

The South Florida Avenue MESSENGER

A Friendly Church With a Vital Message Proclaiming the Unsearchable Riches of the Lord Jesus.
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SUNDAY SERVICES

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

WEDNESDAY

Ladies Class.....10:00 a.m.
Bible Study.....7:00 p.m.

HOME OF

Florida School of Preaching
since 1969

MISSION FIELDS

Dub Hill.....Russia
Don Iverson.....India
Marc Veary.....Malawi, Africa
Graham McDonald..Scotland
J. Paguaga.....Honduras, C.A.
Joey Treat.....Pacific Islands
Ted Wheeler.....Ghana, W.A.

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IN
SEARCH
OF THE LORD'S WAY

Sundays @ 8:30 a.m. Check local listings

*6 Fat Tuesday*9*

Man-Made Religion Gone Gluttonous

Brian R. Kenyon

Tuesday, March 13, 2018, is known in some parts of the country as “Fat Tuesday.” A preacher from Florida learned about this day through an interesting experience. Several years ago he and his family lived in Louisiana, along the banks of the Bayou Teche. One Wednesday night, he stopped by the grocery store as he often did on the way home from midweek Bible study. As he was waiting in line to check out, he saw an acquaintance, who had a black smudge across his forehead. The preacher debated within himself whether he should say something or just let it slide. Finally, he put himself in the place of his acquaintance, figuring “whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them” (Mt. 7:12), and determined to say something. The preacher said, “Excuse me, sir, you seemed to have brushed up against something dirty that left a spot on your forehead.” The older man answered angrily, “Don’t you know this is Ash Wednesday!?” The preacher thought, “Ash Wednesday, what in the world is that?” Then he investigated.

“Ash Wednesday”

Immediately Follows “Fat Tuesday”

As the preacher investigated, he learned that, according to Roman Catholic tradition, “Ash Wednesday” is the day that “Lent” begins. “Lent” is a forty day period of “penitence and restraint” on bodily appetites that ends at the beginning of “Easter week.” It turns out that in the case of the preacher’s acquaintance, the Roman Catholic priest had to smear ashes, a sign of remorse and penitence, on the foreheads of his parishioners in order for them to be blessed in their observance of “Lent.” The idea behind “Fat Tuesday” (better known as *Mardi Gras*) is to splurge the day before one begins the forty day period of “penitence and restraint.” Thus, the celebration on Tuesday often involves all-out gluttony, whether in the form of uncontrolled feasting, drunkenness, and/or sexual promiscuity. “Fat Tuesday” is another example of how false religion can influence entire generations to fulfill the lusts of their flesh, all in “good conscience.” This is not to say that everything associated with present day *Mardi Gras* is sinful. There are cultural activities involved that are not sinful. However, many in this world still live by the fleshly gratifying *Mardi Gras* philosophy.

(continued on page 2)

A Period of “Penitence and Restraint”?

The forty days of “Lent” being set apart as an obligated period of “penitence and restraint” is wrong for at least two reasons. First, it implies that practicing self-control is not as important at other times of the year. Such, however, could not be further from the truth. True religion teaches that self-control is to be a way of life. Peter wrote, “But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love” (2 Pet. 1:5-7). Each of these “Christian graces” is a necessary element that all Christians must possess and in which all Christians must grow throughout their lives (cf. 2 Pet. 3:18). The word “self-control [temperance, KJV]” means to master or restrain self. Self-control is to be practiced at all times, not just during a forty day period in the year! Note also that among the “fruit of the Spirit” is “self-control [temperance, KJV]” (Gal. 5:23). Again, the “fruit of the Spirit” is to be produced all year, not just during a forty day period. Self-control must always be a life-long practice!

Second, “Lent” is a man-made substitution. By what authority do we reduce God’s instructions for a life of self-control to only a forty-day period per year? Paul addressed man-made substitution for God’s instruction:

Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—²¹“Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,” ²²which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men? ²³These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh. (Col. 2:20-23)

The three “do nots” were not a reference to smoking or chewing tobacco, but they were part of a philosophy later known as asceticism, which taught the more one denied his “flesh,” the more spiritual he was. This same philosophy bred the monastic system of the Middle Ages, where “monks” would seclude themselves in monasteries. Some would literally starve themselves, poke out their eyes, and cut off their hands (and other unmentionable body parts), thinking this made them more spiritual. Paul called this foolishness “self imposed religion ... false humility, and neglect of the body”! There is no substitute for converting the mind, and “bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:5)!

