
❖ Restoration Village ❖

October 2012

Jesus went across to Mount Olives, but he was soon in the Temple again. Swarms of people came to him. He sat down and taught them. The religion scholars and Pharisees led in a woman who had been caught in an act of adultery. They stood her in plain sight of everyone and said, "...Moses, in the Law, gives orders to stone such persons. What do you say?" Jesus bent down and wrote with his finger in the dirt. They kept at him, badgering him. He straightened up and said,

THE SINLESS ONE AMONG YOU, GO FIRST: THROW THE STONE. (JOHN 8:1-11)

It is one of those mornings that makes no sense and yet, as the day progresses, it made a lot of sense. After reading some of the newspaper stories and then reading the letters to the editor, and a few tweets, it was obvious after another Arkansas football team loss that a growing fan base wanted the coaches and Athletic Director fired. There seems to be a gathering group of stone throwers. That same day I read the Forbes list of the richest people in the world, some of which are from Arkansas and was quietly gathering stones because they would not miss a few million dollars contributed to the National Child Protection Training Center and make it possible for the renovation of the building to begin.

Sometime during the day I began to hum the tune and eventually broke out into an old Bob Dylan song, *Everybody Must Get Stoned*. It is not a song about marijuana, despite some thinking so. The words are very clear and the implication gives the song away: *They'll stone you when you're trying to be so good/They'll stone you just like they said they would/ They'll stone when you're trying to go home/They'll stone when you're there all alone/But I would not feel so all alone/Everybody must get stoned*. There are four more verses, but you get the idea. But it was a day where every rock at Restoration Village seemed to call my name.

On October 11, 1856, Herman Melville boarded the steamer ship, Glasgow at the urging of his wife and his father in law to relieve his depression caused by the public and reviewers rejecting his newest book, *Moby Dick*. He felt like a failure. Eventually, he arrived in Jerusalem and wrote *Stones of Judea*. "We read a good deal about stones in Scripture. Monuments and stumps of memorials are set up in stones; men are stoned to death; the figurative seed falls in stony places; and no wonder that stones should so largely figure in the Bible. Judea is one accumulation of stones – stony mountains & stony plains; stony houses & stony tombs; stony eyes & stony hearts. Before you and behind you are stones. Stones to the right & stones to the left."

Melville wrote many short stories, two of which are in a form of Christian typology and "*The Two Temples*" can be aligned as an implicit contrast between the antithetical faiths of the Old and New Testaments. The "*First Temple*" of prestige and prominence in New York City where the unnamed

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Restoration Ministries, Inc.
2215 Little Flock Dr.
Little Flock, Arkansas 72756
(479) 631-7345
Fax: (479) 631-9011
restore89@cox.net

Executive Directors

David and Beverly Engle

Board of Directors

Bill Gillingham, PhD (ret.)

Licensed Professional Counselor
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Rogers, Arkansas

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Church at Pinnacle Hills
Rogers, Arkansas

narrator is a hapless and penniless stranger who goes to the church as his first resort anticipating aid and to be welcomed with the open arms of hospitality. Instead he is refused admission and goes to hide in the belfry to hear the sermon. The service ends and not wanting to be seen during the exiting period he gets accidentally locked up in the bell tower. Only by ringing the bells does he get discovered and is escorted to jail. He gets wrath instead of mercy.

The Second Temple is a story of our unnamed narrator wandering the streets of London looking for any type of non condemning relationships when he passes by a theater that is conducting a play. Even though he is a beggar, a patron of the theater gives him a free ticket to enter and watch the play. He stands out in the street and argues with himself whether to use the ticket or not: "Shall I use it? Maternal charity nursed you as a babe; paternal charity fed you as a child; friendly charity got you your profession; and to charity of ever man you meet this night in London, are you indebted for your unattempted life." After he seats himself, another person, a boy who "looks like a beggar" gave him a free drink of ale and the "stranger in a strange land" thinks to himself as an evening of unwarranted and free-ranging welcome. The story tells of the stranger "... I went home to that lonely lodging, and slept not much that night, for thinking of the First Temple and the Second Temple; and how that, a stranger in a strange land, I found sterling charity in the one; and at home, in my own land, was thrust out for the other."

"The travail of the poor is intercessory for the rich – for them, in their behalf, in their place, it substitutes for their own sufferings."

I decided to reread the John chapter 8 passage about "getting stoned" that day and jotted some notes for myself about "stone throwers" of which I was one. First was the recognition that stone throwers are insensitive (vs. 3-4) as they publicly shamed a woman so that they could accomplish their own agenda or justify their own goodness. Secondly, they were not very good with their legal mumbo jumbo: the law (Leviticus 20:10, Deuteronomy 22:22) says to stone the man, or stone them both, but it was not about justice. Third, it doesn't take much to shame stone throwers, Jesus told them that "one without sin, throw the stone" and with the situation reversed upon them, they sulked away. Then Jesus turns to the lady and says without condemnation, "go and sin no more."

A book that greatly influenced me in the 1960's, *My People is the Enemy*, written by William Stringfellow and in order to cease meditating on the song, *Everybody Must Get Stoned*, I looked up the quotes that influenced me so long ago. Stringfellow writes: "The travail of the poor is intercessory for the rich – for them, in their behalf, in their place, it substitutes for their own sufferings. They (the rich) would suffer if the poor did not purchase for them some immunity from suffering ... All men, in short, live in a history in which every action and omission and abstention is consequently related to all else that happens everywhere. That is the theology of Adam's Fall and with him, the fall of all men. In history, we live at each other's expense.

