



OPINION

Rainfall Tops The List

The reports of devastation and personal hardship for farmers in the drought-stricken areas of California have touched all of us. For five years in a row, these farmers have been without a crop. In the past, rain has come in years following a drought year, but this time, five consecutive dry years have reservoirs low, the ground dry and cracked and the state sending water for irrigation on to the cities. Of course, agribusiness and the total state economy is adversely affected.

While California is somewhere beyond the Rocky Mountains as far as our personal involvement in the East, their situation should teach us a lesson. In this area we have adequate rainfall every year to grow bumper crops. Not three years out of five. But five years out of five. We don't even need to irrigate our crops during most growing seasons.

That's why we believe the number one reason to preserve farmland in Southeast Pennsylvania, all of Pennsylvania, and in all of the states that border Pennsylvania, is because we have water. Sure, we're close to markets, we have the best soils, we need open space, and farming is a way of life. All of these reasons make our local farmland important.

But the major reason for governments, business and farm organizations, and individuals to work to preserve farmland and the family farm is water. We can't control the rainfall. But we can prevent this wonderful blessing from above from falling on an asphalt jungle.

One developer said we don't need all this good land for farming. Farmers can move somewhere else to farm.

We say, with all the empty, unrented business facilities and shopping center stores--with hundreds of new homes on the market that can't be sold, we don't need all this good land for development. Developers can move somewhere else to develop.

When you look at all the reasons to preserve farmland and the family farms in this area, adequate rainfall, year in and year out comes to the top of the list.

Farm Calendar

Saturday, March 2

Fellowship of Christian Farmers fourth annual outreach luncheon, Friendly Farms Restaurant, Westminster, Md., 11:45 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

Northeast Regional Christmas Tree Growers meeting and trade show, Mountain Laurel Resort, White Haven, 8 a.m.-4 p.m.

National Farmers Union Convention, Wyndham Franklin Plaza, Philadelphia, thru March 6.

Sunday, March 3

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Maple Sugar Festival, Hashawha Environmental Appreciation Center, 1 p.m.-5 p.m.

York Co. Rabbit and Cavy Breeders Assoc. Spring Show, 4-H Center, Bair.

Monday, March 4

National Farmers Union Convention, Wyndham Franklin Plaza, Philadelphia, thru March 6.

Central Hardwood Forest Confer-

ence, University Park, thru March 6.

Berks Co. ag zoning meeting, Berks Co. Ag Center, Leesport, 1 p.m.

Jefferson Co. Dairy Nutrition School 1, UNILEC building, DuBois, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Delaware Valley Milk Goat Association meeting, Boyertown Borough Hall, 1:30 p.m.

Farm Bill ASCS Seminar, Farm and Home Center, Lancaster, 9:30 a.m.

Lancaster Co. tobacco meeting, Lancaster Farm and Home Center, 12:30 p.m.-3 p.m.

USDA CRP Sign-Up, thru March 15.

Tuesday, March 5

Lancaster Co. Dairy Day, Farm and Home Center, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

10th annual Pa. Frame Builders Conference, Days Inn, Keller Conference Center, State College, thru March 6.

Elk Co. bee management, extension office.

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NOW IS THE TIME
By Jay Irwin
Lancaster County Agricultural Agent

To Be Award Of Safe Drinking Water

A private water supply is just that — private. The quality of your water supply is the responsibility of the homeowner or farmer. State laws do not require testing and regulatory agencies do not monitor the quality of private supplies. Therefore, the only way you, as a water supply owner, can be certain that the water is safe to drink is to have the water tested periodically.

* What Should Water Be Tested For?

A comprehensive water analysis can be very costly. The following tests can determine the most common water quality concerns.

... BACTERIA: A test for total coliform bacteria can determine contamination from septic tanks or manure.

...NITRATES: Excessive levels of nitrates can be harmful to human infants and some animals, although the occurrence of this is rare. A level of 10 ppm nitrate nitrogen has been set for humans, 100 ppm for livestock.

...pH: Water with a pH less than 6.5 or greater than 8.0 can cause plumbing problems. Corrosion shortens the life of the pipe and can introduce dissolved metals into the water that can stain fixtures and pose a potential health hazard.

To assure that a well supply is safe, it should be tested for bacteria and nitrate at least once a year, preferably during wet spells. Only after accurate testing can a decision be made for treatment equipment.

