the city, and cried with a bitter cry.”* **(Esther 4:1-f).**

Then, in Nineveh, when the people heard the prophet foretell their doom they *“proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth”* and Jesus said *“they repented at the preaching of Jonas.”* **(Matthew 12:41).**

Humility (of self-censure), mourning, submissiveness, and the like are graphically represented in this early wearing of *“sackcloth and ashes.”* It was clearly, *“I am nothing – my former robes of purple (Isaiah 37:1) were but tents of pride – I need help.”* Little wonder such conduct was associated with repentance – and Christ could say of Tyre and Sidon, *“they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.”* **(Matthew 11:21).** Abject humility, while not “repentance,” is certainly an essential ingredient. We wonder if the whole of *“sackcloth and ashes”* should not also be included?

It is not the symbol itself to which we refer. We suspect many would wear the sack, who had not yet put on the things for which it stood. But when we see the casual way in which repentance is treated – a sort of academic pause between faith and baptism – there is little resemblance to the spirit of *“sackcloth and ashes.”* The substance should far surpass the shadow – must do so if it is real. Do you see such *“fruits meet for repentance”* today? (Note **Matthew 4:8**).

Years ago a young lady came forward, wanting to be baptized. I said something about the joy she must feel in knowing that her sins could be washed away; and she looked at me in astonishment. “Sins???” She seemed shocked that I would suggest such a thing. That is *“sackcloth and ashes?”* A backsliding saint is encouraged to “make correction.” His situation is an embarrassing one, and makes for a “sticky situation” among friends, so he “comes back to the church,” or he “makes acknowledgement” to the church. This is *“sackcloth and ashes”* before the Lord? Are we kidding ourselves?

Our inability to see and judge the heart of man should provoke charity; and I am aware that external signs and symbols may be most hypocritical. This article is completely misunderstood if you think I am calling for “demonstrations” of repentance. But I challenge you to consider the lesson contained in the ancient *“sackcloth and ashes”* and apply it to your life.

Robert Turner