

PILGRIM NEWS & NOTES

The Official Publication of the Midwest Pilgrim Holiness Church

October 2018



**The Midwest Pilgrim Holiness Conference wishes you a very
Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!!**

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Lord of the Cattle Shed

By Larry D. Smith



Cattle sheds are grimy, grubby places—or at least they were in the First Century when Jesus Christ was born in one of them. There in that cattle shed, among festooning cobwebs, reeking straw, and lowing oxen, the God-man “came to visit us in great humility,” as the Book of Common Prayer so tersely and so eloquently reminds us. “Great humility,” of course, was as little valued then as it is now on this twisted planet, where the movers and the shapers of this world publicly commend it but privately deride it. “Stupid weakness,” they mutter, as they strut and preen and shove and elbow their way to eminence and priority. But how different is Heaven’s estimate of humility, as Jesus’ cattle shed so decisively affirms!

This Christmas, we shall visit again that dismal barn; and there we shall kneel in deepest reverence before His manger bed. For it was here that God the Son took humility to its deepest depths and to its highest heights and “made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant,” as Saint Paul asserts. Moreover, He “humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.” Here in Philippians 2 is “a double humiliation” for Our Lord—first in the self-abasement of His incarnation; and second, in the “obedience unto death” of His atonement. He who is the Eternal Word of the Father and who is Himself “God of God, light of light, very God of very God,” surrendered the privileges that were His by right from all eternity and “emptied Himself of all but love.” While retaining the fullness and majesty of His deity, He embraced the fullness and agony of our humanity.

Both His spotless life and His reconciling death were offered to the Father and for us in this magnificent self-giving of His humiliation. How fitting, then, that Jesus our servant and our sacrifice first appeared among us in that cattle shed, beginning His lifelong condescension to “men of low estate”! In speechless awe we behold the Savior as He points to the carpenter’s shop where once He worked; to the bowl and towel with which He ministered; and to the borrowed donkey upon which He rode. Gently He lifts His calloused hands pierced for us; and compellingly He shows His loving heart broken for us. Gladly we move to His invitation: “Come unto me”; for gently He assures us, “...I am meek and lowly in heart.”

Would you ever say that about yourself, or would anyone else ever say that about you? “Meek and lowly in heart.” Yet this is what Jesus said about Himself. For humility was God’s purpose for Him; and humility is also God’s purpose for us. Indeed, the Savior’s humility in lowly service and unselfish sacrifice cited by Saint Paul is a moving illustration of the apostolic appeal: “Let this mind be in you which also was in Christ Jesus.” He “bids us mind the things which the Lord Jesus minded,” notes the venerable Pulpit Commentary, “to love what he loved, to hate what he hated; the thoughts, desires, [and] motives of the Christian should be the thoughts, desires, [and] motives which filled the sacred heart of Jesus our Lord.” This is breathtaking—even a bit disconcerting at times. But it is also the very pith and core of that holiness which we must vigorously and continuously pursue and “without which no man shall see the Lord.” “Holiness” becomes a cheap and cultic slogan—much discussed but rarely practiced—whenever it is divorced from this all-encompassing challenge to utter Christlikeness. Sometimes we have forgotten what holiness really is, and we have suffered immeasurably for doing so. To be holy is to be like Jesus; and to be like Jesus is to be “meek and lowly in heart.” As someone has observed, we can thus measure our progress in holiness by our progress in humility!

“What is the first article of the Christian religion?” Saint Augustine was asked. “Humility,” he responded. “And the second?” “Humility” he repeated. “And the third?” “Humility.” Thus he could also write, “Tota

Christiana religio humilitas est." "The whole of the Christian religion is humility." Basic to all right relationship with God and with men is a profound sense of personal unworthiness and "a modest sense of one's own merit." Humility is not cringing subservience; but it is a continuing realization of who we are in the whole of God's creation, keeping "oneself within one's own bounds," as Thomas Aquinas once said, "not reaching out to things above one." Deliberately, then, we renounce grasping personal ambition and inordinate self-esteem to follow Jesus in unassuming, gentle, and quiet servanthood.

