

## SIGNS OF THE TIMES

*"And you shall hear of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not alarmed; for this must take place, but the end is not yet. For nation must rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places; all of this is but the beginning of the sufferings..." (Mt. 24: 7-8) Floods and storms could have been added, even dry spells and global warming. There does appear to be cycles in the nature of things and events. But here Jesus is issuing a warning. Do not believe everything that you hear, seriously regard what is going on around you, and above all, keep your own life above reproach.*

*And that brings us to the storms and earthquakes, and flood, and the wars that are going on around us, and to news reports! ... and the news reporting, what a mixed up, perverted, self-serving, truth shading, and outright misinformation that is! As one reads and listens, alertness and discernment must be practiced.*

*A long time ago, very long ago. I was a lad of ten or twelve years and my parents had given a couple of sisters a home. They were cousins of some distant kind and they needed a home. At the time we subscribed to the county newspaper. It was a good paper in many ways and was very useful. One day one of the sisters was reading the paper and came upon something that bothered her. She looked up and said: "Isn't everything that is printed true?" She was a very innocent soul and my parents very gently explained to her that sometimes something that wasn't the whole truth got printed. Sometimes it was an accident and at other times the truth was*

*actually twisted, spun, deliberately and for a reason. From that day forward the sister read the news with greater discernment!*

*Today we are aware that much of the reporting regarding "Katrina", the storm, was far off the mark. There never were 500 bodies stacked in the sports arena. Shootings and rapes did not occur there. In fact some of the on-the-scene reporters were so ridiculous that I, with some sort of humor, dubbed them, the "storm idiots". They garbed themselves in all manner of storm garments, coats, caps, boots... They found positions, safe of course, where the wind was blustery, rain falling and they lifted their mikes and started telling us what we were clearly seeing... wildly pointing, eyes glaring... clowns doing their act on a stage of tragedy! That is our contemporary media at work.*

*Recently a headline asks, "Will the news change?". Add to that "News media" and the answer is "Yes" and "No". Of course the "news media" will seek to use all technical advances in communication. The news media is a business and it seeks to utilize business methods and techniques. No, the news media will not change its method of dealing with news features. It will continue to "spin" items of news. It will engage in character trashing. It will continue to create and dispense false reports. Depending upon its agenda and to whose advantage, it will truthfully report some occasions and events. As Jesus said, "The end is not yet..."*

*Thus we are reminded that the reporting of the news media greatly affects the ministry of the Church. One source reported that 30,000 Catholics are engaged in parish ministry and that 80% of them are women. For readers who are Presbyterians that reminds of*

*us of how Presbyterian women have always been in the forefront pushing for the meeting of human needs. Patsy Turner, born in 1875, is an early example. For 68 years she rode a mule, walking part of time, through the hills and valleys of Breathitt County, Kentucky ministering to mountain folk who were in need. Bringing the Church and Christian concerns to the mountain people. So have the women of the church ministered through the years.*

*There is a thing known as Presbyterian "ETHOS" that also brings Presbyterian men on to the scene of action. ETHOS: a distinct tone, guiding principles, rules by which to live... A German historian, Ranke, said, "John Calvin was the virtual founder of America." Of course, Calvin never made it to these shores but many of his disciples, principles and codes of ethics did. Robert Spears, stalwart Presbyterian, quipped: "It is true, the wicked flee when no one pursues, but he maketh better time when some one is after him!" He was proposing the principles of justice, morality, and the need for men to stand for, and establish such ideals in the whole world. William Brewster, elder, brought Calvin's Institutes, via the Mayflower, to this Country. Thus, Presbyterian history becomes a roll call of women and men who, throughout our history, have made great moral, political, economic, religious contributions to our country. As I write, Iraq is voting on its new Constitution. It may too become a free land. Fourteen signers of our Declaration of Independence were Presbyterians. Now there are many "signs of the times" that are signaling members of the Presbyterian Church to*

*actively honor our history! Also, the signs are telling us that the Christian Faith is coming up against some hard times as history turns.*

*The October 2005 issue of Presbyterians Today does a marvelous and impressive job of capturing some of the Presbyterian ETHOS! This is done though such articles as "Grace on The Table", "Do it Well" by Stated Clerk Betterick, "Living Our Witness", the numerous articles on youth and adult ministries, and just the general tone of this issue.*

*Pastors, elders, teachers and members would do well to devote time to absorbing the spirit of this issue. Pastors could find a month of sermon themes here!*

*"Truly, we shall hear of wars and rumors of wars, storms, and terrorists, ugliness and goodness, but the end is not yet..."*

*Hughston R. Peyton  
10-17-05*