



ONE VOICE



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

Pastor Randy Baldwin & Pastor Bill Peters

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From the Pastor's Desk

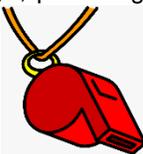
"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: ... A time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; ... a time to break down, and a time to build up... a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing, ... a time to tear, and a time to sew... a time to weep, and a time to laugh, ..."

Ecclesiastes 3:1-7



The month of August is a season of change. We begin with the dog days of summer, trying to find time to swim at a lake or a pool, at least finding shade, if not seeking the shelter of some air conditioning. The long summer days allow for bike rides in the morning or bike rides in the evening. Or take a stroll together as a family.

As August continues, we see the lazy summer days are interrupted by preparations for the school year. The chirp of the lifeguard whistle mingles with the chirp of the high school band director as the band members line up on the practice field. The band members learn the steps to their march, until the steps become body memory. With the steps memorized they begin to play the notes as they march the steps rehearsed until it comes together. The chirp of the football coaches mingles with the chirps of the lifeguards and the band directors. We see the football players going through conditioning exercises, practicing blocking, running pass plays, practicing hand offs and running plays so they too become part of the memory, so the players can use their skills against an opponent in weeks to come.



The chirps of the whistles of the lifeguard become quiet, as the quiet halls of school become suddenly a buzz with excited students glad to see friends again, excitement for new schedules, new learning opportunities. Teachers are excited to see the faces of their students ready to teach them new lessons, ready to lay before them new challenges and smile as new gifts and talents are developed in their students. Pastors are also looking toward the fall schedule. Planning for confirmation classes, first communion classes, Bible studies and more. Yes, August is definitely a season of change.

This August we are dealing with more changes than normal, mostly due to the COVID -19. Now there is more of a focus on a time of refraining from embracing, a time of social distancing, a time of wearing masks. The threat of COVID -19 is changing the way we are preparing for the normal changes that we experience at the end of August. We normally don't think about kids sitting next to each other on the bus as they travel to school. We don't worry about our kids sitting in desks next to each other at school. Once school is started, we usually settle into the new routine of getting up early, getting breakfasts on the table, getting the kids ready for the bus or getting them to school. Once the kids are in school, the parents settle in their workday knowing their kids are busy at school learning, being well taken care of by our teachers and school staff. But what if Covid-19 interrupts the in-person classes? What if there are required times of quarantine? What if the students are now going to be at home doing e-learning? Does a parent have to be at home? Can Parents pool being



home, taking turns helping students learn? Will the day care centers have room for all the kids, and will they help structure their e-learning time? Questions we don't yet have answers to, changes that are forced upon us. Lutherans hate change. So, we would like some more time to get ready for these changes.

We are still adjusting to our spiritual time being changed. Most of us are just getting back to in-person worship. We have had a time of watching and worshipping with families in our homes instead of in our sanctuaries. We are adapting to the change of sitting social distances apart in our pews. We are gathering together wearing masks and forced to hum instead of singing our favorite hymns. Change, umph, Lutherans hate change.

COVID-19 isn't the only change we are facing. The death of George Floyd as created a time of unrest, a time of looking at our social relationships and perceiving the sin of racism creating injustice and broken relationships in our communities. A time of change from acceptance of the racism to a time of addressing the changes that are needed. A time of tearing down systemic racism and a time of rebuilding relationships built on respect, trust and the love of God seasoning and shaping our relationships.

Lutherans hate change. But as the Preacher of Ecclesiastes teaches us, there is a season and a time for every matter under heaven. We know this as we live in an agricultural area, where there is a time for sowing, a time of growing, a time of harvest and a time of resting. We know this as we experience a time of babies learning to crawl, to being toddlers, to preschoolers, to elementary, junior high, high school, going to work and college, marriage, becoming parents, or remaining single, retirement, health bodies becoming wore out with time and death of loved ones, with our own impending death. Life is a time of seasons.

All these changes can create fear and stifle our life, or at least our enjoyment of life. What we need to remember is our Lord always holds us in his hands, no matter the season. Our Lord always knows our journey, the beginning, the middle and the end. Our Lord never leaves us alone in the midst of these changes but is always present. Jesus is the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending. As we change seasons of summer into fall, or seasons of life, Jesus is present walking with us through it all. Jesus is always steadfast with his love. Jesus is always faithful. Jesus is always present shepherding us through the changes we face. No matter the season we face, it is always the season for resting in our Lord's love.



