



# ONE VOICE



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

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## *From the Pastor's Desk*

*"If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete."* John 15:10-11



As we enter the month of February the echoes of the Angels' song to the shepherds singing praises of the birth of God's Messiah are no longer heard. A month has almost past since we heard of the Wise Men seeking to honor the newborn Messiah of God. Time keeps marching onward. Even the gospel lessons have jumped years forward in Jesus' story. As we listened to the Angels sing of the birth of the new Messiah and ascended back to heaven, we jumped to Jesus' being



baptized by John with the heaven's opening and the Holy Spirit descending as a dove alighting upon Jesus and the voice of the Father from heaven declaring, *"This is my Son, the Beloved, with whom I am well pleased."* Now the story will continue of Jesus bringing the kingdom of God into the midst of the people as he teaches them with parables and heals people from all kinds of infirmities. We will discover the story moves faster and faster from teachings and healings to Jesus arriving in Jerusalem, which will lead to the cross and finally the victory of Easter morning.

The story moves right along, not as fast as our lives today, but rather quickly. It seems to me, and maybe to you, that Christmas finally came and then it was gone. All the baking of Christmas goodies, all the planning and shopping for the perfect gifts for our loved ones, the Christmas gatherings, the worship services all happened are now fresh memories. We have already celebrated a New Year and the first month of the New Year is almost over. Our calendars keep us hopping from one event to another, always preparing for the next events, while trying to enjoy the present. The only thing that slows us down is a blizzard, when our whole world comes to a standstill.



In that blizzard, when everyone is home safe, and we are in our homes nice and warm and secure, comes the blessing of rest. A break from the hecticness, because nature makes us stop. The Lord blesses us with the Sabbath, a day of rest, a day of worship so we can catch our breath. But

sometimes the demands placed on our schedules, leaves us with just a morning of Sabbath, a morning of worship and then we spend the rest of the day getting ready for the week.

Maybe time has always seemed fleeting, for the Lord gave us the Sabbath as a day of rest and the church gave us the season of Lent. Lent is a season, in which we set aside forty days before Easter, minus the days of Sabbath, for the discipline of fasting, prayer and works of love. The season calls us to take a disciplined break from our daily routines to focus upon the Passion or suffering of our Lord Jesus as the journey of Lent leads us to the cross, Jesus' death and burial and finally the glorious day of Easter. We set this time aside because the calls of our vocations and our roles as parent, children, sibling, friend, and neighbor demand so much of our time and our energy. It is so easy for us to become swept up in our daily

lives and the demands placed upon us that we no longer hear the good news of God's love and grace revealed in our Lord Jesus Christ. If our busyness keeps all our attention on the world around us the noise of the brokenness and demands of the world begin to drown out the good news of God's love and grace.

The season of Lent sets before us a discipline described for us in the Ash Wednesday service, the first day of the Lenten Season. Ash Wednesday begins with a repentance with an ashen cross placed upon our foreheads as we confess that we have not loved the Lord nor our neighbor with all our heart, soul, strength and mind. Our Ash Wednesday repentance calls us into the discipline of Lent. The liturgy lists a discipline of fasting, a discipline of prayer, and a discipline of works of love. We are familiar with a discipline of prayer and a discipline of works of love. But we are no longer familiar with the discipline of fasting. Many times our days are so busy that we end up skipping a meal to get everything done. This is not the discipline of fasting. The discipline of fasting is setting time aside in which you would have spent preparing a meal, eating a meal and cleaning up after a meal and using this time for listening to God's word and a time of prayer. Then the money you saved from fasting is available to support acts of charity. This was the vision the church had for the season of Lent.



The Discipline of Lent calls us to set aside time away from the whirlwind of our lives in the world to rest in and focus upon the good news of God's grace revealed by our Lord Jesus. We begin with the Ash Wednesday service and we continue with the Lenten services. We enjoy fellowship as we travel weekly to each congregation. We eat a meal together, so the needs of the family are met, and we can attend the worship services. During the worship, we once again focus upon Jesus as the light of the world, who disperses the darkness of brokenness, sin and death as we light candles and sing of the hope and light of Christ's love. This discipline of Lent, taking time to pray, taking time to worship, taking time for acts of love takes our eyes off the world to focus once again upon God's love for you. We lift up the cross to see the depth that Jesus was willing to go for you and me to know the peace of being forgiven, the joy of being claimed by God's love, the newness of life found in the mercy of our Lord. Focusing once again on God's love revealed through Jesus we re-enter our daily lives filled with the power of the Holy Spirit to love, to forgive, to enjoy the newness of life and look forward with certain hope of eternal life with the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit.

