

NEWS AND VIEWS
MOUNT OLIVET BAPTIST CHURCH

3500 Edwards Mill Road, Raleigh, North Carolina 27612-5362

Phone... (919) 787-1910
E-mail: office@mobic.org
Web Page: www.mobic.org

*“Southern Baptists with the Full
Gospel for the Whole World”*

SAM GORE, Senior Pastor
EDITH JACKSON, Prayer Coordinator

NANCY MCBRAYER, Office Manager
MIKE KING, Maintenance Supervisor

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By the time you read this newsletter I will have preached a sermon called *Thanksgiving in Distress*. Lately I have been grieving over what appears to be a shrinking and diminishing holiday that folks in our culture used to set aside for a time of thanksgiving. It has been a favorite time of year for me for as long as I can remember. But it seems to be shrinking. It seems to have lost its value for the culture at large. Disappearing before my very eyes. It's just another day off work for a lot of people. Soon it may be only just another day. It already is for many. So if this is a real situation, Thanksgiving is really fading away, what might be some of the contributing causes of this troubling cultural condition?

Could it be that Thanksgiving Day serves best as a bridge between Halloween and Christmas? Or, writing from a more culturally correct perspective, between *Halloween and the Holidays*. In times not too distant I remember Thanksgiving Day meal preparations when some of the cooks had forgotten to purchase pumpkin for the pie filling, or cranberry sauce for the dressing. It was almost Mission Impossible to find a store open, even a convenience store. But today, you don't have to wait till Black Friday to get the best deals...it's all too convenient. You can start holiday shopping or shopping for Christmas even on Thanksgiving Day!

Could it be that Thanksgiving isn't so much getting smaller...but the Holidays are getting so much bigger? Is my beloved Thanksgiving Day getting swallowed up by a ravenous cultural desire to buy more than we need with less than we have? I read somewhere that the wealth that exchanges hands in preparation to celebrate Halloween now comes in second only behind the Christmas, or Holiday shopping season. I guess masquerading and costuming has outgrown the children...or maybe it's because the children who still have some growing to do have never stopped pretending. And today there is a whole lot of pretending going on. Our holidays seem to be all about giving us what we want. We are the center of our celebration. So why are we so sad?

Could it be that so many in our culture diminish Thanksgiving and speak not of Christ and Christmas because they cannot give thanks to One they do not know or reverence One they will not name? A man who does not know God will not call Him by name. He will not thank God for His provision when in his mind he is a self-made man or what he receives is distributed by the hand of government. So who's there to thank in that scenario? In my lifetime I have seen godless cultures around the world disintegrate and a godly culture here at home degenerate. The concept of being God forsaken can apply to a land or a people or a culture. And it seems that it's looking more and more like that is our condition. Judgment on unbelief brings desolation.

But for the people of God...who are called by His name...it is a most exciting time to be alive. When the people around us move from one holiday to another, living out their purposeless existence, this is a time when we can fulfill the purpose for which we were created. We aren't the only worshippers of God ever to be burdened with oppressive man-centered governance that results in physical hardship and a diminished recognition of the Person of God and His authority.

From an earthly king came a decree...*Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus, that a census be taken of all the inhabited earth...* But God had a message...*Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people; for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.* The gospel is still our hope...remember the Lord your God...worship Him and Him alone...Jesus is Lord!

My Christmas message...the looming disaster of the implementation of Obamacare is not the greatest disaster facing the people in our culture...forgetting God and being God forsaken is.

Christmas Blessings to you,
Pastor Sam