

RELIGION

'SNEAKY' A CLASS ACT

Parable of the Sower

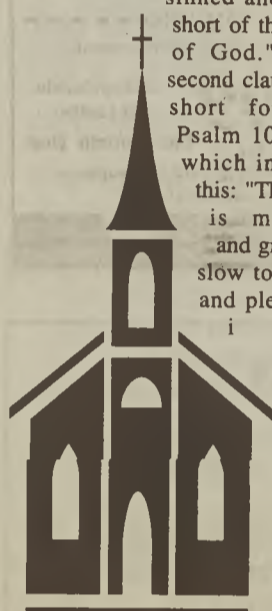
Sunday school lesson

Devotional reading: Ephesians 4:25-5:2
Lesson scripture: Matthew 18:21-35

"To forgive what he or she did to me is just impossible. It's too much to expect of any human being."

Most of us have heard something like that more than once, and perhaps we have even said it ourselves. And it is not all wrong. The essayist Alexander Pope was never more right than when he wrote, "To err is human, to forgive divine." The first clause is a short

form of Romans 3:23: "For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God." The second clause is a short form of Psalm 103:8-13 which includes this: "The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in



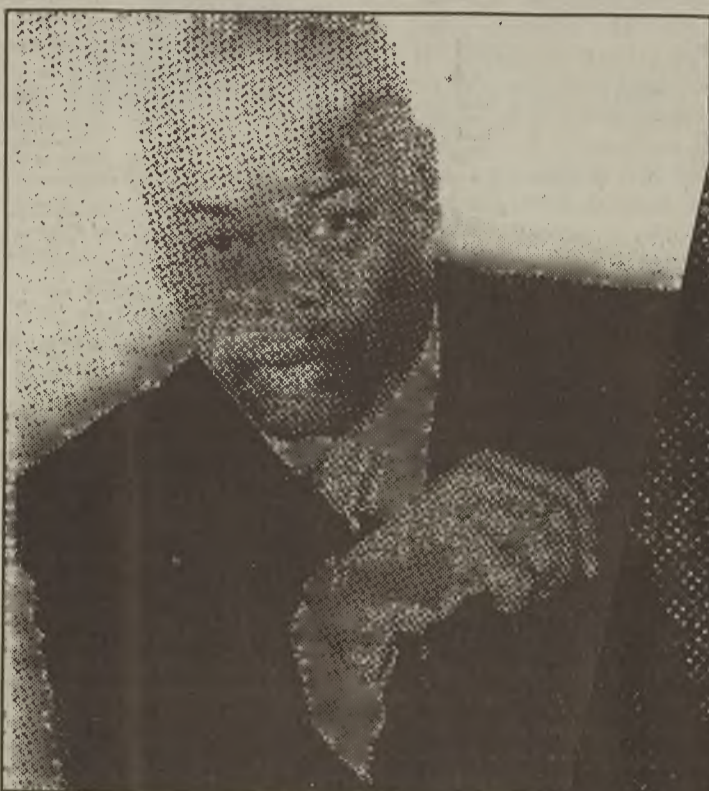
mercy...As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us."

Forgiveness is a quality of God, who cannot tolerate wickedness, but who can remove it by forgiving the penitent sinner. That divine quality was fully expressed in Jesus, whose mission was to bring God's forgiveness to mankind (Romans 8) and who prayed for His murderers. "Father forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). That divine quality of forgiveness enables the child of God, through the indwelling Holy Spirit, to do what is humanly impossible, even as the dying evangelist Stephen prayed, "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts 7:60).

Genuine forgiveness requires a person to recognize evil for what it is, to reflect the divine abhorrence of wickedness, and yet to throw the mantle of patient love over the confessing offender.

Jesus spoke His parable in reply to a question from the apostle Peter: "How often should I forgive?" The answer in brief was this: "As often as God forgives you." Consider the night when Peter boasted to Jesus, "Though all men shall be offended" (Matthew 26:33). Within a few hours, three times he vehemently denied knowing Jesus. Moments later Peter was weeping, and within hours Jesus was dying. Immediately after the Lord's resurrection, however, Peter was included by name in an invitation to meet Jesus in Galilee (Mark 16:7). Then in Galilee the Lord made a special point of accepting Peter's acknowledgment of personal devotion, and giving to Peter a shepherd's appointment over His flock (John 21:15-17). Peter knew what he was talking about when he preached Christ as Savior, "To give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31). He was not counting the sins, nor worrying whether there would be enough forgiveness to go around.

Pray to forgive
O God, You have made us an Your image, and we praise You. We have marred that likeness in many ways, but especially in our failure to forgive as You have forgiven us. May we see again Your perfect likeness in Jesus our Lord, and may we learn from Him to forgive. Free us, please, from any unforgiving spirit that hinders our being fully forgiven and offering



By Tammie Tolbert
THE CHARLOTTE POST

Laughter and applause filled the air at Owens Auditorium last Sunday as the cast members of the play "Sneaky" gave a standing ovation performance.

The gospel play was well-written by multi-talented playwright Michael Matthews. The music was well-choreographed with the scenes. "I get inspiration for my plays from everyday events and situations that take place in people's lives," Matthews said. "After being inspired, it only takes me a couple of weeks to complete a play; music and all."

"Sneaky's" cast is made up of approximately 20 performers. When asked why they agreed to work in this play, Daniel Webster, who played Cedric responded, "I am happy to have the opportunity to travel with a cast that strives to serve God first and even more importantly I am glad that I can share God's values with other people."

Denise Giles, who played Mother Thomas, said that she likes working with the play because it presents the word of God to people without beating

them over the head. This play was the type of play that puts the meal out on the table, but lets you

decide for yourself if you are going to eat.

