

THE PARISH REGISTER

St. Andrews-Cheney Memorial Church

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Illusions and Reality

St. Paul wrote two letters to the church in Thessalonica, a city in Macedonia. The apostle wrote to remind them how they were taught to live and should continue to live as Christians. This exhortation was important because those believers lived in a society that had sunk to the depths of degradation. That was especially true in the area of sexual ethics, which is why St. Paul said, "For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from unchastity; that each one of you know how to take a wife for himself in holiness and honor, not in passion of lust like heathen who do not know God...." (1 Thess. 4:3-5)

We live in a society that is strikingly similar to the Greco-Roman world of the First Century. Like the Thessalonians we too need a clear understanding of what is Christian morality and what is not.

The first principle we must understand is that Christian moral standards come from God. St. Paul wrote, "Therefore whoever disregards this, disregards not man but God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you." (1 Thess. 4:8) Our moral standards are not mere convention, i.e., not something man and society have contrived. Christian ethics is based on God's character; His own moral attributes. It is God who made us and who knows what is best for us. God created us to be like Himself. When we stray from God's blueprint things do not work well.

Since morality is based on the nature of God, and God's nature does not change, moral standards do not change. Simply put this means that there are moral absolutes. This is in stark contrast to the world that tells us that moral standards are always changing and are not the same for all people.

As Christians it is important for us to know how sin attracts and deceives people. There is no originality in Satan or sin. Satan cannot create

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something new. C. S. Lewis in writing about evil said, "Goodness is, so to speak, itself; badness is only spoiled goodness... Evil is a parasite, not an original thing." All Satan is able to do is take something good which God created and pervert it.

All that sin offers is an illusion. It can only mimic the good; it cannot produce true good. The devil makes great promises, but he cannot deliver on his promises. He promised freedom to Adam and Eve. The freedom Satan promised was in reality slavery.

In his first letter to the Thessalonians St. Paul wrote mainly about sexual ethics. He did so because sexual immorality was a serious problem in that society, as it is in our own. Here also Satan is the master illusionist. Sexual license offers freedom and liberation, happiness and self-expression. The reality of a licentious lifestyle is quite the opposite of the illusion. It is a life of slavery to one's passions. Those who follow this path reach the point where they are unable to maintain meaningful and lasting relationships. This is true because other people are transformed into objects whose only value is the temporary pleasure they may provide.

Was St. Paul saying that sex is evil? Certainly not. Sex was created by God and everything God created is good. It is the misuse and perversion of good that constitutes evil. As Lewis said, evil is only "spoiled goodness."

St. Paul gives the believer a strong warning not to be led astray. Lot, Abraham's nephew, is a prime example of a person drifting from the right path. There were basically three steps in Lot's downfall. It began when Lot looked in the direction of Sodom. "And Lot lifted up his eyes, and saw that the Jordan valley was well watered everywhere like the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, in the direction of Zoar; this was before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorra. So Lot chose for himself all the Jordan valley, and Lot journeyed east; thus they separated from each other." (Gen. 13:10,11) Next, we see Lot getting closer; he, "...moved his tent as far as

Sodom." (Gen. 13:12) The final step took place when we read that Lot, "dwelt in Sodom...." (Gen. 14:12) Lot was attracted, he moved closer and closer, and finally was a resident of Sodom.

When Lot separated from Abraham and moved toward Sodom he was a wealthy man. After Sodom Lot lived in a cave. (Gen. 19:30) Sin offers us much, but it only takes; we become less.

Lot's foolish decision not only effected him adversely, but his entire family. His wife was so hesitant to leave Sodom that she lost her life. Lot's daughters had become so polluted by Sodom that they thought it perfectly acceptable for them to deceive their father into committing incest. Our decisions and behavior will have an impact on others.

When it comes to moral standards to whom are we listening? Are we being guided by TV, movies, pop culture and music or are we guided by the One who made us and knows what is best for us? Sin and Satan offer us an illusion, not reality. God gives us what is true and good. Real beauty and happiness are only available as we obey the Lord.

by Rev. F. M. Levi

Parish News

ST. ANDREW'S WEB SITE

(<http://andrewrec.org>)

The webmaster, Mark Levi, has been doing a complete makeover of our parish web site. Among the changes and improvements are the following:

- Streaming audio of Morning Prayer on Holy Innocents Day, December 28, 2003. Eventually we plan to add streaming video, plus additional services.
- Parish Registers dating back to 1996, 77 issues, are presently on-line. More past issues are being added.

A search engine has been installed which makes it possible to type in a keyword and find it anywhere in the web site as well as in back issues of the Parish Register. This is a great asset to those wishing to research a topic or the history of the parish.

We would also like to invite you to subscribe to AndrewREC.org. Those who do will get e-mail updates when the current monthly issue of the Parish Register is placed on the web site. Included in the e-mail will be links directly to the current issue of the Parish Register, one to a HTML version, another to a hi-res color PDF, and a third to a low-res black and white PDF. To receive this service send your e-mail address to: subscribe@andrewrec.org. Please include your mailing address.

CITY WATER

The rusty well water is gone. St. Andrew's has finally been hooked up to city water and sewer. This has been a long process and we are thankful that it is now complete.

LENTEN SERVICES

Lent began on Ash Wednesday, February 25, 2004. We continue the observance of Lent with a soup supper at 6:30 p.m. in the Parish Hall followed by worship in the chapel at 7:30 p.m. on Wednesdays. All of you are encouraged to attend.

CHURCH DIRECTORY

We would like to begin including e-mail addresses in the parish's phone directory. Please send your e-mail address to: franklevi@andrewrec.org

APRIL PARISH REGISTER

The deadline for the inclusion of announcements or news items in the next Parish Register is April 8, 2004. Please send information to the Church office.

MISSIONARY OF THE MONTH



Pray for Bishop Oommen Samuel, his wife Mary and their children Susan and Brian. Reformed Episcopal Mission. Lalitpur, IND

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!

March 1 - Dale Muir
 March 3 - Holly Ardizzone
 March 5 - Ian Christenson
 March 9 - Allison Klingen
 March 12 - Amy Christenson
 March 26 - William Burdette



CONGRATULATIONS!

Adam Sellers & Lisa Hoppenrath were united in marriage at St. Andrew's on Saturday, January 10, 2004. Adam is the son of Franklin & Loretta Sellers of this parish. The wedding ceremony was conducted by Adam's grandfather The Rt. Rev. Franklin H. Sellers.



MARCH 2004 CHURCH CALENDAR

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3 Dinner 6:30 pm Evening Service 7:30 pm <i>Ember</i>	4	5 <i>Ember</i>	6 <i>Ember</i>
7 2nd Sunday In Lent SS - 9:30 am HC - 10:30 am	8	9	10 Dinner 6:30 pm Evening Service 7:30 pm	11	12	13
14 3rd Sunday In Lent SS - 9:30 am MP - 10:30 am <i>Bake Sale</i>	15	16	17 Dinner 6:30 pm Evening Service 7:30 pm <i>St. Patrick's Day</i>	18	19	20 <i>1st Day of Spring</i>
21 4th Sunday In Lent SS - 9:30 am HC - 10:30 am <i>Women's Guild</i>	22	23	24 Dinner 6:30 pm Evening Service 7:30 pm	25 <i>The Annunciation of the Blessed Virgin Mary</i>	26	27
28 5th Sunday In Lent SS - 9:30 am MP - 10:30 am	29	30	31 Dinner 6:30 pm Evening Service 7:30 pm			