



ONE VOICE



Churches: ♦Bethany ♦Immanuel ♦Lunder ♦Silver Lake ♦Winnebago

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From the Pastor's Desk "Now during those days he went out to the mountain to pray; and he spent the night in prayer to God. And when day came, he called his disciples and chose twelve of them, whom he also named apostles; ... He came down with them and stood on a level place," Luke 6:12-13, 17a



As we head into the month of March this year we will begin our Lenten Journey. Usually Lent begins much earlier in the year, but this year Easter is late and so our Lenten journey begins later as well. I always have looked forward to Lent. Now I know that sounds odd to a number of people for they think of Lent as the time that we focus upon Jesus' suffering, his death on the cross, and finally his victorious resurrection. This is true. However, I think our Lenten Journey is following Jesus' example of stepping out of our busy schedule in the world to spend time in prayer with his Father. Taking time to exercise our Lenten discipline, we follow Jesus' example taking time out of our busy schedules to focus once again upon the grace and mercy of our Lord poured out upon us in great and inexplicable abundance through Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection. I mean, when we think about it how amazing is God's grace that his Son would suffer the cross for us, to redeem us from the brokenness of our sin and death to claim us as children of God with his unconditional love? Living in our fast paced world with all its demands, plus living through all the winter storms of late, disrupting our lives, it is easy for us to lose focus that we live in the grace of God as loved children.

So Lent is a time for the discipline of prayer, discipline of breaking with our normal routines to attend a mid-week worship with a meal of fellowship with brothers and sisters in Christ. It is a time in which we separate ourselves from the world. The world doesn't take time for Lent. The World doesn't take time to focus upon the cross and the suffering of our Lord Jesus. The World looks upon this next six weeks like any other six weeks of the year. It is a time to work, a time to play, a time demanding our energy and our focus to make the world work. The discipline of Lent reminds us that we are no longer of the world. We are in the world. But our citizenship is of the kingdom of God.

As citizens of the Kingdom of God, our actions, our lives should demonstrate, communicate, that we are children of God, heirs of the kingdom. When people in the world encounter us in their daily lives, they should also encounter the love of Christ, the power of the Holy Spirit that dwells within us. During this Season of Lent, we will be focusing upon Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and how Jesus lays out for us ways to be Children of the Kingdom of God as a different journey than just being in the world.

Jesus begins by turning the expectations held by the world of what it means to be blessed, what it means to be living the good life. Jesus proclaimed, "*Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for they shall inherit the Kingdom of God. Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness for they will be filled.*"

... *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*" The world doesn't think being poor in spirit, or mourning or hungering for righteousness or being persecuted is a blessed situation. But Jesus turns these moments of brokenness into times in which God's love is present bringing life and hope and newness of life.

Then Jesus begins to lay out for us "Blessed Ones" on how we should live out his love. We are to pray for our enemies. We are even to feed and take care of them. We are to forgive, even when we don't expect to be forgiven or the other doesn't deserve to be forgiven. We are to be the salt of the earth, the seasoning in the world that brings the taste of love. We are to be the light of the world. We are to be the beacons of God's love shining into the darkness so those living in the brokenness of the world will be drawn to the light of Christ, so Jesus can give them newness of life. We are to walk the extra mile. We are to share from our abundance of possessions to those who have little or none. We are to be tirelessly advocating for righteous and justice for all our neighbors. We are to refrain from judging others whether they are worthy of God's love or not. We are simply to share the story of God's love and serve and love the neighbor with God's love. Let Jesus be the judge.

Jesus also says we are not to worry. This is truly a different journey from those in the world. Jesus proclaims, we are not to worry about what we are to eat or what we are to wear. "*Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air; they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?*" The World wants us to worry about food and clothing and all kinds of comforts and needs all the time. So when you don't worry, when you live in trust and faith that the Lord loves to provide for you in abundance; you are sending a clear message that Children of the Kingdom live differently than Children of the world. You live with hope in the face of fear. You live in abundance in the face of scarcity. You live in communion in face of loneliness. You live in life in the face of death.

To live as Children of the Kingdom in this world, we need to spend some time apart from the world so we don't get swept up and carried away in its messages to us. Lent is a time to practice the discipline of prayer, discipline of hearing the good news of God's love and mercy, to hear again that we are Children of the Kingdom. This is our focus during this Lent. Follow Jesus' example and take time out from the world's demands upon you. Come and join us in our Lenten Discipline and get refreshed and renewed by the power of the Holy Spirit, you Children of the Kingdom of God.

Pastor Randy



WANDERINGS AND WONDERINGS



I am tired of the battle of words...the rhetoric...the intentional, hurtful banter that seems to dominate our culture, our politics, our lives. “Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me.”

Sticks and Stones may **BREAK** my Bones
But words Will ~~NEVER~~ hurt Me
ALWAYS

Have we ever been led to believe a greater lie than that one? ...words will never hurt me...

We are dealing with this all the time. Everyday hurtful “words” are in the news. Sometimes it is the words that are said. Bitter, acidic with sarcasm. Hateful. Irreverent. Disrespectful. Sometimes we hear a word ... said unknowingly and ignorantly, that dig up hurting emotions and hurtful experiences from the past. Those words expose a raw nerve that we thought we were over or had buried effectively. Sometimes it is the word that is implied, maybe not even said, but brings us to our knees.

Words may not break our bones, but they hurt us ... wound us ... deeply ... and the pain can persist effectively forever.

I’m not telling you anything new. No doubt you’ve had your share of words that have wounded you. You’ve felt the sting of a well-aimed jibe. You know that sting all too well. Someone you love or respect slams you to the floor with a slur or slip of the tongue. And there you lie, wounded and bleeding. Perhaps



the words were intended to hurt you, perhaps not; but that doesn’t matter, the damage is done. The wound has been made. The injuries are internal. Broken heart, wounded pride, bruised feelings.

If you have suffered or are suffering because of someone else’s words, know that you are

not alone. Jesus suffers with you ... because Jesus has been there ... done that ... endured that ... as painfully as any one of us. As Jesus hung on the cross, they hurled insult after insult in his direction. Even the words that hung over his head – “King of the Jews” – though they were true, were there to belittle him. The banter, “... If you are the Son of God, come down from the cross ... He saved others but he can’t save himself...” Again dares and challenges, that he could have answered in miraculous ways, but chose not to.

He did not retaliate ... he had the power, he could have. He did not bite back ... and his words would have stung for all eternity ... he remained relatively silent. He didn’t say, “I’ll get you Just wait until after the resurrection.” No, he bore the pain.

He did not take on the task of seeking revenge. He demanded no apology. He hired no bounty hunters, nor did he send out a posse. He, to the astonishment of all, spoke on their defense. “Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.”

The words on that Friday morning were bitter. The verbal stones were meant to break him. How Jesus, with a body wracked with pain, eyes blinded by his own blood and lungs yearning for air, could speak on behalf of some heartless thugs beyond my comprehension. Never, never have we seen such love. If there was ever a person who deserved a shot at revenge, Jesus did. But he didn’t take it. Instead he died for them. How could he do it? I don’t know. But I do know that all of a sudden, my wounds seem kinda small. My grudges and hard feelings seem a bit childish.

And though there are words that have hurt me, is a Word (Jesus) greater those that pain me ... it me ... and holds me ... comforts me ... and saves

God's
Love
Never
Fails

there
than
heals
and
me!

It is a Word (Jesus) that embodies love and forgiveness and grace For me For me to share.

*Wanderings and Wonderings,
Pastor Bill Peters*