An important part of "Sneaky" was to remind people that they are blessed to have good friends who stay by their side and that friendships should not be taken for granted.

Lydia Wright, who played Clarita, provided the audience with a good performance of being a faithful, God-loving, and dedicated wife to Aaron, played by Howard Hewitt. One other glorious fact about Wright was that she had incredible voice range. Her voice inflections combined with her body movements made her character undeniably believable.

Dita Jackson, who played Sharon, also had incredible



can happen to someone if they are sneaky. The play had a very comical way of displaying that the love of money is the root of all evil and that friendship is priceless.



their seats. "Sneaky" was a humorous play in many aspects. Nevertheless, it also touched on the serious issue of what people will do in order to get money.

Overall, the play was very realistic as to what

From left to right, Sneaky principals are playwright Michael Matthews, and actors Howard Hewitt (Aaron) and Margaret Avery (Mrs. Hillcorn).

Eye on Gospel

The People's Choice is the name of the chorale that accompanies Dottie Peoples on record and on the road, and is fast becoming the label to which she has been referred on the gospel scene.

Hits like "On Time God" - off her second album from AIR - have struck a chord with traditional gospel fans. So much so that an Atlanta-based booster club composed of up to 100 fans accompany her on the road to dates in and around Georgia. In January, nearly 50 braved the blizzard of '96 via bus to cheer her on at the 10th Annual Stellar Awards and that night - copping four awards - she indeed became the people's choice. All for the album she

says put her on the gospel map.

Now AIR Records is going all out to capitalize on the momentum with a fourth album, "Count On Me," slated for release at the end of the month. Peoples is calling the project, which was recorded live in Atlanta on Jan. 12, a follow-up to her highly successful "On Time With God."

Peoples wrote two of the cuts and arranged three. Her signature flair is taking old time classics and rearranging them. However, with her latest installment, Peoples alters her characteristic, hard-core traditional style with the inclusion of some contemporary cuts. "It's a different Dottie," she remarks. "People expect me to be all the way

traditional and I am traditional singer, but I also wanted to show some versatility. To let people know that I can do it all." Since signing to the label in 1993-and her debut album, "Dottie Live," which dropped in 1994, Peoples has become AIR's top seller. And while with the success has come greater confidence on stage, she says what is boils down to is that in her own words, "the pressure is on."

She continues: "I had to work harder on the last album, because people are now expecting more."

But it more with her faith than talent that the 40-plus year old divorcee believes she can deliver. "The best is yet to come and we've been called to

do what we've been called to do which is minister. I feel the Lord will take us higher if we stay humble." Peoples is the first of 10 children born in Dayton to a General Motors worker and a homemaker. She started singing in church at the age of 10 in the young adult choir, which is also about the time of her first solo, "Walk Around Heaven." Peoples recalls, "People started shouting and I was so scared that after I got through singing, I ran out of the church."

She's back: Twinkie Clark, known for her cutting edge style, teamed up with two of gospel's finest cutting edge producers - Donald Lawrance and Ben Tankard - for the

project that will mark her re-entry onto the gospel scene later this month. It has been five years since her last release.

Clark, who was dubbed for years as the innovative source behind the Clark Sisters, is presently signed to Tribute Records and is calling her comeback release, "The Masterpiece." Meanwhile, Benson Records is getting set for the March 27 release of "Shakin' the House: Live in L.A." Recorded live at last year's annual Gospel Music Workshop of America meeting in Los Angeles, it features live performances from Yolanda Adams, Hezekiah Walker and his Love Fellowship Crusade and Fred Hammond with Radical for Christ.

It's been a bad year for spiritual leader of Episcopalians

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

CHARLESTON, S.C. - It has been a bad year for the spiritual leader of the nation's 2.5 million Episcopalians, with a scandal involving a top church official, a fierce battle over homosexuality and calls for his resignation.

"It's been the worst year of my ministry," said the Most Rev. Edmond L. Browning. "No doubt about it."

The soft-spoken Browning was here for the weekend installation of a new suffragan

bishop for the Diocese of Charleston.

An outspoken liberal, Browning replaced a more moderate bishop as head of the Episcopal Church 11 years ago.

He has preached against racism and pushed for women's rights. He has also launched a crusade to make the church more welcoming to homosexuals, a move criticized by some church leaders.

Conservative bishops have leveled formal charges against a retired New Hampshire bishop for ordaining a non-

celibate gay deacon six years ago. An ecclesiastical trial is scheduled for later this year.

Seventy-six bishops backed the ecclesiastical charge against the retired bishop, including the present and retired bishops of the Diocese of South Carolina.

There were also calls for Browning's resignation last year when the then national church treasurer admitted stealing more than \$2 million from church accounts.

The Standing Committee of the Diocese of South Carolina declared the church was suf-

fering from a "decisive crisis of confidence."

"The presiding bishop is a hard-working person who has struggled with a very difficult job," said the Rev. Kendall Harmon, rector of St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Summerville. "But you would have to say many of us have been deeply distressed with his leadership."

Browning, in an interview with The (Charleston) Post and Courier, said the scandal involving the former treasurer and the debate about gay rights are legitimate concerns.

But he sees the biblical condemnation of homosexuality in the same light as its endorsement of slavery. Both are ancient laws made untenable by science and modern culture, he said.

Genetics has show homosexuality is inherited, not chosen, he said.

"If it's a genetic matter, doesn't it behoove you to look at it ... in a more tolerant and understanding manner?" he asked.

He said the New Hampshire

See BISHOP page 13A