

Proclamation! Boxing Day Holiday

Whereas it has been the custom in Georgetown in past years to hold a Boxing Day the day following Christmas Day.

And whereas the Municipal Council have authorized me to proclaim such a day:

Therefore, I do declare Thursday, December 26, 1946, a Public Holiday in the Town of Georgetown.

HAROLD CLEAVE, Mayor

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GEORGETOWN

MAIN ST.

School Lesson

PAUL CLAIMS THE WORLD FOR CHRIST

by Rev. R. O. Todd

LESSON: Acts 9:10; 19:21; 20:11; 20:28:31; Romans 1:13-16; 22-24

This week's lesson brings to an end this quarter's studies on Paul and His Letter. Last week we saw the effects of the gospel in breaking down class distinctions, and this brings us to the way in which the gospel overcame racial distinctions and national divisions. All — Jew, Roman, Greek, became equal members of one body in Christ.

In this quarter's lessons we have already seen how the Roman Empire brought into one scheme of political unity the whole Mediterranean world. Roman legions guaranteed the peace and order and security of Rome's empire; and Roman citizenship was a passport which was honored from one end of the Empire to the other. As we see from the lesson text, Paul was greatly anxious to go to the capital of this Empire to preach the gospel. There was already a Church there; but Paul greatly desired to preach there, in order, one supposes to reap a further harvest. When he finally went, it was as a prisoner. Being arrested in Jerusalem, he took advantage of his Roman citizenship and appealed to Caesar. We do not know what effect his preaching had in Rome, although we do know the slave Onesimus of last week's lesson was a reward of his labours there. And while we cannot be sure of how his career ended, tradition has it that he died in Rome, a martyr's death.

Although in Paul's day the Christian Church was small and never got beyond the stage of being an occasional nuisance to local Roman authorities, yet it was destined to unify men in a way which Roman might and law could never bring about. The Roman Empire went the way of all human empires, becoming the victim of decay within and enemies without. A few centuries after Paul, it could hardly be said to exist, although its glamorous name was long continued, and in our own day was revived. But the Christian Church became the one comparatively stable and unifying institution in the chaos of the Dark Ages.

Why? What was the basis of this new and deeper unity? It was a common faith in Jesus Christ. Holding to the same faith, acknowledging one Lord Supreme over all temporal kings and lords, men of many different races found that they were one in Christ.

Of course, it is possible to idealize the Unity of the world in Christ. Race prejudices and national ambitions have always flourished and still flourish considerably, in spite of the influence of Christianity, and even the Church itself has bred many unhappy divisions which have prevented even those who bore the name of Christ from being united. Nevertheless, this must be said; that wherever men have truly held the same faith in Christ; unity has prevailed among them. The common faith has crossed borders of race and nation and color which could not have been crossed in other ways. No human empire could do this. Might can subdue people temporarily, but human nature is restive under armed might. The very conception of empire implies a HUMAN lordship; and since by nature every man wants to lord it over others, men will not indefinitely submit to human domination, they will be truly dominated and united only by a lordship which is not of this world — in other words divine. No individual or nation has the right to dominate other men or other nations. Only God has that absolute right and He does not delegate it to humans. And only He can create an order in which all who come under it are willing to be equal members of the one community; putting to rest the jealousies of one individual or class or nation toward others. No one but the Lord Jesus Christ qualifies as the ruler of a community in which all men live in unity and peace.

We are living today in a world which seems to greatly desire peace and knows not how to get it. World unity and law are widely spoken of and recommended, but race prejudices and national ambition and economic strife continue to exercise their sway until men achieve a common basis of faith upon which to act. Until such time there will be much talk and much idealism; but talk and idealism without works, are dead.

The Church, therefore, reminds men that true unity among men is possibly only in the sharing of a common faith in Christ. Perhaps in the present broken condition of the Church, so much divided by sectarian bickerings and denominational aloofness, (although not half so much as her enemies would

have them believe) and so powerless to restrain the greed and self-righteousness of the world, this hope seems as remote as any other. Yet this need not and ought not to prevent us from looking in that direction, for it is the only direction which has any promise at the end of the road. The Church of Jesus Christ does not lay the emphasis upon the Church as an institution, aspiring to rule, and thus unify, the world.

We cannot tell what the fate of the Church as an institution will be. The point is that wherever a true and living faith in Jesus Christ is found and shared, there unity exists already. In Christ, barriers are broken down between man and man, in so far as the impact of this faith is felt. Paul did not go to Rome dreaming of a world-wide Church institution; he went there to preach the gospel in which he believed, and in which others were coming to believe. And where that belief existed, there was neither Greek nor Jew nor Roman any more. Paul could not promise any unified and peaceful world; nor can the Church of today; but Paul could preach that faith which set those who accepted it upon common ground; and that is what the Church preaches today.

Lessons for the next Quarter — The Gospel of John.

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