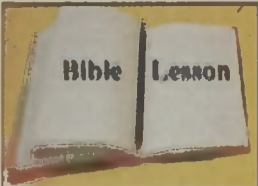


8B

RELIGION

Life 1B



Anointed
Isaiah 61:1-2

Introduced in Isaiah 60, the prophet described the promise of Jehovah to establish a glorious Kingdom. He promised to provide light for those who had been in darkness. People from great distances would come into the Kingdom because the glory of the Lord would be there. God promised the Israelites that the riches of the Gentile nations would become their possessions, and the Gentiles themselves would come unto them, also. As awesome as the description of the glorious Kingdom of Isaiah 60 is, noticeably missing from the description is that of the King of the Kingdom.

Subsequently, this is the beginning of the text for today's lesson. The King of the glorious Kingdom referred to in Isaiah 60 is Christ the Messiah. In fact, Isaiah 61:1-2 was quoted by Jesus in Luke 4:18-19.

One Sabbath day, Jesus entered a synagogue in Nazareth, where He had grown up. After being handed the scroll by the attendant, Jesus read from the Book of Isaiah and quoted this particular passage of Scripture. Jesus then closed the book, and with all eyes fastened on Him, he said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your eyes" (Luke 4:21).

The second portion of Isaiah 61:2, "and the day of vengeance of our God," had not yet occurred, and will not until Jesus returns to the earth again. Many marveled at Jesus's words, but they threw Him out of the synagogue with the intent to throw Him from a hill to His death when Jesus told them God showed grace to the Gentiles.

How interesting it is that, hundreds of years earlier, the prophet Isaiah declared the glorious Kingdom and its King. While Israelites looked forward with great excitement to that day, when the day arrived, they were no more prepared to receive and acknowledge their King than they were when the prophet foretold of His coming.

Although often quoted in the Church, many people overlook the powerful reference it also speaks of the Holy Spirit. The "me" on whom the Spirit is resting refers to Jesus. The reason for the resting of the Holy Spirit upon Christ was because of God's anointing. The word "anointed" in Hebrew is mashach and refers to pouring on oil to set a person apart for a specific office. In the Old Testament, people were appointed to the offices of king, prophet, and priest. Christ's appointment set Him apart to be a Prophet, the High Priest, and the King of kings.

Isaiah described the purpose of Christ's ministry. The primary theme of today's lesson is that Christ was to preach good tidings.

Is Christ slowly being removed from Christmas?



PHOTOWADE NASH

Not too many churches have nativity scenes as a part of their Christmas decorations.

By Cheri F. Hodges
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There's something missing from many area churches: Nativity scenes to illustrate the meaning of the Christmas season.

Riding around Charlotte's black churches, you'll see a wreath on the door, but no manger. Some churches, like Pritchard Memorial Baptist on South Boulevard, are host-

ing a live nativity scene.

Trymaine Gaither of the Church of Philadelphia said people, including Christians have lost the true meaning of Christmas and that's why a lot of people don't feel the Christmas spirit because Christ is missing.

"It's not about a man coming down the chimney, it's about celebrating Jesus' birthday," he said.

"If you're not going to church on Christmas day, then you're celebrating the wrong thing."

In Kentucky, the Rev. Jon Weese of central Kentucky's largest church said that, in canceling worship on Christmas Sunday, its elders "chose to value families; people over policy."

Officials at Southland Christian Church said they received protests

from hundreds of Christians across the nation when word of the closed-on-Christmas decision was reported in the media.

In a sermon interrupted by applause and one standing ovation, Weese said: "I was deeply saddened by the knee-jerk response of the Christian community as a whole to give the benefit of the

Please see NATIVITY/7B

Churches lost to Katrina create gathering

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

PASS CHRISTIAN, Miss.—The thick ring of trees outside the Mt. Zion United Methodist Church is bowed as if the winds from Hurricane Katrina were still blowing. But the tiny building still stands, offering a spiritual sanctuary to its members and worshippers from three other congregations.

Ever since floodwaters leveled this Gulf Coast city of 8,000 people, the church has opened its doors to two Baptist communities and another Methodist congregation, each left without a place to worship. On Christmas, they'll take that act of fellowship a step further.

Congregants from all four churches

will abandon their separate worship schedule and gather for a joint service, determined to summon some holiday spirit despite a season of loss.

"It is going to be different," says the Rev. RoseMary Hayes Williams, pastor at Mt. Zion, "but all the joy will not be taken out of it."

Church has been a refuge in this area still devastated by Katrina, a place where —just this month—authorities found the body of a storm victim.

Williams served as a teacher in the community for nearly three decades but says the damage is so pervasive that she sometimes gets lost driving through neighborhoods because buildings that she once used as land-

marks have been reduced to identical piles of rubble.

Like Mt. Zion, the three visiting congregations — First Missionary Baptist Church, Goodwill Missionary Baptist Church and St. Paul United Methodist Church — were formed more than 100 years ago by freed slaves and their children. All can trace their membership back for generations of the same family.