Before God, humility continually acknowledges unworthiness and dependence upon Him and pledges submission to His will. "But to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word" (Isaiah 66:2). Never for a moment do we take God or His mercies for granted; for ours constantly is the plea of Charles Wesley: Father, I stretch my hands to Thee, No other help I know, If Thou withdraw Thyself from me Ah, whither shall I go?

Always we are suppliants at His table, and always we ask as He has taught us, "Give us this day our daily bread...forgive us our trespasses...deliver us from evil." With deep abhorrence, we abjure all human boasting or self-congratulation; and with all the saints, we readily acknowledge that we are "unprofitable servants," as He has said.

Moment by moment we are dependent upon Him as He imparts grace for everything we need, both for our bodies and for our souls. Whatever our accomplishments in virtue or in valor, they are always enabled by the Holy Spirit; and whatever is good in us is never fully our own but His constant gift. Acknowledging this and confessing our continual "sins of ignorance" and infirmity, we offer the only sacrifice which He accepts, a "broken and a contrite heart."

We know that He regards with merciful acceptance only those who "tremble" in profound reverence at His word and whose only claim to righteousness is that they constantly abide in Him and He abides in them. Objectively, our holiness depends always upon Christ's offering and heavenly intercession for us; and subjectively upon the Holy Spirit's cleansing and empowering ministry within us.

To others, humility treats people as Jesus treated them. "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself." This is contrary to the selfishness which lies at the heart of sin and haughtily asserts our will against the will of God and ignores the needs of others. Arrogant and insensitive men still contemptuously exploit the poor, the ignorant, and the weak, as they grab for money, position, and authority. Never was this our Master's way! He modeled for us a deliberate disregard for His own prerogatives as He lived unselfishly for God and for those around Him.

This Christmas we peer again into a grubby cattle shed; and there among the beasts and shepherds, we gaze upon Him "who came to visit us in great humility." Indeed, all His living, His serving, and His dying were "in great humility"; and this is the pattern He has left for us. His humiliation now is ended, and He is raised in honor to the right hand of His Father. As it was for Jesus, so shall it also be for us. He who is "Lord of the Cattle Shed" is also Lord of All; and we who follow Him in the lowliness of His humility will share also in the splendor of His glory.

Larry D. Smith is the former editor of God's Revivalist (1995-2015). He and his wife Carol live in Cincinnati, OH. This article first appeared in God's Revivalist and is used here with permission.



A Woman's Perspective

By Stephanie Burley

Stephanie is married to Greg, and they have four wonderful children. She teaches at Pilgrim Christian School in Lima, Ohio, and is very active in her local church. They live in Lima, Ohio. Stephanie is a regular contributor to *Pilgrim Ness & Notes*

Blessed to Give

Christmas. Simply mention the word, and the eyes of children sparkle with excitement and anticipation. The innocence and joyful expressions often melt the hearts of doting parents and grandparents as gifts are shared and wish-lists are fulfilled. What a blessing to witness such special moments!

As we enter the season of gift-giving each year, my husband and I typically have a quick conversation about how much we should spend on gifts for each of our children. Our minds are usually in sync, and it takes no time at all to agree on an amount. But no matter the time spent or the amount set, whether great or small, there are some important lessons to be learned in acts of gift-giving. Parents have an amazing opportunity and obligation to create a Christ-pleasing spirit in the hearts of children, especially during this season. Let's look at two aspects of gift-gifting that should be considered with each recipient on our list this year.

