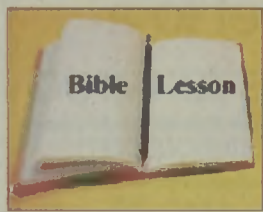


8B

RELIGION

Life 1B



Christian character

Matthew 5:1-12

To Be Lowly and to Mourn (vv. 1-4)

And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him.

Jesus is at the height of His popularity. Large crowds gather to watch Him heal the sick (Matthew 4:23-25). They are also attracted to Jesus because they are astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes (7:28, 29).

When Jesus goes up into a mountain, it could be any of many possible locations in the hills of Galilee. The hilly location perhaps weeds out the people who are merely curious, and it provides a natural amphitheater for those who are willing to make the climb.

As Jesus sits down to teach, He adopts the accepted posture of teachers in synagogues or schools (Luke 4:20). There parallel account in Luke 6:17-26 has Jesus standing. Putting together the accounts of Matthew and Luke, we see hints of a multi-day affair. Sometimes Jesus sits, sometimes He stands, depending on a variety of factors. The disciples include both the apostles and other followers who are serious about hearing the Master.

It is important to catch the flavor of the word blessed in the Beatitudes. In the common language of the day, the word is used to describe people who are saying, in effect, "How fortunate are the poor in spirit." He is not feeling sorry for them as losers in the game of life; He is congratulating them as the ultimate winners.

Those who are poor in spirit are, in fact, better off than those who are arrogant and smug. People who recognize their own spiritual bankruptcy are more likely to be ready to turn to God and receive salvation. Only those who humble themselves can enter the kingdom of Heaven—both now and in the life to come.

The church is an expression of God's kingdom on earth. After Jesus ascends, the first century church will be made up of "not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble" (1 Corinthians 1:26). The final expression of the kingdom is heaven itself. Those who humble themselves will be exalted; they will have a home in heaven. The best is yet to come.

4. Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.

Of all the Beatitudes, this one seems to be the most paradoxical. How can it be fortunate of happy for people to mourn? There are two senses in which mourning is good. First the concept of mourning is found often in the Old Testament when people are expressing sorrow for sin. Those who repent are obvi-

Black churches work to increase AIDS awareness

Outreach part of prevention and support

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

SEATTLE—The Rev. Carey G. Anderson wants his congregation to realize not only that HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, disproportionately affects the lives of black Americans—but to respond to that crisis.

Anderson, senior pastor of the First African Methodist Episcopal Church, hopes that his church can not only help black Americans avoid HIV infection but also support those in the larger community who live with HIV and AIDS.

"The cry must be heralded not only from the pulpit but also from the hands," he said.

Anderson's church, which hosted an HIV testing day June 12 and plans awareness workshops, is part of an increasing number of black churches nationwide that are becoming more active in HIV/AIDS education and support work in their communities, AIDS activists say.

Teresa Holmes is a spokeswoman for The Balm in Gilead, a New York City-based organization that tries to combat the epidemic by mobilizing black church-



PHOTO/WADE NASH

Black churches want more people to get tested for HIV, which infects more African Americans than any other racial group.

As part of National HIV testing day Monday, The Balm in Gilead gave churches information on how to encourage black people to get tested. During the past few days, churches nationwide conducted HIV testings and rallies, Holmes said. More than a million Amer-

icans are believed to be living with HIV, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. And an estimated 25 percent of those with HIV don't even know they have it. The latest CDC estimates indicate blacks account for 47 percent of HIV cases; gay and bisexual men make up 45 percent of those living

with the virus, the health agency believes. When the disease first emerged 20 years ago, many black church leaders considered it mainly a problem of gay white men, Holmes said. Now "it's infecting and affecting people of color," Anderson said. See CHURCHES/7B

Judge rejects arguments against web site

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NEW ORLEANS — A federal judge has rejected arguments from the American Civil Liberties Union that religious references tied to the Louisiana governor's sexual abstinence Web site constitute a government endorsement of religion.

In a decision handed down late Thursday, U.S. District Judge Thomas Porteous refused to hold the Governor's Program on Abstinence in contempt of a 2002 agreement to stop promoting religion with taxpayer money.

Porteous found that the religious references, along with several links that lead to other sites that openly

promote prayer and repentance, do not constitute an excessive entanglement between government and religion — a standard by which federal courts judge compliance with the Establishment Clause of the Constitution forbidding government endorsement of religion.

Gov. Kathleen Blanco's office did not immediately respond to a request for comment Friday.

Joe Cook, executive director of the Louisiana ACLU, pointed to several references to God connected with the site, including one that referred to sex outside of marriage as "one sin above all others as the most destructive to your soul and spirit."

