

April 25, 2021

GENERAL ANNOUNCEMENTS

This Week: 9:30 a.m. Reading Service, 6:30 p.m. Catechism Reading Service. Classes after the morning service.

Next Week: 9:30 a.m. Reading Service, 6:30 p.m. Catechism Reading Service. Last Classes of the season after the morning service.

-All the Lord willing-

Offerings Today: 1st General Fund Next week: 1st General Fund
2nd Kingdom Boundaries 2nd School Fund

Collections Received in March:

General Fund	\$869.00
School Fund	\$186.00
Living Bread	\$637.00
Prison Ministries	\$596.00
Disaster Relief	\$329.00

We Remember in Prayer:

-Our widows, widowers and lonely ones, the unborn, prodigal sons and daughters, those undergoing treatments, and all those with hidden crosses.

MEDITATION

Empty Places (a dream) *(continued)*

"Fellows," says the prince of hell, "You are all fit and ready; continue with your work."

"Yes, the work is effective," resumed the devil who had been speaking, "when we can keep people from going to bed early enough Saturday night, and also if we cause them to talk about so-called pious subjects which actually only consist in the slanderous finding fault of others or even speaking disapprovingly of the minister, his preaching or his actions. The best work at present is: a little religion in appearance and as much liberty as they want to have in self. Thus they will continue to talk on and you notice how beautifully we arrive at our goal: empty places in the church."

"You do very well," said his hellish majesty, with a warm heart, for his breath was as a flame of fire. "Ministers may work and pray persistently that their words might find an entrance in the heart but little profit will be obtained where the places are empty. This is one of the most important means; therefore spare no pains in keeping people out of church. I really must praise you for you have accomplished much already. But let me draw your attention to another thing and it is this: ministers are also people and therefore not perfect when in their speaking or their gestures, or in anything else... Speaking too soft or too loud... Too fast or too slow... The preaching is too sharp or too mild... Too dry or too metaphorically... Too flowery... Too long... Or too short... Reading too much or repeating too much... Whatever it may be,

it matters little, then you may must see to it, that the Christians who are faithful in going to church, must find one thing or another to condemn their minister, and that they constantly speak about it in the presence of others. This shall be a wholesome means for staying at home and even keeping young people from going to catechism and making confession of faith.

"If you can do anything at all which will bring perverseness and division, or discontent against the minister, consistory members, or members of the congregation mutually, then do it. You must especially apply yourself to do so just before the Lord's Supper. This will keep them out of church especially on that day which for a Christian is so important and so desirable. And this, as you know, is just against what our great adversary, their Christ, commands: to do this in remembrance of Him. And many are, as they think quite conscientious in this respect. Man himself says that they cannot sit together with dissension. If persons are angry with each other, then they would sooner not go to church on that day. They would do better if they were reconciled with each other, which is also their obligation and which their Master has commanded them, but of this they are not mindful and now you must be especially careful not to even hint it to them, but rather when they do begin to think about it, to then lead them from it by suggesting to them that they are not in the wrong and completely innocent as to this discord and they will leave their places to remain empty. The pastor may have done his very best as to his sermon, having studied his subject thoroughly and made it as pleasant and unctuous as possible, urgently inviting the people, even coming to church with a fervent, prayerful heart, as if he were all a glow, but yet the empty places can be a means to send a cold chill through all his limbs and the result might be a cold, dry sermon. If some strangers have come out of curiosity, they were disappointed and would come no more. "

Satan continued by saying: "It is not the beautiful, meticulous, neat, and appropriately arranged church buildings, nor the congregation which has an eloquent, teaching, and serving pastor who speaks the truth in conformity to the Holy Scriptures which makes a congregation prosperous, causes it to flourish and advance, although this is of great power in the furtherance of the thriving and welfare of the congregation, but what means a great deal is the faithful observance, the faithful attendance of divine worship by all the members of the congregation! Naturally this does not include the places where false doctrine is preached. The people are obligated to God at all times to His Word, to faithfully come to hear the proclamation thereof. It also serves to the extension of the congregation that which is heard is so meditated upon in conversation with one another that even as the honey is sucked out of the flower by the bees, so also is the spiritual honey sucked out of that which was heard. Thereby brotherly love and harmony between the members mutually, as well as between them and the minister, is not only produced but becomes constantly more and more intimate. This would cause others who saw and heard it of that congregation to be affected with interest, and to also go to listen. And if such a one goes

to church with the impression that he will hear something good, then it can be that a great deal said which is not exceptional and still it has the desired effect and such a one is soon gained.

"But you can readily understand that this is not the lesson you are to teach the people. On the contrary, but I am simply telling you this that you will know what is detrimental to us and what you must fight against with all your devilish might. But you must impress upon those who still go to church that there is none as proficient as they in knowledge, none more orthodox and better reformed, none who has more or better experience than they, and then when the minister says something that does not exactly fit upon their register, they know better; it is not right, no matter how good it is according to the truth which he understands. Yes, if you can get but one man in the congregation, of which men generally can believe that he is rather versed and pious and if they hear that he is not in accord with the minister and consistory, then you have gained a great deal; then dissension comes and men will go somewhere else or even, most of the time, stay at home and then, more and more they will speak and work against it. And this way they separate one from another and instead of praying with the travelers to Emmaus: "Lord Jesus, abide with us," they cause that this Jesus, whom we strive against, shall finally give such a divided congregation, at least we hope so, over to hardness of heart. You must be the sower of tares; perhaps the good wheat shall be suffocated by the tares. Your aspiration must be directed thereto. Wherever a church is established by Prince Jesus, there you must endeavor to demolish and disturb as much as you can. Now you must heed the lessons which I have given you; be especially upon your guard and notice every opportunity, and do everything you can to promote the great aim which I have commanded you and cause our advantage to triumph and that is, keeping people out of churches as much as possible by making empty places. "

"But not me!" cried Jane aloud, who, in terror, awoke out of her dream and came to consciousness and realized how wrong she had always acted. And amid the influence of this consternation, she recognized and learned to realize that her God-dishonoring conduct of formerly. She immediately arose, decided to go to church, which she did, and where in this hour she received so much blessed grace that her place was never again found empty.

After reading the above narrative, may many be found full of contrition. We hope the number of those who are guilty may not be great, but among those who are guilty may many be found who by grace are frightened from sleep as our dreamer Jane; may they not only cry out as Jane, "But not me," and even as Jane never again leave their places empty unless because of lawful reasons which are accountable before God. Let everyone be fully convinced in his own mind, but I invite you to give an account before God for your unlawful empty places. Let everyone examine his conscience and many coverings and fig leaves shall be found which are worthy of being cast away.

Identification of writer unknown. We only have the initials K. V. D. W.

Netherlands Reformed Congregation

Sioux Falls, SD



*Exalt the LORD our God, and
worship at his holy hill; for the
LORD our God is holy.
Psalm 99:9*

Church Times: 9:30 a.m. and 2:30 p.m.