



## A VIOLIN PREACHES

My wife and I are very thankful to be able to visit our son, Tony, and our daughter-in-law, Christy, and our three precious granddaughters, Angie, Ashley and Abby, during this Thanksgiving season. And we are certainly thankful to be able to worship with you here at the Lakota Christian Church one more time. You know it has been interesting having Tony as a son. During my lifetime he has played many infamous tricks on me. He didn't know how dangerous it was to ask me to preach this morning because this gives me an opportunity to tell a story on him.

I understand that at the time Lakota Christian Church interviewed Tony to hire him for his position, they felt like one of the things that was needed for the minister of this brand new church (at that time) was a minister with mathematical ability. So, as the committee interviewed Tony they said "We have three questions that we want to ask you. If you pass this test well you will be our minister. And we will permit you to use a calculator." So Tony said, "Fire away." So the committee said, "All right; this is question number one. Name two days of the week starting with 'T'." He said, "I don't need a calculator for that, it's 'today' and 'tomorrow'." The committee looked at him and said, "Well, that wasn't exactly what we were expecting, but come to think of it, I guess that's correct. We'll go on with the second question. How many seconds are there in a year?" Tony said he didn't need a calculator for that either. "Twelve." The committee said, "How did you come up with that?" He said, "January 2nd, February 2nd, March 2nd...." They said, "Well, Tony, that wasn't exactly the answer we were expecting either, but you've got it. I guess that's right. We'll go on to the third question." Tony says, "OK, I'm ready for you." They said, "How many 'd's' are there in 'Rudolph the Red Nosed Reindeer'?" Tony said, "I'll need the calculator for that one, and they said OK. So he goes "480". The committee said, "Where in the world did you ever come up with an answer like that?" Tony said, "It's easy - 'deet deet de deet deet deet'".

Now because your minister is such a whiz in mathematics, you've had a really great financial campaign.

We have enjoyed getting those tapes every week and following your church services and the progress of this financial campaign. It's really been wonderful and I want to congratulate each member of the congregation on this campaign because I know that spiritually it has been very rewarding to you. As Esther and I have listened to the tapes we have really enjoyed the testimonies. They have been heartfelt and very rewarding.

Tony has asked me to play the violin and so I want to try to do that, because the sermon is also going to be preached from the violin and I want to do this in honor of God and in praise to his Holy Name.  
(Violin music)

The Bible says that we should praise God with stringed instruments. I hope that I have praised God for you this morning in playing that hymn "Blessed Assurance - Jesus is Mine".

In John the 1st Chapter and 29th verse - As John the Baptizer introduced Jesus Christ, the Bible puts it like this: **"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, Look the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."** As I see it - that is the mission of the church - the only mission of the church, to present Jesus Christ to this lost world as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.

### A WONDERFUL ILLUSTRATION ABOUT THE VIOLIN

When Eugene Restilli was the Director of the Great Chicago Symphony Orchestra; one night just before curtain time he noticed a disturbance in the last row of the violin section. One thing that Eugene demanded was strict attention and this angered him when he saw that disturbance and he took his baton and he cracked it across the conductor's stand and demanded to know the meaning for the disturbance. Immediately a poor old stage hand stepped forward, holding a battered violin in his hand and an old bow. He said, "Please Mr. Restilli don't be angry with your musicians; it was all my fault, this disturbance, I caused it. You see, unknown to you, every time your great orchestra has performed in this theatre I've been hidden behind the curtains playing my violin along with you, just for my own enjoyment. But this evening I was so busy getting this stage ready for the performance that I didn't have time to tune my violin, so I had whispered to one of your violinists, and I said 'please sound the A note so that I can tune my violin. You see Mr. Restilli it is the greatest joy of my life to play my violin with your orchestra, but I didn't want to run the risk of sounding the wrong note tonight and spoiling your performance.'" They say that the curtain was 5 minutes late in going up that night as Eugene Restilli personally walked over to the piano and sounded the A note so that one poor stage hand could tune his violin.

As I have pondered that story, it seems to me that is problem with the entire world of 2006. Most people are so busy with their own selfish interests that they don't have time to stop and help somebody else tune up their life with God. Consequently our world is in disharmony. There are many wars being fought. Many people are starving to death all over the world - simply because Christians have not taken time to help others get their life in tune with God. Some people are so important that they think they should play all of the solos, apparently thinking that they are the only ones in tune and that everybody else is out of tune. And oh my friends, it is my prayer that this morning as we have emphasized missions that each one of us will consider taking more time out of our busy schedules to personally help somebody else get in tune with God.

