

## **MercEmail** A Weekly Devotional by Steve Higginbotham

### **They Did It Again**

January 2, 2012

A couple years ago I had the opportunity to make a trip to Israel. One of the places we visited was the “Church of the Nativity.” This church building was erected over the alleged birthplace of Jesus. As we walked through the facility, one of the men in our group quietly chuckled at something that was said by another tourist. Immediately, one of the priests approached him and threatened to throw him out if he continued to show disrespect in this “holy place.”

I found this priest’s rebuke to be rather ironic, because only months prior to our arrival, the Greek Orthodox and Armenian priests that share possession of this church building got into a brawl as they cleaned the building in preparation for their observance of the birth of Jesus. Due to their brawl, several priests and police who tried to stop the fighting had to be sent to the hospital. So while this priest lectured this man about “respect,” I couldn’t help but think that this man, only a few months earlier, had engaged in a free-for-all at the same spot.

Well, it happened again. As December 25 approached in 2011, these priests got into it again, throwing brooms at each other and beating each other with broomsticks and iron rods. Again, their riot had to be broken up by police.

Allow me to make a point from this. We need to allow this story to remind us how in congruent unholy actions are coming from those who are supposed to be holy. Oh, it’s easier to see in others than in ourselves, isn’t it? The inconsistency of the actions of these priests is glaring as we look on. However, let me remind you that our unholy actions are just as glaring to our friends and family. God has called us to holiness (1 Peter 1:15-16). There is more to being a Christian than just a single act of obedience which allows us to wear the name of Christ. Those of us who wear the name of Christ must also give special attention to walk in the footsteps of Jesus, and to guard our influence so that the world will not blaspheme.

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