Motive - Am I giving this gift to **impress** or to **bless**? At some point, we've all exhausted ourselves looking for the "perfect" gift. But was it because we really struggled to find a gift that would truly bless, or were we more worried about the "wow factor?" The next time you're perplexed in gifting, ask yourself some questions. "What gift would make this person feel loved? What gift would brighten their life? What gift would be an expression of heartfelt thanks for what they mean to me?" When I was young, PEZ candy was really cool. And it was also really expensive. My parents lived on a close budget and didn't spend frivolously, meaning I didn't get PEZ candy. I will never forget, as a young adult, opening a Christmas gift that was full of PEZ. It was fun, humorous, and sentimental. And twenty years later, I still remember it. Another question to ask when buying a gift may be, "Am I buying a gift or a relationship?" If the gift is meant to compensate for some deficit in the relationship, just understand that it won't. No material item or experience can replace an empty spot in the human heart. Remember, it isn't the size or price of the gift, but the meaning and motive behind it that generates a genuine response.

Outcome - Could this gift ultimately produce an undesirable consequence? Giving should be sacrificial, but let's face it. Our kids, as well as the others on our lists, know us. And they probably know if "Christmas" is way out of our means or somewhat congruent with our lifestyle. Their expectations should be grounded to reality. The role of "Santa" varies greatly from family to family, but one downfall to the "ask Santa" mindset is that children often do not associate gifts with the element of sacrifice. There is no connection between daddy and mommy's wallet and that pile of beautifully wrapped packages lying under the tree. If a gift is extravagant or out of line, it can foster an attitude of entitlement and discontent within a child. It can also build a mindset that makes personal sacrifice and discipline difficult for them in years to come. When our oldest son was about five, I went out for what I recall as my first ever Black Friday purchase. I saw that Best Buy would have a Nintendo Gameboy for \$25. That was about half of retail, and I was so excited to find such a reasonable gift for my little guy! As I browsed the empty shelves, my heart sank a little. I had so hoped to snag one of these little square electronic games. Just as I was about to walk away, I looked up on a high shelf, sort of away from the original sale area, and spied three or four more boxes with the coveted product. That was a fun gift for me to give, and it started a trend that we joke about today. Instead of returning to Best Buy, we learned the art of Craigslist and Ebay, and for years and years our kids would upgrade to what others were upgrading from. It nurtured contentedness and taught them how to look for a deal and value what they had. Many times, when they were ready, they would resell their item and use that money toward an upgrade. Today, it is a joy to watch them work to earn, save, spend, and give.

However, nothing warms my heart any more than being surrounded by my husband and children in those special moments just before we share gifts. Each year, similar words are spoken. "God has blessed us so much this year, and because He has blessed us, we want to bless you." Someone has said, "Christmas presents come and go, but Christmas memories last a lifetime." Our gifts are simply fibers in the loving bonds that create memories.

Wishing you and yours a very Merry Christmas and a wonderful New Year!



News from around the Conference

News articles on this page have been submitted by various Pilgrim Churches. We reserve the right to edit the submissions as necessary to fit space requirements. E-mail all news to: midwestphc@gmail.com

Peebles, OH —(by Pastor Wayne Kennedy)

We have been working diligently to do some much needed repairs on the church. This summer we had a new metal roof installed and just last month new steps and porch columns were installed. Next up will be new handrails and then new siding on the church. Help us pray that all the needed funding will come in. We have been affected by much sickness over the last few months, but God is helping. We are averaging 14 in our Thursday night kids club, with several of them returning for Sunday School. Pray that these children can be reached for the Lord.

Corydon, IN —(by Hannah Fowler)

Greetings from New Shiloh Pilgrim Holiness Church in Corydon, IN. The Lord has greatly helped us in the past few months. Funds have been raised, souls helped, and revivals held. The youth have taken part in the services and participated in Pilgrim events. Our church is blessed and we praise God for the victories.

On September 8th, a groundbreaking ceremony was held to commemorate the beginning of the building of a multi-purpose facility on our church grounds. The ceremony was held by Pastor Mark Arnett and the ground was broken by the board members. A pitch-in dinner was held afterward. The multi-purpose facility will have a gymnasium, cafeteria, kitchen, and restrooms. We later hope to add on classrooms for a new school. God has abundantly provided the funds needed for this endeavor.