### THE 4 STRINGS ON THE VIOLIN

There are 4 strings on the violin. The "g" string, the "d" string, the "a" string and the "e" string. Each one of these strings must be in tune for the violin to be played melodiously. And there are 4 major concerns in life - all 4 must be in tune if we are going to be able to play in the divine symphony of God.

- I. **THE "G" STRING.** The bottom string on the violin is called the "g" string, because the "g" note of the musical scale sounds when you draw the bow across that open string. **The first string on the violin - the bottom string - reminds me of the first major concern of life - almighty God.** Our lives must be in tune with God. Every time I play on that "g" string of the violin it reminds me of God.

Most of the world does not know God. We who are Christians understand that we can know God through the Bible - His revelation. But what would you do if you lived in a nation where you did not have the Bible? What would you do, for example, if you lived in Russia the previous 75 years when the Communist regime burned the Bibles, destroyed the church buildings, murdered all of the preachers, and murdered (it has been estimated) up to 30 million Christians? Little wonder that the people of Russia do not know God. How can you know God without the Bible.

Here in America we are very blessed with Bibles. Every home in America probably has 10 or 20 Bibles lying around the house - most of them untouched and unread because we Americans say, "We know God; we have the Bible, and we have read the Bible." But I wonder have we really read the Bible and do we really study the Bible day by day? We can not only know God through his word, the Bible, but we can also know God through his son, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the teachings of Jesus.

I would like to refer to that teaching of God that comes from Luke the 15th chapter in that well-known story from our Lord Jesus Christ. You remember Jesus said there was a very rich man who had two sons. The younger son said, "Give me what is mine and let me go." And so the father divided his living and gave the younger son his inheritance and he took it and left for the far country. There he wasted his manhood, his substance and his integrity in riotous living. And Jesus said when he had spent everything living with the harlots he finally found himself unable to even feed himself. He got a job feeding the pigs, and in that lowly position as he fed the pigs he thought about his father and his home that he had left. He remembered that his father was rich and that even his father's servants had more than he had. So this younger son said, "I will arise and I will go home and I will say to my father, 'I have sinned; please let me come back and be a servant'." And so he got up out of the pignen and he started home.

Now as Jesus tells this story he shifts the scene at that point in the story and takes us back to the father. You see the father in this story that Jesus told is just like God. And we can learn what God is like by studying this story of the prodigal son. What was that father like? Was he angry? Was he waiting to beat his son or to kill his son? Oh no! He was a loving father; he was watching for his son to come back. And so he saw him while he was yet a long way off, and he rushed out to meet him and put his arms around him and hugged him, and he put the cloak upon his back and the ring upon his finger. Then he called for the fatted calf to be killed. He prepared for a great party to welcome his son back home. Because he said My son was lost but now he's found; my son was dead but now he is alive.

That story of the prodigal son teaches us what our God is like. Our God is not an angry God waiting to destroy us. Our God is a loving God who longs for us to come to him and say, "I'm sorry." He is just waiting to forgive us, waiting to welcome us home and to rejoice with a great big party.

But you see, the people of Russia have not known God. They have not realized that we have a loving Heavenly Father. And the peoples in far off Africa and China, and the millions in India who worship snakes, cows, and bugs and other animals for their gods, do not realize what a wonderful God that we have. That's why we need to be a mission-minded church. And that's why we need to go into all of the world and preach the Word of God everywhere, to everybody, so that all people can know God and get their lives in tune with God. That's what I think about every time that I play that "g" string of the violin. I think of God.

**II. We come now to the second string of the violin - the "d" string which sounds the "d" note of the musical scale when the bow is drawn across that open string. It reminds me of daily living.** I appreciated so much that first song that our musical group sang for us this morning. I believe that they were quoting the words of Eddie Guest when they sang, "I'd rather see a sermon than to hear one any day." Because how you live speaks so loudly that I cannot hear what you say. Day by day our lives show whether we are in tune or out of tune with God.

The story has been told - a rather amusing story - about a notorious self-tutor who

arose in prayer meeting one Wednesday night to brag about his righteousness. As this fellow gave what he called his testimony, he bent over and pointed to the knees of his trousers. He said, "I want everybody to notice how threadbare they are. It's evident when you look at my threadbare pants that I have been spending hours and hours of my life on my knees in prayer to God." A wag sitting behind him spoke up and said, "Brother, from where I'm sitting it looks like you've been doing some backsliding at the same time."