"What sophisticates the suffering of the poor is not innocence, nor extremity, nor loneliness, not the fact that it is unknown or ignored by others; but rather the lucidity, the straightforwardness with it bespeaks **the power of death among men in this world**" (emphasis mine).

Stringfellow closes the book with the most powerful paragraph that still challenges me to this day: **"The word of God is secretly present in the life of the poor, as in the life of the whole world, but most of the poor do not know the Word of God. These two facts constitute the dialectic of the Church's mission among the poor. All that is required for the mission of the Church...: the presence of the community which has and exercises the power to discern the presence of the Word of God in the ordinary life of the poor as it is lived every day. What is requisite to mission, to the exposure of God's Word within the perishing existence of poverty, is the congregation which relies on and celebrates the resurrection"** (emphasis mine).

All of us are this particular lady and we all are religious self righteous stone gatherers in need of grace and a word of resurrection and restoration that says "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more."

David Engle

Village News

THESE ARE JUST TOO CUTE NOT TO SHARE with you: Eli celebrated his first birthday anniversary and his doggie presentation cake was one of the two beauties this month. Gavin celebrated his 7th birthday and asked for a fishing theme for his cake. Ann Gray of Candy Boutique (Rogers, AR) prepares these wonderfully designed cakes for our children and part of the joy of the birthday anniversaries is the anticipation of seeing what design creations she sends out here via her husband Tom.

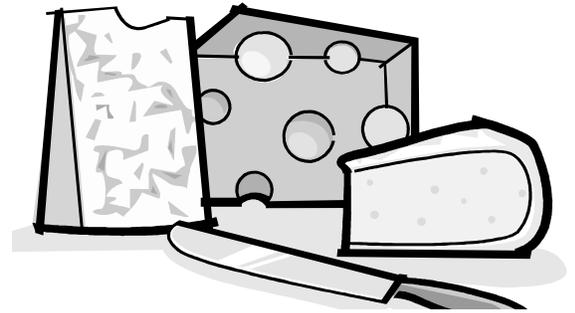


IN A SEPTEMBER 10 NEW YORK TIMES OP-ED EDITORIAL, STAFF COLUMNIST FRANK BRUNI asks the question: *“Just How Flagrant Does a Pedophile Need to be Before the People Around Him Contact the Police?”*

The continued accusations and new revelations of sexual abuse against children by those in leadership positions in the Catholic Church and the “hushed” atmosphere that prevailed before finally being revealed should have warned others to be aware. Now major accusations against the Boy Scouts of America and secret files of unreported abuse(s) against Scouts are being revealed causing law suits and defamation of their good name will soon emerge into millions of dollars in judgments is just beginning. I pick up the paper and read of a prominent Church in Oklahoma where staff members are accused of crimes against children and members of the church staff that knew about the crimes “did not report the incidents for two weeks.” Our local paper said the senior pastor “thought the staff members followed church procedure.” In Kansas City the Bishop who knew of the abuses of the Priest, but failed to report same, was convicted of being criminally culpable for his inaction. He was the first Bishop ever to be convicted. Last year, here in Arkansas a pastor was fined \$500.00 for not reporting an incident in the church where he was pastor. I do not know what will happen in the mega church, but I do know that some of the staff members have been charged for “not reporting.”

The song goes like this: “Jesus loves the little children/All the children of the world” and you know the rest. We can sing it but do we protect the children? Is this just a song or do we mean it? Jesus gave his life to protect us, if we are imitators of Christ, then why don’t we protect and cherish the children? And why do some profess to be believers and at the same time think that abortion is a “woman’s right”, but the child has “no rights?”

A FRIEND OF MINE AND TO RESTORATION VILLAGE DIED LAST MONTH. Except to a few people in Tulsa, he was mostly an unknown person. His long time illnesses kept him at home most of the time and he depended upon others to secure his groceries, his personal needs, and materials to create the masterpieces of needle point that kept him busy with his hands and allowed him to have some extra spending money. He was a pacifist, mainly because of the awful things that he saw and tried to repair in the lives of the wounded during his healthy years as an overseas nurse in war torn nations. We used to talk about those things until his health began to decline during the last six years. Jay was a financial contributor to Restoration Village from the first year (1989) because he knew that people here at the Village would get a chance for grace and redemption. Every time I traveled to Tulsa I had to visit Jay as he had bags of cheeses, homemade seasonings, and enough spaghetti sauce to fill up the back seat of the automobile. He loved the newsletters, often called me and we talked about the newsletter until the weakness of his illness robbed him of his strength and then he would encourage me and say tell Beverly hello and wish he could come see us.



I visited with Jay five days before his death at the hospital and asked him how he wanted me to pray for him? He could barely speak, but asked, “Bless me with prayer that it comes quickly,” I did pray his request for five days. Jay did “Rage, Rage against the dying of the light” (Dylan Thomas poem) for the final days, but then succumbed. Jay Whitwill had no memorial service and had requested that his ashes be buried in Pennsylvania at an Amish farm as they were the peaceful peoples that he so admired. His wishes were completed. I will see him again someday, healthy, laughing, no coughing, no diabetes, and still needle pointing some of the most beautiful works of art that heaven will be enjoying. I suspect he will greet me the same as when he called to talk about a newsletter, “This is Jay and how many people you got there at the Village now and how are you doing?”

