

“By Their Fruits Ye Shall Know Them”

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The gentle Savior said, “Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them” (Mt. 7:15-20). It is paradoxical that many do not prefer the language of scripture describing the Christian as clad in spiritual armor (Eph. 6:10-17). Biblical imagery of fighting and warring against the devil is viewed as distasteful (I Tim. 6:12; II Cor. 10:1-5; I Pet. 2:11). And, yet the demand of the Savior cannot successfully be refuted that he expects every follower of his to be a fruit inspector. The language is just as potent in this connection as in regard to the former, “Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.”

For many years now, efforts have been made to caution against departing into denominationalism by heeding the self-styled “change agents” who are high on the community church movement with its restructuring of the church and its so-called “contemporary worship.” Yet, unfortunately, a fresh, new example has emerged right here in Memphis. The Bailey Station Church of Christ has purchased a new campus and built a new building and announces through the local paper, *The Commercial Appeal*, that it has become Grace Crossing Church (April 13, 2006, B12; April 15, 2006, B6).

One of the “shepherds,” Ken Gilbert, said, “We very much want to be a church that looks first to meet people’s needs, not to advance an agenda or make a demand.” Perhaps the “shepherd” does not remember or know that Jesus Christ said, “But those mine enemies, which would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and slay them before me” (Lk. 19:27). Jesus Christ expects to “reign over” people, and those that are unwilling to relate to any of his “demands” ought to take heed to what he has promised to do to them.

Twenty-eight year old Tony Brown is the Worship Leader which according to the paper means,

“They’ll be more options open to him as Worship Leader. His is an eclectic role, everything from selecting songs, videos and audio clips, choosing scripture, leading the Praise Team and producing dramatic presentations.” *The Commercial Appeal* reported, “From what I’ve got [sic] from the shepherds and the leadership is that everybody at the church has been waiting for someone to come in and give them permission to do whatever is conducive for them in their worship,” Brown said. ‘And if that means clapping, raising their hands shouting out our if that means getting on their knees or standing up or sitting – whatever they need to do for worship I want to be open for that and allow them to be comfortable in God’s presence and allow them to be themselves in a worship setting.’ And while it is tradition in the Church of Christ for all songs to be played without accompaniment, Brown plans to add in instrumental service on Thursday night. But that is just one of Brown [sic] new ideas to incorporate into the worship process, once the church has settled into its new home. Contemporary music with instrumental accompaniment is one of many worship innovations on the horizon at Grace Crossing Church.”

Clearly, the attitude toward worship expressed by Grace Crossing Church is unlike that called for by the Lord himself in John 4:23-24 and practiced by his church in Acts 2:42 and more like what Moses saw when he descended mount Sinai, “And the Lord said unto Moses, Go, get thee down; for thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves: They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them: they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt” (Exod. 32:7-8).

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