Pastor Randy



WANDERINGS AND WONDERINGS



I knew a racing dog once... down Florida way...greyhound, if I remember right. He lined up on a track with all the other greyhounds. Gun went off. Dogs went off. Around the oval. Toward the wire. Chasing a mechanical rabbit. Until this particular greyhound retired. Called it quits, just like that. I didn't know him all that well. But, as luck would have it, I got invited to his retirement party. Talking to him afterward, I said: "Do you miss the glitter and excitement of the track?"



"No," he replied. "Well, what was the matter? Did you get too old to race?" "No, I still had some race left in me." "Well, what then? Did you not win?" I asked. "I won over a million dollars for my owner." "So, what was it? Bad treatment?" "Oh no," the dog said. "They treated us royally when we were racing." "Did you get crippled?" "No."

"Then why?" I pressed. "I quit," he said. "You quit?" "Yes. I just quit. "Well, why did you quit?"

"I quit the day I discovered that what I was chasing was not really a rabbit." Then he looked at me very seriously and said: "All that running, and running, and running, and running... and what I was chasing, it wasn't even real."

Every once in a while, we have such a reality check. Health issues give us the opportunity to re-think. The COVID experience – I have heard people say over and over, it has given them a new, maybe even healthier perspective on things. Change of jobs ... where we live ... changes and sometimes struggles in our families – all things give us pause.

Is all our running around getting us anywhere? Does our “time priorities” reflect our claimed “value priorities?” Jesus reminds us in the Sermon on the Mount – **“For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”** (Mathew 6:21) That is challenging our priorities ... and our core values ... and our “gods”. And it asks who/what is leading who? What we deem to be our treasures, that is where we are led, that is what we give our hearts to, that becomes our priorities and values. Then we have to ask what are we doing? Why? And are we going to continue to do it that way.

“Now as they went on their way, he entered a certain village, where a woman named Martha welcomed him into her home. She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what he was saying. But Martha was distracted by her many tasks; so she came to him and asked, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to do all the work by myself? Tell her then to



help me." But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and distracted by many things; ⁴²there is need of only one thing. Mary has chosen the better part, which will not be taken away from her." (Luke 10:38ff)

Sometimes the story we tell about Mary and Martha would leave Martha in the bad light if only most of us were not so much like Martha. Jesus does not criticize Martha for what she is doing, but for judging Mary for what she is doing. And Jesus clearly says, Mary has chosen the better part. I often wonder if this changed Martha's priorities at all. I doubt if it changed her work ethic, but I wonder if she learned to make room for a few other people and things.

Do we “make room” for God in our lives? Do we “make room” for our neighbor? For our families? For spiritual matters that are mixed in with our daily chores and busyness? This does not just happen. With God's help we have to make it happen ... work at it ... often change things in our lives to reflect holy ways. “Holy” means to “set it apart”. Do we “set our lives apart” to reflect God's will and God's ways in our lives? Do others see God at work in us?

The following story does not so much reflect our spiritual lives, but does reflect the pit falls in our lives. How we get caught up in the ways of the world. How we are pushed to reflect worldly values. And ultimately the story highlights one who understands what he wants, and what he has.

There is a story of a rich industrialist who was disturbed to find a fisherman sitting lazily beside his boat. "Why aren't you out there fishing?" he asked.

"Because I've caught enough fish for today," said the fisherman.

"Why don't you catch more fish than you need?" the rich man asked. "What would I do with them?"

"You could earn more money," came the impatient reply, "and buy a better boat so you could go deeper and catch more fish. You could purchase nylon nets, catch even more fish, and make more money. Soon you'd have a fleet of boats and be rich like me."

The fisherman asked, "Then what would I do?" "You could sit down and enjoy life," said the industrialist.

"What do you think I'm doing now?" the fisherman replied as he looked placidly out to sea.

Sit down at Jesus' feet. Walk with God. **“Strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”** (Matthew 6:33)

Wanderings and Wonderings, Pastor Bill Peters