The youth held a three day revival beginning on September 28-30th. The messages were brought by three young men: Mitch Garrett, Randy Gilley, and Jeremy Wright. The youth pastor, Danny Gilley, also preached on Sunday morning. The youth sang the special songs, were ushers, and led the singing. The congregation was touched by the sermons and the Spirit of God. The youth also attended Youth Challenge on October 26th. Six of the youth went along with our pastor and his wife.

We had a revival November 13-18th with Rev. Matthew Blankenship. He connected with the hearts of our congregation. He and his daughter Myka ministered in song each night. On Friday, he shared his life story, which spoke to our hearts. Many souls were helped at the altar and victories were won. We are extremely thankful to Bro. Blankenship and his daughter for coming to our church and for minding God.

We are truly grateful for all of the blessings God has given us these past few months, and we will continue to trust Him for the future.





PASTOR TO PASTOR

Ministering to those who minister to others

Tell the Story Again . . .

By Rev. Wayne Kennedy

It's the most wonderful (busiest) time of the year! Christmas has always been my favorite time of the year. As a child, I loved the lights, the Christmas store displays, the candies that mom only made at Christmas time, and of course the presents. As I grew older I looked forward to gatherings with family members that you didn't get to see very often and there was always something special about Christmas music. To me, it is some of the most wonderful music that we hear all year long.

After getting married and having children Christmas became even more exciting as we watched our children's faces light up with each opened gift. Sometimes we were so excited we would go and wake them up. We seem to quickly forget the aggravation of tangled lights, long shopping lines and dealing with people who don't seem to share the same joy we have about this time of year. We can seem to put those things behind us quickly with a carol on our lips and family gathered around us.

Becoming a pastor brought many more interesting aspects to my favorite time of the year. There are dinners to plan, special services to hold, sometimes caroling to organize, gatherings to attend, and sermons to prepare. The last two years we have had our Kid's Club to lead, so that meant another Christmas party and special songs to teach them for their monthly presentation to the congregation. Then the pastor had the bright idea to teach the children a Christmas song to play on their handbells. You just haven't lived until you have fourteen children clink-clanging their metal bells!

It's these children however that brought the main focus of this article to my mind. I believe Dr. Randall McElwain wrote an article in last year's Christmas issue entitled, "Preaching the Ever New "Old Story." In that article he addressed pastors dreading to preach Christmas messages because there was nothing new. It is a tremendous article and you should revisit it. However, as we have been working with the children in our Thursday night Kid's Club, I have come to realize that most of what these children know about the Bible, God and the Christmas story comes from Hollywood. They didn't have the same blessing I had of being raised in a Christian home and hearing the story read every year from Luke chapter two.

So many times as pastors we feel the pressure to bring about the story in new ways. We are sometimes guilty of using the phrase, "You know the story," and not just in regards to Christmas. However, we have entire households that never open a Bible to see for themselves the true accounts of these stories that Hollywood butchers. We can't assume that everyone in the congregation really does know the story.

The children love to try and help me tell the Bible stories each week. Sometimes the things they say would be comical if it wasn't for the fact they believe that's how the events really took place. Still, there are times when their insight into the events thrills me. As we were retelling the story of the shepherds, one of them raised their hand and said, "The angels told the shepherds because God wanted the outcast to hear about Jesus."

We need to tell the story. We don't have to re-invent the story. It's marvelous just as it is. As part of the Living Word of God, the Christmas story still brings joy and wonder, peace and excitement. In a time where

many are experiencing despair, depression, discouragement, and disappointment, the Christmas story in all its glory will shine a bright light into a troubled soul.

For some individuals, my favorite time of year is their most dreaded. Separated families, recently departed loved ones, broken hearts, and financial difficulties weigh heavy on the soul.

The story we have to share with them is one that shows how God still comes to the lowly, to the unfortunate, to those the rest of the world may have forgotten. And He still brings tidings of good news and great joy. He is not an exclusive God known only to the educated and astute. He is a God who extends first to the lowly and downtrodden. It is a story that still rings with hope.