God Does Not Give License to Sin

The idea that it is acceptable to uncontrollably let ourselves go in fulfilling every desire of the flesh because we are about to enter into a forty day period of “penitence and restraint” flies in the face of our Lord’s will. Our minds should never be focused on the lusts of the flesh (Rom. 8:5-8). Rather, our sights should be set on the “things of the Spirit” (Mt. 6:33; Col. 3:1-2). Given the idea behind “Fat Tuesday” (*Mardi Gras*), it should be no surprise that

many sins are encouraged and committed during this time. However, Paul still says, “do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh” (Gal. 5:13). Peter still says that we must not use our liberty as a “cloak for vice [maliciousness, KJV]” (1 Pet. 2:16). It is never right to do wrong (cf. Rom. 3:8)!

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. ⁶For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. ⁷Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. ⁸So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. ⁹But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. (Romans 8:5-9)

Conclusion

As with Christmas and other holidays, it is not inherently sinful to participate in the cultural, non-religious aspects of *Mardi Gras* (as long as those aspects do not violate God’s will) such as parades, throwing and catching beads, eating “king cakes,” etc., but it is always sinful to live by the lusts of the flesh, even for a day (cf. Rom. 6:1-2; 1 Jn. 2:15-17). Let us not think we have to “sow wild oats” before we can serve God and sow the Gospel seed. ♥ Brian

SFA FAMILY MATTERS

Prayer List

Our Members: Bobby Simpson is home from the hospital recuperating. Carol Eason is in Lakeland Regional Hospital. No visitors at this time, she is in isolation. She would love phone calls, ext. 4016. Shannon Chisholm was home sick. Please remember Faith West, Bill Long, Wanda Bruno, Ginny Hamby, Jim Turner, Brenda Mask and Margaret Coone in prayer.

Shut In Members: Virginia Plumlee, Dick & Joyce Burbage, Don Starks, Evelyn Wyatt and Sharon Edler.

Others: Lynn Stevens, Bob McAnally, Jerry Cole, Joan Shanes, (Jeanelle Thrower's sister in law), Janet Hyder, Doris Smith, Joyce Stearsman and Jack Pinckert

Upcoming Events

Sunday Feb. 11th: Senior Saints outing to hear the Lakeland Symphony Orchestra at the Branscomb Auditorium at Florida Southern College. Program is from 2:30 to 4:00 p.m. Meet at the church parking lot at 1:30 to car pool. Anyone is welcome!

Sunday February 11th: Elders/Deacons Meeting at 4:30 p.m.

Tuesday, February 13th: Valentine's Day Banquet at 6:00 p.m. All adults member's are invited. The men of the congregation will be cooking for the women. The meal will be provided. Nursery will be provided by our teens. Please sign up on bulletin board and list the number attending and how many children need baby-sitting.

Saturday February 17th: Men's breakfast here at SFA. at 8:00 a.m.

Sunday February 18th: Teacher Workshop from 2:00-5:00 p.m for all those teaching next quarter from March-May.

Thank You Notes

I would like to thank everyone for the cards, letters and prayers. My progress is slow but with all the encouragement everyone has given me, I know I can do this.

In Christian love, Wanda Bruno

Thank you for the cards, prayers and visits during my illness.

The Wyatt family

Placed Membership

Carol Pace has requested to place membership with us here.

Visitors

Michael Edwards, Bitsy Thomas, Teresa Reeves, Kaylen Reeves, Mary Moore, Becky Borders and Kimberly Borders.



Sunday Fellowship Meal



Special Worship Schedule

Every last Sunday of the month, starting on March 25th, we will have morning worship, then a fellowship meal and go right into our 2nd worship service. At the fellowship meal, we will celebrate Birthdays and Anniversaries for the month.

SCHEDULED TO SERVE

February

David Anderson **Table** David Williams
Paul Romine **Assist** Robert Cooper

Sunday, February 11, 2018
9:30 A.M.

Song at Bible Class..... Stacey Paulin
Prayer David Anderson

10:30 A.M.

