

November 2, 2003 © Homer Kizer

Commentary – From the Margins Who Locks Up?

In Alaska in the early 1980s, the economy took such a downturn it became common to hear some variation of, *Will the last person out please turn off the lights*. Today, Old Bedford Village, Bedford, Pennsylvania, closed for the season. But the doors of the historic houses remain open as I write, late into the night. Amidst the controversy that has hung as a dark cloud over the village for the past month, everyone left without locking up.

Well, almost everyone left: I live in the village. I rent a house that doubles as residence and studio, a house that causes me to wear period clothing and spurn radios, televisions and air conditioners. It is a quiet place to live, especially since the other year round residents have packed up and moved off over a controversy that began with the site's director firing the blacksmith who leased the blacksmith shop...someone should be quick to point out that the director cannot fire a lease holder. The director could not renew a lease, yes. But fire, no! And so the controversy began when the board of directors neglected to act on the matter, thereby leaving the site director in place as a little autocrat.

I came here in August; I came with the promise of having use of the church. The site director reneged on that promise when he learned that I intended to hold weekly Sabbath services in the building. He pulled me aside after I preached one service, and said that I might convert someone, which would never do. I jest not. He told me that the Bedford community was very religious, and very tight knit, both of which are correct. He said that teaching disciples to live within the laws of God that have been written on their hearts and minds when they received the Holy Spirit was too controversial, that he couldn't have me teaching that in the community. Plus, he said that the church needed to be available for weddings, that the Village made a considerable amount of money on couples renting the church to hold their weddings – there has been one wedding since the first Sabbath in August, and that wedding was held in the evening.

I have temporarily let the matter go. Right now, I am involved in a budding worldwide work that really hasn't left me time to do considerable evangelism within the community. Yes, I am neglecting the local community in favor of a larger, more distant work. But with the closing of the village for the season, it is time to take the good news that all who endure to the end shall be saved (Matt 24:13) to neighbors.

Unfortunately, my neighbors in the village have left, leaving me to take this controversy between site director and love for neighbors to Christ for His resolution. And what the site director doesn't realize is that Christ will pick up the gauntlet. Christ is the reality of love. He will affect the mindsets of all involved – or He will remove them if they prevent little ones from coming to Him.

I don't, tonight, know how Christ will resolve this controversy, which is now known worldwide. But no one locked up the village when it closed for the season. How much should be read into doors standing wide open as if the last person out forgot to close them?

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