

A Preach-y Pistle to my Grandchildren

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Beloved Children:

Are you surprised that I would preach to you? Well, I am old (I can remember when a nickel could buy a package of gum, or a cup of coffee, or a coke, or a ride in a taxi that was called a Jitney Bus) enough to have the right to preach to you young people.

Today's letter is all about signs. Do you know what a sign is, Bill? You say, "Something that represents something else"? Yes, partly. Sherry, can you add to that definition? You say that a sign shows something that cannot yet be seen? Yes, that explains it a bit better.

You are all acquainted with signs all about us. When driving down a rural road, and we see by the side of the road a white post with black-and-white cross pieces at a forty-five degree angle to the post, we say to the driver, "Watch out! There is a railroad track there, and maybe a train is coming." Or, if while driving in the city between rows of buildings, we come to two red lights on a post at the curb, and the lights start flashing, we say, "Stop. There is a train coming!" No, you do not yet see the train which is a-coming. You only see the sign that signifies that it is coming. So, although you do not yet see the train, you had better believe the sign! We call those red light sign(als). Even the word, signature, has that same idea in it. When you receive a letter you first look at the sign(ature), so that in your mind's eye you can see the writer.

In somewhat that sense, Christ spoke of signs. Shall we look at a few of them? In Matthew twelve, some of Christ's enemies asked for a super-natural sign to prove His authority to teach God's will. Our Lord refused their request. He said, "You already have a sign in your Scriptures. You know that Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days. Jonah preached to the city of Nineveh and they repented of their sins." You see: Jesus showed them that the sign (signal?) of Jonah was indicating an un-seen thing in the future. What was that not-yet-seen thing? This: That Jesus preached to them but that they do not believe Him, and unlike the Ninevites, they do not repent. They would ignore the sign(al) of Jonah and will be destroyed by the approaching train-the judgment of God upon those who would deliver Him up to death and His three-day grave.

A very long time ago, before you were born, in the time of World War II, England was subjected to air-raids by their enemy, Germany. Their planes would drop bombs on the large cities. When such raids were approaching their shores, the English air raid sirens would wail for everyone to hear and heed. The signal said, "Everybody into the air raid shelters!" Now, the people could not yet see the planes, but when they heard those sirens they could see them in their mind's eyes, and would hurriedly seek shelter to prevent being destroyed.

Our Savior also spoke of other kinds of air raid sirens. Read about it in Matthew 24:24,30; Mark 13, and Luke 21:11,25. But because those signs are still in the future, we cannot understand them yet. Just as George Washington would not have understood someone speaking of flashing red lights as railroad signals, they had not yet been invented. Christ spoke of the sun and moon being darkened. Who can understand how that will be? He spoke of the heavens being shaken, dropping stars down like a fig tree drops figs. We can imagine that a little bit because we have already seen a star fall. But our Lord Jesus spoke of a much more mysterious sign. He called it, "The Sign of the Son of Man." We do not understand what that sign will be; but we will know it for what it signifies then! That will be the air raid siren that will be the end of all air raid sirens. The great difference between England's sirens and Christ's last siren is that England was being warned of the enemy, while the last one will tell us, "To lift up your heads for our

redemption draweth nigh." That last sign will be the signal that our Friend and Lord is invading the land-His Own earth. Then we will know that, as flashing red lights warn of an approaching train, so His sign will loudly proclaim that our risen and Glorified Lord, the Lord of Heaven and earth is "coming around the bend" to judge the living and the dead.

Already today we hear of events in this world of which Christ foretold, which are also His first-warning-signs: earthquakes, floods, storms, flu epidemics; all of which are called, pre-cursory signs. Pre-cursory means introductory. They are those which introduce the coming of the following ones. At an airport terminal we notice pre-cursory signs of an on-coming plane, while that plane is still out of sight. We see the porters busy placing the baggage carts in position to receive the plane's cargo. So, seeing that activity, we say, "It must be that our plane is coming in soon."

So, after many years of those introductory signs, the Day approaches, as our Lord taught us in the Parable, the signal is given, "The Bridegroom cometh, the Bridegroom cometh!" Then do not get caught unawares like the five Foolish Virgins who had lamps which could not be lighted because they had neglected to get oil for them.

I wonder what that means for you young people today. Maybe it means that in your Foolish unpreparedness you had flashlights, but had neglected to get batteries. Maybe it means that you were too busy watching the Devil's Hollywood productions on the boob-tube, that Theatrical Villain, in that church members' living room, den, bedroom, movie house. So busy that you had no time to prepare for your Sunday School lessons, your catechism and young peoples' meetings. Too busy trying to be "one of the boys" chumming with those who experiment with "pot", "beanies" or whatever name you give the latest in drug poisoning. Too busy making and enjoying a dance-date at a local Bar, so that you have no desire to double-date with Christian young people spending time in wholesome entertainment, with another couple who confess the same Lord as you do. Does this sound like I am writing to one of my own grandchildren? To young people who go to catechism, to Sunday School, and young peoples' societies in one of our churches? Yes, sad to say. Besides making your gramp and gram sad, your father and mother, your ministers are sad. But, and this is worse, you also grieve the Holy Spirit with such business which contributes to unpreparedness to meet the Lord when He comes again.

And why am I writing all about the end of the world to you young people and children? I'll tell you why. Jesus is coming to judge the living and the dead. And who will be living in that Day? Grandfathers, grandmothers, fathers, mothers, young people and children, that's who! Does that list leave anyone out? Jesus said, "When ye see these things come to pass, know that the Kingdom of God is at hand." That is what it is all about. The Kingdom is near. What Kingdom? That Kingdom in which the Risen and Glorified Christ shall reign in the New Earth - and we with Him!

Listen! Is that a siren I hear?
Love, Gramp.

Originally Published in:
Vol 37 No 3 May 1978