You see, if we are living daily Christian lives we don't have to put a tag on ourselves that says, "I love Jesus." We don't have to put a bumper sticker on our car that says, "Honk if you love Jesus." If our daily lives are in tune with God people will know it by the way we treat our dog or our cat. They will know it by the way we speak to our children. They will know it by the way we conduct our business. Daily our lives are a testimony either for God or against God. That's why the apostle Paul said in Romans 12:1-2 I urge you brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices holy and pleasing to God; this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind; then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is - His good, pleasing and perfect will.

So, the "g" string reminds me of God; the "d" string reminds me of our daily living that must be in tune with God.

### **III. That brings us then to the top string on the violin - called the "e" string.**

When you play on the "e" string of the violin you are able to reach the highest notes. You can play higher notes on the violin than you can reach on a piccolo or a flute, or any other musical instrument. By playing in the higher positions on the "e" string of the violin you can go into infinity. No one even knows how high you can actually go on the "e" string. **So that reminds me of the third major concern of life - and that's eternity.**

We are going to live forever. A thousand years from today we will be alive - somewhere, someplace. Either heaven or hell. Now when you think about it, that one thought should spur us on to greater missionary activity. The people in Africa - even those who are dying of starvation right now in Somalia - are going to be alive a thousand years from now - a million years from now. But the question is, "Where are they going to be living?" The people of Russia who have been under Communism so long are going to be alive a million years from now. Each living soul in this world is headed for eternity, including each one of us. And that leads me to ask, "Where are you going to spend your eternity?"

Long ago Billy Sunday once explained eternity like this. If God should commission a little bird to fly down from the skies and to brush with its wings the top of the highest mountain, and then if God would increase the life of that bird and then allow it to fly back here a thousand years from today and brush the top of the mountain once again; and if God should keep extending the life of that bird allowing it to come back once every thousand years brushing the top of the mountain, when that little bird finally worn this mountain down until it was nothing but the valley below, that would be five minutes out of eternity. Does that help us to realize how long eternity really is? It is forever! Life without end. Every time I play that "e" string on the violin it reminds me that our lives are bound for eternity, and I want to spend that eternity with God, don't you? And I want everyone else to spend that eternity with God. And how can they do it if we don't go and tell them about Jesus?

### **IV. That brings me to the fourth string on the violin.** I bet some of you thought I'd made a mistake, because I went from the "g" to the "d" to the "e", and you sat there

thinking, "Oh, he missed the 'a'." No, I didn't miss it. I purposely saved it until last. **Because the "a" string on the violin is the all-important string.** Did you ever notice the symphony orchestra when they tune, they sound the "a" note. And all of the stringed instruments tune to that all-important "a" string. After the "a" string is tuned correctly, then the "d" is tuned to the "a" - the "e" is tuned to the "a", and finally the "g" to the "d" - it all goes back to the "a" string; as the "a" is tuned correctly then the whole violin is tuned properly. But if the "a" is tuned incorrectly then the entire violin will be off key.

And that's the way it is with the major concerns of life. **Everything finally depends on the atonement of Jesus Christ.** He died upon the cross for our sins, shedding his blood so that our sins might be removed; so that we might be in tune with God; so that daily we can live our lives according to God's will. Finally, we might spend eternity with Him in heaven. But you see, if it were not for the atoning blood of Jesus then nothing else in life could be right.

#### A Story about Fritz Kreisler---the masterful violinist

When Fritz Kreisler was giving one of his great concerts, right in the middle of one of his pieces the "g" string broke. Now I can assure you that there is nothing anymore embarrassing to a violinist than to have such a thing happen. And that has happened to me, so I know whereof I speak. The audience was sympathetic; they really felt sad when this happened. Fritz Kreisler removed the violin from his chin and very dramatically he took those broken pieces of string and yanked them off the violin and angrily threw them on the floor.

The audience, that had at first sympathized, now turned against Fritz Kreisler with this display of temper. Much to their amazement, the great violinist reached down, grabbed hold of the "d" string and purposely broke it and threw the pieces on the floor. And then in rapid succession he reached down again and grabbed the "e" string and broke it, and threw the pieces on the floor. The audience began to murmur against him; they were thoroughly disgusted with this display of anger. Of course it was not anger at all; it was all part of the performance of this great master violinist. Now with one string remaining, Fritz Kreisler placed that violin underneath his chin and he began the piece over again; playing it with great artistry - as only he was able to do - with many shades and tones that brought out the meaning and the feeling of the piece until the audience was actually in tears. They had never heard anything like it. When he finished that piece, playing it all on the one remaining string, the "a" string - the audience stood up and wildly applauded. As they walked out of the concert hall that night you could hear people saying, "What a masterful violinist!" And he was!

