



CENTRAL SHELBY CHURCH OF CHRIST

working and worshipping together to serve the Lord



"Jesus answered and said to her, 'Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.'" (John 4:13,14)

TRAGEDY IN OHIO

This past week we heard the tragic news of a man shooting a 15-year-old neighbor for walking on his lawn. Charles Martin, who lives in a community east of Cincinnati, "called 911 on Sunday afternoon, saying calmly: 'I just killed a kid.' ... Larry Mugrage, whose family lived next door, was shot in the chest with a shotgun. The high school freshman was pronounced dead at a hospital... Neighbors said Martin, 66, lived alone quietly, often sitting in front of his one-story home with its neat lawn [and] well-trimmed shrubbery..." (Associated Press, March 20, 2006).

How did such a tragedy come to be? There may have been several contributing factors (some of which we'll never know), but we believe at least two are quite apparent.

First of all, Charles Martin had his sense of values all messed up. Do I have to say it? Human life is more important than a few blades of grass, folks! (Matthew 6:30) But of course, you know that already, don't you?

Yet perhaps this incident makes for a good occasion to examine what we value most in life. To us, what should be most important? Hands down, the salvation of our soul in the eternal glories of heaven! (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). This salvation comes through our fellowship with God in Jesus Christ, and this relationship should cause us to place importance upon that which is truly relevant -- God, our brethren, our family relationships, and our fellow man. But too often we tend to place emphasis on those things which are truly irrelevant by comparison. Perhaps it's not a yard, but then it might be a car, a music collection, a golf ball, a place of residence, _____ (you fill in the blank). And maybe we wouldn't consider killing anyone for these things, but could it be that they nevertheless have taken a priority with us? We need to be reminded that the things of this earth really don't matter! "For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal."

Second, Charles Martin apparently had allowed his anger to fester through the years. The same article reported that he "told police he had several times had problems with neighbors walking on his lawn... adding that, 'I've been harassed by [Mugrage] and his parents for five years. Today just

blew it up.”

Beloved, we must never allow feelings of malice and rage to dwell within us. The Scriptures command, “Do not let the sun go down on your wrath” (Ephesians 4:26). In fact, Jesus taught His disciples that being angry with one’s brother can eventually lead even to murder, and consequently He taught us to reconcile quickly with our brethren (Matthew 5:21-24).

Mr. Martin’s actions are reprehensible and to be condemned; but they ought to cause each of us to seek out and destroy anything in our *own* lives that would twist and distort our godly values and emotions.

--Mike Noble