Announcements Fred Strickland
Song Leader..... Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer..... Wayne Shearer
Sermon..... Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer C.J. Grimes
Sound Booth..... Tucker Sweeney

6:00 P.M.

Song Leader..... Kyle Williams
Opening Prayer..... Steve Hunley
Sermon..... Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer C. J. Grimes
Sound Booth..... Tucker Sweeney
Greeters Debra/Melissa
Att. Cards..... Paul/Sebastian
Open & Close Building Bobby Sheumaker

Wednesday, February 14, 2018

Song Leader..... Ken Walker
Opening Prayer..... David Williams
Closing Prayer..... Paul Romine

Please meet in the library. If you cannot serve, please call Chuck Wyatt so he can get a replacement - (863) 602-9005

Sunday, February 18, 2018
9:30 A.M.

Song at Bible Class..... Jim Turner
Prayer Fred Strickland

10:30 A.M.

Announcements Fred Strickland
Song Leader..... Jason Hendrix
Opening Prayer..... C.J. Grimes
Sermon..... Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer John McShane
Sound Booth..... Paul Sweeney

6:00 P.M.

Song Leader..... Kyle Williams
Opening Prayer..... Paul Romine
Sermon..... Hiram Kemp
Closing Prayer David Deal
Sound Booth..... Paul Sweeney
Greeters..... Bingles
Att. Cards..... Antonio/Paul
Open & Close Building Bobby Sheumaker

Wednesday, February 21, 2018

Song Leader..... Steve Hunley
Opening Prayer..... Wayne Shearer
Closing Prayer..... Ken Walker

~ HOW ARE WE GIVING ~

Jan. 14..... \$5,421.19
Jan. 21..... \$5,223.60
Jan. 28..... \$5,099.75
Feb. 04..... \$7,286.45
Contribution Average..... \$5,811.44
2018 Weekly Budget..... \$4,716.51

Are We Devoted to the Apostles' Doctrine?

Luke summarized the first church of Christ, established in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost following the resurrection of Christ: "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers" (Acts 2:42). The term, "continued steadfastly," is translated from a Greek word that means to be devoted (Acts 1:14; 2:46; 6:4; Rom. 12:12). There are four specific things to which these early church members were devoted. In this article, we will examine the first. They were devoted to the "apostles' doctrine," which refers to a specific body of inspired instruction. The apostles were the only teachers this early, and they exercised the Great Commission (cf. Mt. 28:19-20). In time, apostolic teaching took written form (cf. 1 Cor. 14:37). It is the duty of all converts (disciples) to learn and abide in the apostles' doctrine (cf. 1 Cor. 15:1-2). The first century church abided in this doctrine, which is described in a number of ways, including "sound doctrine" (2 Tim. 4:3), the "doctrine of Christ" (2 Jn. 9), and even "preaching Jesus" (Acts 5:42; 8:35). If there was a command to assemble "daily" for study of God's word this early in the church's history, it is not recorded. However, these Christians knew they needed to learn (Mt. 5:6), so they did assemble daily (Acts 2:46)! We have a great advantage over the first century church in that we have abundant access to God's written word (cf. Jas. 1:25). How important is the "apostles' doctrine" to us? What are we doing to show our daily devotion to the apostles' doctrine?  *Brian*



South Florida Avenue
CHURCH OF CHRIST
 1807 South Florida Avenue
 Lakeland, FL 33803-2653

Return Service Requested

The End of Your Search for a Friendly Church . . .

Save the Date
March 4-7, 2018
Gospel Meeting with Jody Apple



Think souls! Let's Invite our friends and neighbors to church assemblies and/or to one-on-one Bible studies!

GET INVOLVED Thanks to a lot of people working behind the scenes, there are plenty good works and activities going on with the South Florida Ave church of Christ. Now is the time to "let your light so shine"!

Set to Go!
Feb. 23-25, 2018
YES Weekend
 Forrest Park, Valdosta



Pray as we gear-up for another YES II mission trip to Boquete, Panama, June 1-9, 2018. Our young people and their chaperones will be giving out tracts, inviting people to a Gospel meeting, and conducting Bible studies.

Let us continue to pray for our young people as they prepare for the Lads to Leaders convention in Orlando. What they are doing is not easy but rewarding!

