

MT. OLIVET BAPTIST CHURCH, 3500 Edwards Mill Road, Raleigh, NC 27612
NEWS & EVENTS – November 2023

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

SAM GORE, Senior Pastor
NANCY MCBRAYER, Office Manager
MIKE KING, Maintenance Supervisor

Thorns and snares are in the way of the perverse; he who guards himself will be far from them.
(Proverbs 22:5)

As a boy I discovered that the sweetest blackberries seemed to grow on the thorniest bushes. I loved tasting the flavor of the blackberries in jellies and pies, but I preferred that the berries were gathered by someone else. You could get hurt in the harvesting. My memory recalls the place where my granny would harvest blackberries in their season. I grew up hearing them called briarberries. Or *briberries*, in the vernacular of some South Carolinians. The berries grew in a patch of uncultivated land adjacent to the plowed, furrowed, and planted rows on the farm. They grew wild there. These plants were uncultivated, and grew wild in the woods, hillsides, and hedgerows, and flourished in many places that looked like wasteland. They still do.

In those days I would wander around on that farm learning lessons about life. The first lesson is that you didn't have to plant blackberries. They naturally grew there and year after year the thorny bushes produced sweet fruit. Their fruit was an enticement to enter in. One trip into that thorny patch of ground taught me that the thorns would win, and you paid a price. The wounding was a deterrent unless you were skilled enough to harvest the berries. My granny was able. She was good at gathering. And I was excellent at eating. Blackberry cobbler is still high on my favored food list. Now consider our proverb's teaching. Pain is present in the way of the perverse. This word means crooked, twisted, or out of order. If we live outside of the influential and authoritative presence of God, it's like growing up in the briar patch. The attraction of sweet fruit leads us into thorny ground. If the thorns don't stop us from entering, the traps will surely catch us. The systems of this fallen world attract us with an illusion that they will provide for us. Sin is pleasurable for a season. The promise of provision is elusive. But there is great hope for those of us who guard ourselves. There is a God who guards and guides us into living righteous lives. Among the thorns of this world, God is our provider. He keeps His promises.

I hear these days that agricultural scientists have developed thorn free bushes. Sometimes the mind of man will imagine amazing things. A blackberry without thorns. Who would have thought of that? Here's what the Mind of Christ produces. The truth is that God's way is the right way. The perverse cannot see the right side of life. They are too busy living the wrong way. Too ensnared and entangled to be free. Unrighteousness delivers thorns. Righteousness delivers us into God's presence. He is able to produce sweet fruit even in the midst of thorny ground. King Jesus was crowned with thorns as a mockery of sinful men. The crown of thorns reminds us that our Lord lived a righteous life...that's the sweet part...to break the curse of sin...that's the bitter part. The work of removing the curse of sin has begun in the Cross of Christ. It will be completed when the curse of the old earth is finally removed and the new earth is inhabited by the Lord Jesus and the people who follow Him.

Think about guarding your life today. Unless we are depending upon God to guard us and guide us, we will continue to get trapped in thorny ground. We were born in the briar patch. As believers, or Christ followers, we can hope in the reality of a home on high and continue to be ensnared and entangled with living in the low ground. There are thorns and traps that come with living too close to the briar patch. Don't let the taste of good things apart from God's presence become our bondage. Stay away from the traps of sin. God will show us how to guard our lives. Getting into His Word, and guided by God's Spirit, is the remedy that leads to righteous living.

Jesus is coming...O Lord, hasten that day...Come Lord Jesus. A world without *briberries*. I can only imagine, yet still I know, that these things be true.

Blessings to you and Thanksgiving to Our God,
Pastor Sam

(If you are unable to attend Mt. Olivet's 11 AM Sunday worship service in person, can go to website www.mobc.org and click on "Worship Services" for live streaming or prior messages.)