

## Guest Editorial

### EMPTY NETS

Editor, "Pilgrim Holiness Advocate"

Small churches are not an oddity; there are many of them in the land. Some of them are legitimately small because they have only recently been organized, or are so located geographically as to draw a limited number of worshipers. But it is also true that some small churches have been in operation for a number of years and are in communities where the potential attendance certainly is much larger than those that now come. The question arises as to why some churches remain so small, so long.

One reason may be that some of us have become too exclusive. We want our own little crowd, and that's it. But certainly this notion hardly corresponds with the scriptural concept of things. God tells us that he "so loved the world," and we have been commissioned to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.

Surely our evangelistic efforts fall short of what God intended for the church, if they only touch those within our four walls. Small vision and small effort can only produce small results.

Some churches are small because of a lack of divine blessing. There is little or no holy fire burning on the altars of the church. There could be several reasons for this. We cannot grieve the Holy Spirit along any line and expect much victory. Sometimes the trouble is a lack of unity within the church. If the church is filled with dissension, it doesn't take long to get out. And who wants to worship in a church where there is contention and squabbling? There have been instances where the church lost its field for a decade because of trouble within the fold itself!

Perhaps some of us are too small in our faith and in our praying. Certainly a church is never greater than its outreach in prayer and faith. Prayerlessness results in powerlessness. This is true of both the pulpit and the pew. When the prayer life of the church has deteriorated and waned, its ability to reach others for Christ also diminishes.

It is perfectly possible for churches to remain small because they refuse to accept new ideas and larger concepts of service. Sometimes when new ideas of service are proposed, they are rejected largely because they are new and different. We ought to be careful not to hinder the work of God by an unwillingness to launch out in new fields of service. Some churches apparently have found it easier to change pastors than to change a time-worn way of doing things.

And when we are asking why the church stays small so long, it is well to remember that the inadequacy of the leadership can be a hindrance to the growth of any church. God's work needs men and women who are scripturally prepared "unto every good work."

The early Pentecostal church was comparatively small in numbers; only 120 waited in the upper room. But under the leadership of the Spirit-filled apostles and the divine anointing of the Holy Ghost, the church grew and spread and carried the gospel abroad throughout the known world.

A consideration as to why so many small churches remain small so long, can lead to many bypaths. But usually the basic reason is to be found within the church itself. Let nothing that is being done for God be discounted, but neither let us be content with empty nets. The One whom we call Master and Lord waits to prepare our hearts and to direct our thoughts and efforts in fruitful toil.

"And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore,

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and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes" (John 21: 6).

## THE CHRISTIAN AS A WORKINGMAN

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They called Jesus the "Carpenter of Nazareth," and all who knew Him or have read of Him admit that His work must have been thorough. His foster father, Joseph, was a carpenter before Him, and we read that Jesus was subject to His parents, so that He must have submitted to training in woodwork in His father's shop.

So far as we can ascertain by reading between the lines of the Gospel record, Jesus must have remained at the carpenter's bench until He was thirty years of age, when He suddenly obeyed the God-given urge to proclaim Himself as the "Son of Man," and began His three-years' ministry.

Ever since that day, men have toiled at the plough or the anvil or the bench with a feeling of pride that they were following the pattern of One who could have lived in royal palaces if He so desired, but who chose to be born in a stable and live among working folk—the peasants of Galilee—whose hands were as work-hardened as theirs.

Christians have always believed in getting and holding a job. They read in their Bible, "If a man does not work, neither shall he eat," and they see other reference in the Word to the beauty of toil and the evil of idleness. They carry their religion into their work, for they know that God abhors faulty workmanship, laziness, or a deliberately-concealed flaw. They are honest and sincere, so that they work just as hard when the boss is around as when he is in another part of the factory or office.

They believe in giving the boss full value for the wages he gives them on Friday night, but they have been quick to come to the defence of a mate whom they feel has been unfairly treated. They support strikes when they feel they are the only means of obtaining fair conditions, but they never resort to violence—either in language or action—because they know it is out of keeping with the spirit of the lowly Nazarene Carpenter.

Many outstanding Christians are members—or even officials—of unions, but they are not a party to those phases of unionism which have brought the movement—in some places—into disrepute. Such tactics as ganging up on a man who refuses to join the union, or deliberately damaging property during a wage dispute, or aiding and abetting an official who is known or suspected of dishonest and wrong methods, even if opposing him means being penalized, are not tolerated by the true Christian worker.

There is much condemnation of the strike these days, and what some folk call the "insatiable demand for ever higher wages," but while unreasonable demands are to be deplored, everyone admits that a man have a living wage in these days of skyrocketing prices.

So many people forget the plight of the workingman in the days gone by (and still extant in unenlightened countries), when he "had to take it" however cruelly he was treated; when he had no redress, and when it was illegal to strike. Men were deported in those days for standing up for their rights, but gradually the employers were led to see that if they did not treat their workers fairly, they and their business would suffer for it.

Thus the unions came into being. Some say they may have replaced the "boss" in tyranny, and some have unquestionably been unwisely led. But most of the unions are well-organized, fair and just. They favor negotiation, and strive to keep their demands reasonable. These bodies

(Continued on Page 4)