

Wreaking Havoc On America

Matt Friedeman - Guest Columnist - 6/24/2008 12:25:00 PM

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Note from Pastor Kevin Lea: I pray the Lord Jesus will keep the families in this church from experiencing the havoc that Matt describes below. To do so will take a love for Jesus as your Lord and Savior, a love for God's Word and the power of the Holy Spirit to do what it says.

James 1:21 Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. 22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; 24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. 25 But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does. (NKJ)



Friedeman

There are four "modern horsemen of the apocalypse," according to Dr. Richard Land in remarks delivered to the annual Southern Baptist Convention in Indianapolis, and they are "riding forth to wreak havoc and destruction in our society." Land listed the four as the denial of the sanctity of human life, the rise of hardcore Internet pornography, the radical homosexual agenda and the attempt to undermine marriage, and radical Islamic jihadism.

Scary enough list. Here's an even scarier one:

- The inactive, rudderless Church
- Fatherlessness
- Undisciplined prosperity
- The values of popular culture

Let's take these in reverse order:

The values of popular culture

Popular culture comes to us in many ways, most of them with the unfettered approval of evangelical Christians. We of the faith watch just as much television as the secular world. We allow our kids to view MTV just as much, R-rated movies to the same extent, listen to hip-hop and secular rock music, and are just as open to the lowest common denominators in Internet

and computer games.

Through these technological media our children, our teens, and none-too-few adults learn the majority of their life lessons about sex, drug use, violence, family, materialism, and peer relationships. And the lessons are hardly reflective of Judeo-Christian tradition, which receives much less of our time and attention on a daily basis. Small example -- the average television viewing per home is seven hours a day ... more American households have televisions than indoor plumbing ... the average American preschooler watches an average of four hours of television daily.

Care to guess how much the average household spends in private or family devotions, or how much daily conversation actually passes between parent and teen?

Undisciplined prosperity

Undisciplined prosperity and the development of Mammonites is a curse to any generation. It is an easy thing to get wrapped up in the pursuit of happiness and to forget that the pursuit of holiness ought to trump the former. Money, possessions, and comforts tend to fuzz up the clear thinking of a culture until the stern virtues of hard work, frugality, integrity, sacrifice, self-denial, and biblical righteousness -- the things that led to the foundation of our prosperity -- are shoved to life's periphery. The prophets and teachers of Scripture knew this, which is why the Bible talks four to five times as much about money as it does about the vitally imperative topics of prayer or faith. Undisciplined prosperity that makes "self" the focus instead of God and others becomes the millstone around the neck of a once moral people.

Undisciplined prosperity tends to make a people sloppy, selfish and arrogant. And it is an age-old problem, as can be seen from this description of Sodom's sin in Ezekiel 16:49:

Now this was the sin of your sister Sodom: She and her daughters were arrogant, overfed and unconcerned; they did not help the poor and needy.

Part of this sloppiness becomes the sense of entitlement -- the attitude that even if I can't afford it, I will get it. Call it debt -- whether through personal credit cards or government borrowing. Debt is no friend to society and, left unchecked, an ultimately lethal enemy.

Fatherlessness

We ought to be alarmed with the redefinition of marriage by the homosexuals. But that is not the worst of our problems ... not even close. President Lyndon Johnson in 1965 at Howard University said,

The family is the cornerstone of our society. More than any other force it shapes the attitude, the hopes, the ambitions, and the values of the child. And when the family collapses, it is the children that are usually damaged.

When it happens on a massive scale, the community itself is crippled.

And so, Johnson signed into law the modern welfare state. He and the legislators of that era felt compassion for the poor and said to young girls that if they had babies out of wedlock, they would receive monetary support. More kids, more money. And these young women were told that the only way to stop the flow of government's compassion was to get married or get a job. The girls caught on fast. In 1960, five percent of all births were out of wedlock; 30 years later it was 30 percent and rising fast. Indeed, in my home state of Mississippi the birthrate is now 54 percent unwed mothers overall, and a whopping 80 percent among African-Americans.

To get a feel for the effect of this, visit any jail or prison in the state and ask the incarcerated men how many were raised in a family where the father was regularly present. Fewer than one hand in ten might rise. Unwed mothers and divorce usher in the worst nightmares of a culture -- increased incidents of youth suicide, crime, poor education performance, mental illness, violence, and drug use.

We can become obsessed with the homosexual revolution, and perhaps we should. But this "heterosexual" revolution has caused and will continue to cause the greater share of American grief.

The inactive, rudderless Church

If the church of Jesus Christ, whose congregations number in the hundreds of millions in America, was doing what she were supposed to be doing ("... created in Christ Jesus to do good works"), a whole host of problems would be taken care of in short order. Indeed, instead of four horsemen of the apocalypse, we may do well to concentrate heaviest on this primary one. An inactive and ineffective church, ignoring the call to be holy, is as bad as a culture can hope for. To have a faith that is comfortable inside the confines of worship but remains unreleased into the world is, really, no faith at all.

Dennis Kinlaw recalls one of his tasks as a boy -- gutting a pig and hanging it in the smokehouse for his mother. One day, she asked her son to retrieve that ham, for special company was expected at their dinner table. He dutifully grabbed the meat and took it to his mother, who cut it with a butcher knife. Her mood suddenly soured, as the boy approached to investigate to find out that the meat was now oozing with maggots. She said somewhat forcefully to Kinlaw: "Not enough salt, Dennis, not enough salt."

When the church isn't the salt of the earth or the light of the world, disaster awaits. And the coming disaster, caused by Christian fecklessness, is the rise of paganism, cults, and Islam. None of these can compete with a vitalized, loving, compassionate church.

Luther had a phrase -- "*Cor incurvatus ad se*" ... a heart turned in on itself; a basic definition of sin. Ecclesiastically applied, there is nothing worse. The

Church was not meant simply for itself; it was made for others.

And the world is waiting for us.

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