"If telling kids that abstaining from sex will bring them closer to God isn't religion, I don't know what is," Cook said. "Taxpayer money shouldn't be used to deliver sermons."

Cook said an appeal was being considered.

In its arguments, the state said material on the main abstinence site was secular and the religious references in the linked material did not constitute government endorsement of religion.

The ACLU had asked for a third party to monitor the site, a move that Porteous rejected.

In July 2002, Porteous found that Please see JUDGE/7B

S.C. Baptists help find illegal gaming machines

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

COLUMBIA — South Carolina's largest religious group has volunteered to help police find illegal gambling machines.

The Southern Baptist Convention will use its 725,000 members and 2,000 churches to seek out the illegal machines starting this Friday. The group plans to post pictures on its Web site of machines considered illegal by the State Law Enforcement Division while encouraging members to report machines they think are illegal to a Columbia office. The office will then forward the tips to state police.

SLED agents have seized 3,400 illegal gambling machines since video poker was outlawed in 2000.

"We're averaging almost 100 per month," said SLED Chief Robert Stewart.



PHOTOS/THE STOCK MARKET

Church literature and the denomination's newspaper, which has a circulation of 100,000, will run articles about the effort, said Southern Baptist Convention member Joe Mack.

Mack served as the church's liaison to lawmakers

during Statehouse battles about the machines. The church is going to act as SLED's eyes and ears, Mack said.

But efforts to identify just which machines are illegal could get harder. A Charleston-area company is asking the South Carolina Supreme Court to grant the right for a jury trial each time police seize a machine and claim it's illegal.

That could cause major problems for police and prosecutors because the same type of machine could be considered illegal by one jury and legal by another, Assistant Attorney General Bob Cook said.

"The operators of the industry have chosen not to surrender," Cook said. "They have continuously fought to make video gaming legal."



New label, new sound for Hayes

Dr. Charles Hayes & The Warriors The Remix Various producers Icee Inspirational

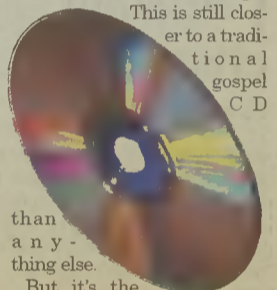


Dr. Charles Hayes and his Cosmopolitan Church Choir aren't strangers to gospel. Hayes and company have traveled the world, basically off the success of "Work It Out," a rousing statement on God's power to provide.

But many young folk, or folk who mainly go for contemporary gospel don't know much else about this choir. That's about to change. Hayes has decided to get a bit more contemporary on a new label and updated sound.

"The Remix" brings Hayes and this energetic choir into this century. It's not a drastic change, more like tweaking. Make no mistake, though.

This is still closer to a traditional gospel CD



than a n y - thing else.

But it's the choir's revisiting of its '80s hit "Work It Out" that's got secular radio stations hopping. It's basically the same song with a more hyperactive beat. It also incorporates the words "crib" (house) and "bling-bling" (gaudy jewelry), something I didn't think I'd live to hear. There's even a slick video for the song. Who'd a thunk it?

Anyone looking for more of that sound may be disappointed. There are no other references. What's left is a strong and compelling body of work that lifts the spirit. "He Laid His Hands On Me" gets a rousing reworking, but more Pentecostal than contemporary. Hayes gets a chance to lead this song and shows that traditional vocals are not outdated.

Hayes may miss the mark on pulling in new listeners. This isn't quite the crossover powerhouse his record company is touting. Nevertheless, this is a solid recording that deserves to be heard.

Ratings

- Classic: ★★★★★
Excellent: ★★★★★
Good: ★★★
Fair: ★★
Why?: ★
No stars - A mess

CHURCH NEWS

The deadline to have your church announcement added to the calendar is 5 p.m. on Fridays.

July 9

Trinity Park Baptist Church, 9115 Trinity Road, will host a Community Outreach/cookout and Health Fair from noon to 3 p.m.

There will be free blood pressure, cholesterol, glucose and hearing screenings. Also information on HIV, diabetes, stress management, free refreshments and much, much more.

July 16

BET Gospel Explosion will be held at Paramount's Kings Dominion through July 17. Featured artists include Kurt Karr, Tye Tribette and others. For more information, call (804) 876-5000. Kings Dominion is located in Richmond, Va.

July 17

A Gift of Love Ministry will host its semi-annual

Gospel Festival beginning at 3p.m. The event will be held at Hoskins Avenue Baptist Church, 101 S. Hoskins Road.

August 15

Friendship Baptist Church will host the 108th annual session of the Lott Carey Foreign Missionary Convention. For more information, contact Doretha L. Leak at Dlleak33@aol.com.

Please see CHRISTIAN/7B

