

# From Where We Stand . . .

## Soil Stewardship Week

The idea behind Soil Stewardship Week has ancient roots. The concept of man's stewardship for the land appears in many religions, many cultures.

The custom of setting aside special days to give thanks for the precious gifts of soil and water, air and sunshine, began more than 1,500 years ago, in Vienne, France.

In 452, Vienne experienced a year of bad weather and earthquakes, which resulted in serious crop failures and widespread hunger.

The Bishop of Vienne called for prayers and penance for the 3 days preceding Ascension Day. Other communities took up the observance, and the custom of Rogation Days spread throughout Europe and eventually came to Colonial America.

Rogation days became a time of giving thanks to God and of asking his help and mercy. The custom recognized that food was provided by neither the earth alone nor the industrious hand of man. It came also from the bounty of God, and so it was fitting to thank Him for His grace.

In America, the observance of the fifth Sunday after Easter, Rogation Sunday, as "Rural Life Sunday" was launched at a meeting of the International Association of Agricultural Missions in 1929. At that meeting, a resolution was adopted urging the Home Mission Council, the Foreign Mission Conference, and the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America to further its observance. During the 1930's, various church services, in their own way, recognized the importance of soil stewardship.

### "Soil Stewardship"

The first "soil stewardship" observance was held on Sunday, July 21, 1946. It was prompted by A. B. Kennerly, editor of **Farm and Ranch** magazine. This observance was referred to as "Soils and Souls Sunday."

Since the inception of Soil Stewardship Week, the National Association of Soil and Water Conservation Districts (NACD) had been especially interested in the advancement of this week as a national event and undertook its national sponsorship in 1955.

An advisory committee of churchmen from several denominations played a significant role in the observance, especially in helping the NACD Soil Stewardship Committee produce informational materials and distribute them to local conservation districts and to church groups. These materials included booklets, church programs, inserts, and posters. From 1958 to 1962, a film was distributed.

In Lancaster County many churches will observe tomorrow as a day set apart for emphasizing the meaning of Christianity in the life of the rural community. Special Rural Life Services are to be held in the

Bergstrasse Lutheran Church, with members of the Lancaster County 4-H County Council assisting.

In most cases Lancaster County people are aware of the rich heritage of fertile soil and religious precepts that have been handed down to us from the past. But we wonder sometimes if we are just as aware of our responsibility to preserve our heritage and pass it on to our children. As the Master Teacher says, "For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required."

The phrasing is Old English, but the thought is quite appropriate for this the beginning of the 1968 Soil Stewardship Week starting tomorrow with Rural Life Sunday.

At least that's the way it looks from where we stand.

## Farm Labor Unions?

Farm workers may be next on the list for attention from the organizational efforts of major labor unions. Legislation now in Congress authorizing the extension of jurisdiction of the National Labor Relations Board to include farms that employ 12 hands at any time during the year and spend a minimum of \$10,000 in annual labor costs, opens the way for large-scale unionization of farm workers.

The potentialities of an all-powerful farm labor union are nothing less than staggering. Such a union, unless it exercised a high degree of statesmanship in labor matters, could bring disaster to large segments of agriculture. Crops that rot in the fields, while "negotiations" dragged on at the bargaining table, would be irretrievably lost.

In agriculture, more often than not, there is no such thing as making up for lost productive time. The cycles of the season cannot be halted by stopping the clock at midnight. Agriculture in the United States has been the most productive on earth. The agri-business techniques of the modern farmer, coupled with mechanization, and scientific utilization of the land, have brought an abundance of food and fiber.

In many respects, the farm has taken on the appearance of an industrial operation, but appearances are deceptive. No matter how advanced he becomes, the farmer must be ever-mindful of the harsh requirements of the elements and the seasons upon which his livelihood depends. The big question is whether farm labor unions will prove equally mindful of these requirements. The record has not been encouraging.

At least that's the way it looks from where we stand.

## Across The Fence Row

Campers roughing it at an Iowa state park recently plugged in so many coffee makers, TV sets, lights and refrigerators that the park transformers cut out from the overload. What would the pioneers say?

— Hereford (Tex.) Brand

"I remember when college students would go to the administration building to be kicked out of school. Now students go there to kick out the president!"

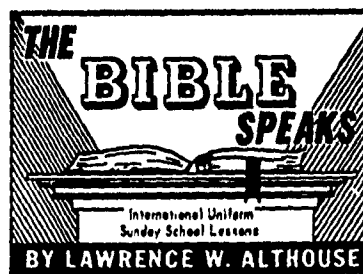
— Steve Balogh Cartoon

To the man who can't use it, opportunity is just another problem.

## Weather Forecast

The five-day forecast for the period Saturday through next Wednesday, calls for temperatures to average near normal with daytime highs in the upper 60's to mid 70's and over-night lows in the upper 40's to low 50's. Little day to day change is expected. Normal high-low is 76-52.