Neither you nor I could've ever conceived of a gift as wonderful as the gift of God which is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In a world in which we must work for everything we have, God condescends to earth and gives us something we could never earn or deserve. He chose to come humbly in the form of a helpless babe so we can come humbly to Him, as well. No wonder Jesus – and the grace He offers to those who surrender their lives to Him – is called the Greatest Gift of All. It is a story of hope to a world that would have otherwise been hopeless.

The days are past when everyone grew up in Sunday School. We live in a society that believes what they believe because they saw it in a movie or on the internet. We need to share the “same old story.” Tell it from beginning to end without leaving out the details you think everyone knows. (Please make sure to get the details correct.)

It never ceases to amaze me the wonderful new insight I gain personally studying this wonderful account of a God that would wrap himself in human flesh and come to earth with the purpose to die for His creation. Tell the story, re-tell the story, for many souls need to hear of the loving Christ Child with a humble beginning, who was also the King of kings. The story of God's amazing love, mercy, and grace will never grow old.

“Same Old Story” by Gordon Mote

VERSE

A baby in a manger wrapped in swaddling clothes
A little town called Bethlehem, you know how the story goes
The shepherds and the wise men came to praise the newborn King
God's gift 2,000 years ago still makes His children sing

CHORUS

It's the same old story that never grows old
It's still like the first time every time it's told
From Bethlehem to Calvary's Hill, to the tomb where He arose
It's the same old story that never grows old



Rev. Wayne Kennedy pastors the Pilgrim Holiness Church in Peebles, Ohio, where he lives with his wife, Tabitha, and their two boys.

Our thanks to Pastor Kennedy for this wonderful article.

If you would like to connect with Pastor Kennedy, click [Here](#)

Who Does the Work of the Ministry?

By Dr. Randall McElwain

Do any CEOs attend your church? No, I'm not talking about corporate executives, but rather I am referring to "Christmas-Easter-Only" visitors. They show up twice a year in their Sunday best, enjoy the special music, and disappear until the next holiday!

How do we preach to CEOs? As we approach the Christmas season, let me suggest three things.

1. Be thankful that they are there. Don't waste your Christmas sermon complaining about the other 50 Sundays!

Imagine that you were invited to visit someone's home. When you show up several months after the invitation, they greet you with a "How nice of you to come—only 6 months late!" Would you be more likely to visit a second time if they had greeted you with a sincere "Thank you for coming! We are so glad you are here"?

Be thankful that your Christmas visitors come—even if it is only because of a Christmas tradition. If you only have one chance to preach to a needy soul, be thankful for that one chance!

2. Preach the Gospel. Don't waste your opportunity to share the good news with people who only hear it once a year. Tell the Christmas story, but include more than just shepherds, wise men and a manger. Give the gospel to your CEOs.

On Christmas Sunday, preach the gospel with clarity. Make sure that no one leaves your Christmas service without knowing why the baby was born. Make sure they know that they are a sinner, but that a loving God has provided a remedy for their sin. Don't let them leave thinking, "That is a nice story, but I'm not sure how that relates to me."

On Christmas Sunday, preach the gospel with passion. Souls are in the balance; this may be your only opportunity to touch a soul for eternity. As the Puritan Richard Baxter wrote, "Preach as a dying man to dying men."

On Christmas Sunday, preach the gospel with power. Early in December, pull together a team of prayer warriors who will commit to daily prayer for every CEO who visits your church. Surround the Christmas service with prayer. You want that visitor to feel the power of the Holy Spirit as never before.

3. Follow up after Christmas is over. Don't ever let a CEO visit without some follow up. Yes, Christmas is a very busy time of year, but soon after their visit, the CEO should hear from a pastor who says, "I am so happy you visited our church! I hope you will come back."

Even more importantly, they need to hear from a layman who stops by and says, "My wife makes the world's greatest cinnamon rolls. I thought you might enjoy a plate of them." It doesn't need to be a long visit, but a layman needs to connect with every CEO. Why a layman? Because in the mind of the CEO, the pastor is

Nearly 2000 years ago, a Babe was born, we know 'twas so, Judean hills glowed with light, when Jesus came to earth that night.
The Gospels tell us of His birth, He "left it all" to come to earth. This Gift the Father gave to man, to bring about "Salvation's Plan"!