Gaynell Jones' mother has worshipped at First Missionary for about five decades. Immediately after the hurricane, Jones, who is also a member of the congregation, rushed to the building, climbed atop a mattress and lifted herself through a window to

Please see KATRINA'S/7B

Wal-Mart greeter debunks Christmas rumor

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

GREENWOOD, S.C. — The Rev. Aaron Walker was stunned when he heard the rumor the greeter at the Greenwood Wal-Mart had been fired for wishing customers a "Merry Christmas."

After all, it was his voice that bellows the greeting. And he still has a job.

"It's hard to say what started this rumor. If it were true, I'd be the first one to know," Walker said Monday as he waved to customers coming into the

store. The story that a greeter had been fired for saying "Merry Christmas" instead of a less secular greeting had been passed through the Greenwood area in the past few weeks in e-mails, prayer lists and by residents in restaurants and convenience stores.

How the rumor started, nobody seems to know. But it has been fueled by the recent nationwide media buzz over whether references to Christmas are being taken away from the

holiday celebrated Dec. 25.

Some people got so angry after hearing the story, they threatened to return merchandise, Walker said.

The store has received up to 15 calls a day asking about the rumor, co-manager Kevin Roten said.

"Nobody has ever been terminated from this store for (saying Merry Christmas)," said Roten who added the store has Merry Christmas banners above one entrance.

Greeters can welcome customers however they

wish as long as it isn't offensive, Roten said.

And if for some reason things ever change, Walker, who started out five years ago in hardware and paint but was offered the greeter's job because of his personality, said he won't be at the store any more.

"If someone told me that I couldn't say Merry Christmas, I would quit today," Walker said. "The will of God is to say Merry Christmas, and we must keep Christ in Christmas. If God is not in it, neither am I."

Cop wins \$5.2M in suit

Rights were violated after arrest of two ministers

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW HAVEN, Conn.—A federal jury on Monday awarded \$5.2 million to a police officer who claimed his rights were violated when he was suspended and transferred after he arrested two ministers.

New Haven Officer Arpad Tolnay arrested the Revs. Armando Hernandez and Daniel Rodriguez three years ago after a complaint about a loud revival service at the Second Star of Jacob Church. The situation escalated when Hernandez refused to lower the music.

Tolnay was suspended for 10 days and transferred to a different assignment for seven months, but did not lose his job.

He alleged in his lawsuit that Hernandez and Rodriguez were key supporters of Mayor John DeStefano. The arrests caused a political firestorm, and DeStefano later went to the church to apologize, the New Haven Register reported.

An attorney for former Police Chief Melvin Wearing told the jury that Tolnay was suspended because he was insubordinate to Wearing and stormed out of an August 2002 meeting.

But Tolnay's lawyer, Karen Torre, said he was suspended because he spoke out about his belief that politics were playing a part in the case.

"He's really happy for his fellow officers because he feels it will help them feel free to enforce the law without fear of the political ties of people who are arrested," Torre said Monday.

A spokeswoman for the New Haven police department declined comment.

New Haven Corporation Counsel Tom Ude said the city will ask for a new trial.

"This is a guy who admitted he was insubordinate and then sued, and the jury's verdict is just way out of line with other cases in this state," Ude said. "I think that it just sends the wrong message that you can walk out of a meeting with your boss and then recover money for it."

The jury awarded Tolnay \$903 for out-of-pocket expenses, \$150,000 for injury to his reputation and \$5 million in punitive damages.

CHURCH NEWS

The deadline for church announcements is 5 p.m. Fridays. Fax announcements to (704) 342-2160 or e-mail to cheri.hodges@thecharlottepost.com.

Ongoing
New Outreach/Hoskins Community is seeking donations of turkeys, hams and toys for Christmas Dinners. Donations are being accepted at 3900 Gossett Ave. For more information, call Pastor Brenda Stevenson at (704) 398-1777.

These items will be given out Christmas day

from 12 p.m. 2 p.m.
December 25
New High Springs Baptist Church, located at 811 South Dalton St. in Gastonia, will hold its Christmas Day service at 8:30 a.m. Sunday School will be held at 7:45 a.m.
• University Park Baptist Church will hold services at 7 a.m., 9:30 a.m., and 11:30 a.m. at 6029 Beatties Ford Road and 8:30 a.m. at The Park South, 13733 Lancaster Highway, Pineville.

January 8
Carolina Voices will hold a special audition for singers for "Psalms & Songs of the Ages," the unprecedented concert planned for March 3 and 5, 2006, in collaboration with Discovery Place and The Dead Sea Scrolls exhibit.
This concert will feature the world premieres of two choral works commissioned by Carolina Voices. Up to 20 persons from all voice parts will be added to the Festival Singers for this concert. Singer requirements: The ability to

read music and blend with an ensemble, as well as a commitment to weekly rehearsals on Monday nights from Jan. 9 through Feb. 27.
Candidates should sing a prepared piece of music of their choice that shows their vocal quality, range and artistic expression. A piano accompanist will be provided. Individual auditions will take place beginning at 3 p.m. at Temple Beth El, Shalom Park, 5101 Providence Road. Call Carolina Voices at (704) 374-1564 for an appointment.

