

Not Worth A Plugged Nickel

Joe Slater

In early America some coins were made with a small silver disc in the center to give them value. A plugged nickel was one with the silver disc removed and replaced with a less valuable metal – thus to this day an item of little or no value is “not worth a plugged nickel.”

King David wrote long ago, *“The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold”* (Psalm 19:9b-10a). Another psalmist agreed: *“The law of Your mouth is better to me than thousands of coins of gold and silver”* (119:72).

Tragically, subsequent generations in Israel distorted God’s word with human traditions. At the time Jesus walked this earth, the religious elite viewed those traditions as equal to Scripture or even above it! They sharply criticized Jesus and His disciples for disregarding “the tradition of the elders” (i.e. the ancestors). But Jesus turned the tables on them! *“Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?”* (Matthew 15:3). Those traditions weren’t worth a plugged nickel! Jesus laid it on the line, applying Isaiah 29:13 to them: *“These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips. But their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men”* (Matthew 15:8-9).

Members of Christ’s body in the 21st century are not immune from the temptation to elevate human tradition as being equal to God’s word or even above it. Let us be ever vigilant to view Holy Scripture as of supreme value! “Have it your way” (the Burger King slogan) must never be our approach to spiritual matters. Compared to the precious word of God, nothing else is worth a plugged nickel!

Problems With Hogs

We have a real problem in our country – a hog problem. It is estimated that there are 2.5-2.6 million feral (wild) hogs in Texas. They cause \$50 million in property damage annually. If you think about it, hogs are a lot like sin:

- o Feral hogs are a man-made problem.
 - Hogs are not native to America but were brought here on the second voyage of Columbus in 1493.
 - Sin is a man-made problem; it started with Adam and Eve (Romans 5:12).
- o Hogs will destroy a beautiful green pasture or a residential yard.
 - Sin can destroy a beautiful life or relationship with hatred, lies, unfaithfulness.
- o A boar hog’s tusks can rip a hunting dog to pieces (dogs are man’s best friends).
 - Sin can destroy friendships through jealousy, envy, unresolved disagreements.
- o Hogs will destroy a garden.
 - Sin will destroy the fruit of the Spirit described in Galatians 5:22-23.
- o Hogs can mess up a good trail or hunting lane in the woods.
 - Sin will lead us down the wrong path – the broad way of Matthew 7:13.
- o Hogs are bad, but sin is worse.

Though there are many plans to solve the hog problem, it’s yet to be cured. But here is where hogs and sin are different. There is a cure for sin. God sent His only Son to be sacrificed for us and cure our sin problem!

“For He (God) made Him (Christ) who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

--Jay Launius (Maud, TX)

Centered

Centered? Centered in what? Centered on what? What are we focused on? Where is our heart?

When they were young our children were diagnosed with ADHD. They had a difficult time focusing on anything. Oh, that was a challenge! Church, when we come together to worship, what do we focus on? What are our hearts and minds centered on?

The question applies to every day and every moment of our lives! May our God help us to remember that Jesus Christ must be the center of our faith. The storms will come. We will face trials. Clinging to Jesus, we will be safe, shielded, protected. But even so, we will be challenged, stretched, wrung out. By staying focused on Jesus, we will be anchored in Him, secure and unshaken.

Race car drivers are trained to focus their attention on where they want to go, as opposed to where they don’t want to go. The premise is simple: they are traveling so fast that if something catches their attention and they look at it, they’ll hit it! Therefore they learn to tune out the peripheral and focus on the road ahead.

Friend, focusing on Jesus will always keep us moving in the right direction. With little or no attention to the peripheral, we press on ahead, our attention on Jesus. If not, we can’t follow where He is going; we’re less in tune with Him.

May our heartbeat be in tune with His heartbeat. Let’s just keep it simple and keep it centered. It’s the greatest of challenges!

--Charles Goodnight (via *Old Paths*)