'Twas love that caused our Lord to come, He loves us each and ev'ry one. He asks that we give Him our heart, make Him our choice.
Eternal life to us He's given, that we might dwell with Him in Heaven. Where peace shall reign in ev'ry heart, no fight, no war, will ever start.

God is so good to you and me! He's given eyes that we might see. All around His mighty power, His touch on every leaf and flower.
The green leaves now have turned to gold, and crimson maples lose their hold. Drifting to the ground below, to soon be covered by the snow.

He is so faithful every day, He marks the path, He leads the way. His precious Word, it standeth sure, His love and mercy will endure.
While war clouds cover o'er the earth, It seems there is no "Peace on Earth." As our thoughts turn to Bethlehem, Pray for peace, in Jerusalem.

His word tells us what we are to do, Keep the faith, to Him be true. "Worship Him" every Nation!! The "Reason of this Celebration."
He came the first time, don't forget! Each Promise He has made, He's kept! Only the Father, on His throne, knows when the trumpet, will be blown.

Our love to you we now do send, a kinship that will never end. "Unbroken Family" may we be . . . "TOGETHER" for Eternity.

Shirley Gray - Christmas 2000

(Continued from previous page)

paid to visit. But when a layman visits, it says, "That church really cares about me!"

Visit again in February. After they assume you have forgotten about them, it says a lot when someone drops by to say, "You were at our church at Christmas. We would love to have you visit again Sunday and then join our family for Sunday dinner."

Then drop in again shortly before Easter. Don't say, "I guess it's about time for our favorite CEO to visit again!" Instead, give them a sincere welcome to join in your church's celebration of the Resurrection.

Can CEOs be frustrating? Absolutely! As a music director, I worked in churches where the Christmas Sunday attendance was double that of the second Sunday in January. I hated it!

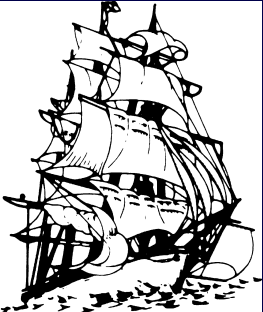
But I have learned to be excited about preaching to CEOs. Why? Because every CEO represents a potential disciple. Imagine the joy of meeting that CEO in heaven and hearing him say, "Do you remember me? I was a Christmas-Easter-Only attender at your church. But Christmas 2018 was the service when my life was changed for eternity. Even then, I could have easily walked away, but your church kept coming after me and showing me Christ's love. I am in heaven today because of the love and the prayers of the people at the _____ Pilgrim Holiness Church."

Do you believe God can turn a Christmas-Easter-Only visitor into a 24/7 disciple? **Think about it!**



Dr. Randall McElwain is married to Sue and they live in Hobe Sound, Florida, where he serves on the staff at Hobe Sound Bible Church as Discipleship Pastor as well as Teaching Pastor at the Palm Beach Chinese Christian Chapel. They have two grown children.

Dr. Randall McElwain is a very busy person, and we really appreciate his willingness to share his thoughts with us in each issue of *Pilgrim News & Notes*.



Pilgrim News & Notes is the official publication of the Midwest Pilgrim Holiness Church and is published bi-monthly.

The main goal of Pilgrim News & Notes is to be an encouragement to our readers, as well as a valuable source of information to those with connections or interests in our Conference.

All submissions are welcome, however, we reserve the right to edit as necessary to fit design/space needs. Not all submissions will be published.

Please email all submissions to the editor via the contact info below:

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MEDIA MINISTRY

Check us out on the web!

The Midwest Pilgrim Holiness Church strives to not only be relevant, but we want to be accessible to those who want to learn more about our Conference, as well as to those who are interested in possibly becoming a part of us!

Our Conference website has been in existence since 2004, and is updated frequently. We also have an active presence on Facebook. Check us out via the links below!

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