When the season of Lent begins at the end of February, I hope you will enter the discipline of Lent to abide in Jesus' love for you.

*Pastor Randy*

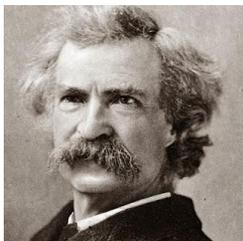


# WANDERINGS AND WONDERINGS



Bill Bryson traveled to Hannibal, Missouri, to visit the boyhood home of author, Mark Twain. The house was a "trim, white-washed house with green shutters, set incongruously in the middle of downtown." It cost two dollars to walk around the site. Bryson found the house a disappointment. "It purported to be a faithful reproduction of the original interiors," he writes, "but there were wires and water sprinklers clumsily evident in every room. I also very

*much doubt that young Samuel Clemens' bedroom had Armstrong vinyl on the floor or that his sister's bedroom had a plywood partition in it."*



*The house is owned by the city of Hannibal and attracts 135,000 visitors each year. Bryson was*

*disappointed that he wasn't able to actually go inside the house. "You look through the windows," he says. At each window there is a recorded message telling about each room. As he proceeded from window to window, he asked another tourist. "What do you think of it?" The friendly stranger replied, "Oh, I think it's great. I come here whenever I'm in Hannibal two, three times a year. Sometimes I go out of my way to come here." Dumbfounded, Bryson replied, "Really?" "Yeah," answered the stranger. "I must have been here twenty, thirty times by now. This is a real shrine, you know."*

*They walked and talked some more. Bryson's last question to the man was, "Would you say the house is just like Twain described it in his books?" "I don't know," the stranger said. "I've never read one of his books."*

Visiting his shrine but ignoring his books. I do not doubt that you may learn some things about the person doing this, but unless you have a keen power of observation and discernment, I do not believe that you will be satisfied. Nor know His heart. Nor come to know the person. Doubtless there are many followers of Jesus who are satisfied with this same approach. They visit his shrine, but rarely read his Word. Most of us want to know Jesus, not just as an interesting historical figure, but as the "living" Son of God. How do we find this Jesus?

Simply said, just like we get to know anyone. Talk to him. This can be done in a host of ways – pray, be part of His body, the church, worship, study His Word,

the Holy Spirit and there is more – do not underestimate God's desire to seek us out.



I would like to explore a simple way to engage and be engaged by Jesus. In a simple yet dedicated devotional life. I do not understand this as the same as reading the Bible (chapters at a time) nor studying the Bible. Devotions is letting

God speak to us one verse at a time. Maybe we add a short comment or two, a prayer, but it is about letting intentionally letting God speak to us, briefly.

There are many good devotional books and disciplines, but if you are just starting, start simple. Read one verse, and let God speak – then enter the conversation all day long. Let me introduce to you a simple pattern that Martin Luther used, it is called T.R.I.P. – an acronym for T – thanks, R – regrets; I – intercessory; and P – purpose.

Read a verse (there is a host of ways choosing a verse or pattern of verses to read) and then use the acronym TRIP, almost like a prayer. Understand prayer to be conversation with God. Don't get too formal, let the Spirit work on you. Don't even worry a "wandering mind" – that might be God's way of leading you into a conversation that you aren't expecting.



**TRIPAdvisor**

Read a verse. T – ask yourself, what do these words make you thankful for? R – do these words make you regret anything? Almost confessional. Maybe you might even ask God to forgive you. I – who does this remind you to pray for? Especially let God move you here – it might not be so much related to the verse as God simply reminding you to pray for others. P – what is God asking me to do? Where is God leading me? What am I supposed to see? How am I to respond?

Do this and depending on when you do this - you will find yourself starting your day talking with God before you talk to anyone else. You will find that your last thoughts and conversation of the day are with God. You may find yourself in a day long conversation with your Lord and Savior. You will find yourself walking with God, or better said, God walking with you all day long.

Try it. You will be surprised at the gift it brings.

Wanderings and Wonderings,  
Pastor Bill Peters