Rain may total greater than one-half inch as showers at the beginning, and again at the end of the period.



## THE CROOKED STICK

Lesson for May 19, 1968

Background Scriptures: Ecclesiastes 5, 12, Devotional Readings: Ecclesiastes 12:1-8.

A little boy was walking down the street one day and encountered a woman who was a good friend of the family. "How's your grandfather these days?" she wanted to know. "Oh," replied the boy, "Granddad's very sick." A congenital optimist, the woman cut the boy short with a knowing look and these words: "Now you tell your grandfather that I said he only thinks he's sick, do you hear?"



Rev. Althouse A few weeks later the boy saw the woman again and she asked him cheerily: "Does your grandfather still think he's sick?" "Oh no," said the boy matter-of-factly, "Now he thinks he's dead and we buried him last week."

### Pie-in-the-sky antidote

Obviously there are some realities in life that cannot be ignored. Sometimes it is necessary to look on the darker side of life, to take our dangers and threats seriously. Those people who always blithely assure us that "Everything's going to work out all right," ought to be around when sometimes everything doesn't "work out all right." There are times when we need a starkly pessimistic point of view to offset the pie-in-the-sky optimism of those who refuse to take evil seriously.

It is within this perspective that we need to approach the Preacher of Ecclesiastes. His sweeping pessimism is of value to us if we keep it within the context of the whole Bible. Someone has suggested that if all the pages of your Bible were accidentally torn out and lost, excepting those of Ecclesiastes, it would be better to tear out these pages and throw them away too. By itself, this gloomy book would be of no value to us. As one of many perspectives in the Bible,

however, it is a valuable call to see life and its meaning from a different angle.

The Preacher's outlook on life is best expressed in Ecclesiastes 1:2, "Vanity of vanities . . . All is vanity." Everything in life is in vain, he cries. Life is futile and the world has no meaning. There is no purpose in man's brief sojourn upon the earth.

### I have seen, I have seen

Where did this "wise man" get such a pessimistic view of life? Like all the wisdom writers he formed his views through his own experiences and observations of life: "I have seen . . . Moreover I saw . . . Again I saw . . . In my vain life I have seen everything . . ." We might quarrel with his conclusions about life, but we could hardly dismiss him as an armchair philosopher.

Furthermore, though the Preacher has an overly pessimistic outlook on life by Christian standards, God has use for such a pessimistic man and his views. He can use such a man to challenge those who are too optimistic about life, who refuse to see the world in realistic terms. He can use such a man to call people to awaken to situations that seriously need correction, reform, and renewal.

### And today?

Someone has said that "God can strike a mighty blow with a crooked stick." The Preacher is such a "crooked stick." With this man, God strikes out at those who make their religion a meaningless jumble of words, pious phrases, and empty double-talk. They never hear the voice of God because they are too enraptured with the sound of their own.

God also uses this "crooked stick" to hammer away at those who assume responsibilities to God without fulfilling them, who want the benefits of religion without paying the price. He strikes away at corruption in government, oppression of the weak and the poor, greed, the love of money, dishonesty, and many other evils that were prevalent then and no strangers to us today. When the Preacher says of all this, "Vanity of vanities . . . All is vanity," who can dispute him?

The times of the Preacher called loudly for such a "crooked stick." And today?

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## For Full Market Reports Read Lancaster Farming



## NOW IS THE TIME . . .

By Max Smith  
Lancaster County Agent

### To Adjust Insurance Coverage

All farmers are urged to evaluate their insurance coverage on buildings and other farm equipment. In the case of fire insurance the coverage should be in terms of replacement value rather than first cost. In many cases the insurance may not replace the building and the contents. Insurance agents will be glad to discuss this situation if given a chance.

### To Practice Safety

Again we come back to the suggestion that all farm machinery operators be careful in the running of their equipment. Instruct employees to take time to be safe and follow manufacturer's instructions. Another thing,

children and farm machinery do not mix, for the sake of safety they should not be permitted to ride on farm machinery or play near where the machinery is being operated.

### To Prepare Tobacco Ground

Tobacco planting will soon be underway throughout the county. Growers are urged to spray the area ahead of planting for the control of cutworms, use chlordane or diazinon 5 to 10 days ahead of planting and work into the top one or two inches; do not use dieldrin or heptachlor. Sprayers being used should not contain any atrazine; it will stunt plants and kill them gradually.

## Farm News This Week

Milk Promotion Discussed By Group Of Interested Persons — Page 1

Rain Holds County Farmer Team From Getting The First Tobacco Plants In The Ground This Week — Page 1

Urner-Barry Listing Revised — Page 1

Farm And Home Open House Set For June 9 — Page 1

Pequea Valley Boys Top State Dairy Judging — Page 1

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