What he had done was really great, but not nearly as great as what Almighty God has done.

You see, our God in Heaven has been playing the entire concert of redemption on one string - the atoning blood of Jesus. That's why John the Baptist announced him there in John 1:29, our text, when he introduced Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Jesus does that when we believe upon Him. When we repent of our sins; when we are willing to accept Him as personal savior and obey him in the waters of baptism. He has promised that there we will meet His cleansing blood; that He will remove our sins as far as the East is from the West and that we will have a brand new life to live for Him.

When Fritz Kreisler made his world tour he came to London, England, and there he was invited to visit in the home of a wealthy Englishman who owned a Stradivarius. Perhaps you've heard of Antonio Stradivarius, the greatest violinmaker in the history of the world. Antonio Stradivarius was born in Italy back in the 1700's. He carved great violins with his own hands, and to this day, the violins made by Antonio Stradivarius are considered to be the greatest, the most beautiful violins made in the history of the world. With all of our modern

technology, nobody ever yet has been able to figure out how Stradivarius cured the wood, or how he managed to carve those violins that are still today the most masterful of all violins.

Naturally, Fritz Kreisler was very anxious to see this Stradivarius violin that was owned by the wealthy Englishman in whose home he was a guest. After they had visited for just a little while, the Englishman brought up the subject of the Stradivarius and Kreisler said, "Could I hold it in my hands?" The Englishman was obviously pleased and got the violin out of the case where he kept it - where it was guarded and locked up. Kreisler handled this lovely instrument and then he said, "Could I play it?" And the Englishman said, "Why, I'd be honored to have you play my violin." And so Fritz Kreisler placed the violin under his chin and he began to play a beautiful melody. It moved the Englishman to tears. When Kreisler finished, he said, "I'd like to purchase it. I'm prepared to pay any price that you might ask."

Now those of you who know about Stradivarius violins know that they can't even be purchased with millions of dollars. They are literally priceless. And the Englishman looked at Kreisler and said, "All the money in the world would not pay for that violin. It's not for sale." Kreisler was very disappointed, but he put the violin under his chin and he began to play it some more. The Englishman sat there absolutely spellbound at the playing of Fritz Kreisler. Finally he spoke up and he said, "Mr. Chrysler, it's yours." Fritz Chrysler looked at him and he said, "Oh, you've changed your mind. You're going to sell it to me. How much do you want for it?" And the Englishman said, "No, it's not for sale, but you see, Mr. Kreisler, that violin doesn't belong locked up in a case where nobody can see it or hear it; that violin belongs to the master who can play it like it deserves to be played. I'm giving it to you." And so Fritz Kreisler toured the world from then on, thrilling audiences by the thousands wherever he went, playing on a real Stradivarius violin - the beautiful music that violin deserved to have played upon it, because he was the master.

#### THE TOUCH OF THE MASTER'S HAND

It was battered and torn; the auctioneer thought it scarcely worthwhile to spend much time with the old violin. But he held it up with a smile, and he said, "What am I bid for this old violin? Who'll start the bidding for me? I have a dollar. One dollar over here, who'll make it two? Two dollars - two, who'll make it three?"

Three dollars back there. Three dollars once, twice, and going for three?" Oh no. Far back in the room an old gray-haired man stepped forward. He picked up the bow. He began to play a melody that was sweet and low - as sweet as the angels sing. When the music had ceased, the auctioneer in a voice that was now quiet and low, said, "And now, what am I bid for this old violin? A thousand dollars, I have a thousand, who'll make it two? Two thousand dollars; two thousand, now who'll make it three? I have three thousand dollars - three and going for three!" The people cheered but then a few of them began to complain. We don't understand. What changed its worth? And the auctioneer replied, "T'was the touch of a master's hand."

And so many a man with life out of tune and a soul that's battered and torn, is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd much like the old violin. A mess of pottage, a glass of wine, a game and he travels on. He's going once, going twice, going and almost gone. But then Jesus comes and the foolish crowd never can quite understand - the difference it makes and the change that is wrought by the touch of the Master's hand.