To Avoid Soil Compaction

One of the real dangers of being in too big a hurry in getting on the soil in the spring with heavy equipment is that we pack this wet soil so hard that poor yields result. With modern machinery, the weight is much more than a team of horses or mules. As a result we have ground that is as hard as concrete and it is slow to recover. It is important to wait until the soil is dried out sufficiently before taking this heavy equipment over the fields. When the soil is worked too wet, it becomes hard and forms clods. This type of soil structure will not give you the best yields. Don't be in too big a hurry, slow

down and leave the weather catch up to you.

To Plan Location For Tobacco Planting

We have been saying for years that animal and poultry manure is an excellent fertilizer. It still is... but not for tobacco. Research shows us that animal manure, particularly dairy, increases the chlorine content of the tobacco; this chlorine content reduces the "burn" quality of tobacco, and buyers frown on that.

Locate the area that you plan to transplant your tobacco, and be sure NOT to apply any manure to that area this year.

We suggest that a soil test be taken as an indicator of your present nutrient level. Then apply fertilizer at the recommended rates. The fertility program, recommended by Research Agronomists, for a 2,000 pound tobacco crop, should consist of 80 pounds of nitrogen, 35 pounds of pho-

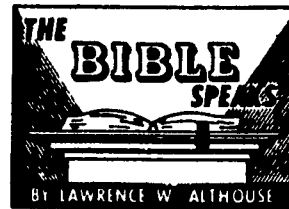
sphorus (P₂O₅) and 165 pounds of potash from either sulfate of potash or potassium nitrate. This fertility program will increase quality and reduce buyer resistance.

To Prune Fruit Trees

Whether you have a few or several hundred fruit trees, orchard pruning need not be delayed until spring. It may be started in colder weather. But it is good practice to work on the hardest trees first.

Easy pruning can involve some problems from winter injury, but in many cases an early start will be necessary to complete pruning of large orchards before spring. By confining early work to the older, hardier trees, fruit growers keep injury to a minimum.

Apple and pear trees are the hardest of the fruits, with plums and sour cherries next in order. Because peach and sweet cherries are most tender, delay their pruning, particularly the younger trees, until late March.



THE LIMITS OF LOVE

March 3, 1991

Background Scripture:

Luke 10:25-37.

Devotional Reading:

Matthew 22:34-46.

Have you ever noticed that the parables that Jesus tells seem to have nothing to do with what people believe? The parables always teach us how to live our daily lives. Yet, very often these very practical teachings on how to live have a great deal to do with what we believe.

This is what we see in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. It begins with a question about belief from a lawyer or scribe — one learned in the religious law: "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" Luke tells us that he did this "to put him to the test." He hoped that Jesus would give an unorthodox answer that would spark a doctrinal argument. But Jesus refused to be trapped and turned the question back on the scribe: "What is written in the law? How do you read? Anxious to show his expertise, the scribe replied with a quotation taken from Deuteronomy 6:4 and Leviticus 19:18: "You shall love the Lord your God... and your neighbor as yourself." In response, Jesus says: "You have answered right; do this, and you will live." **KNOWING & DOING**

But the scribe once more seeks to embroil Jesus in a theological controversy: "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus could very well have answered him with a one-liner: your neighbor is anyone needing your help whom you can help. Instead, however, he tells a parable that says that and more. Remember, the scribes prided

themselves on knowing the law. But in the parable the "hero" is a Samaritan. As a lay person he would "know" far less than a scribe, and as a Samaritan even what little he "knew" would be wrong!

By the careful way in which Jesus crafted his story, he discreetly showed that it is more a matter of doing than knowing. The priest who "passed by on the other side" certainly knew what to do, but didn't. The Levite also knew the right answers, but he too refrained from doing what he could. All Jews knew that Samaritans were all wrong in their religious views. For one thing, they believed the right place to worship God was on Mt. Gerizim, not Mt. Zion in Jerusalem. Yet, although the Samaritan was guilty of "wrong beliefs," he did exactly the right thing: he helped the robbery victim, despite the fact that the victim was a Jew, a sworn enemy of any Samaritan. **LET'S BE REASONABLE**

In a sense, the scribe had asked Jesus to say something about the limits of loving one's neighbor. We can understand that because we too often wonder if love doesn't have some reasonable limits. Obviously, we must help someone in our own family who is in need. We all "know" that, although we may not all act upon it. The same is true of our friends. But what about the family next door whom we hardly know and actually don't much like — they, with their loud stereos and dog who seems to like our yard a lot more than theirs?

And what about the people on the south end of town who live in perpetual squalor and unemployment? What about those Hare Krishnas who always accost us when we go to the airport? And even if all the others are my "neighbors," surely that doesn't include Saddam Hussein!

The answer is no less hard for us than it was for the scribe: in Christ there are no limits to love.

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