



ONE VOICE



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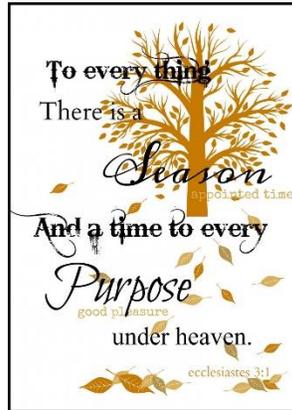
From the Pastor's Desk

"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted; a time to embrace, and a time to refrain from embracing."



Ecclesiastes 3:1-2, 5b

The month of September begins a different season for us, a season under heaven that moves us in North America from summer to fall. All ready we have begun to experience some of the changes in fall. Our students will be starting school at the end of August. It is time for school to begin. However, with the Pandemic interruption we don't know how school is going to look like. Is it going to be normal, with school buses running in the morning to pick-up students, where they gather together in classes with classmates and teachers? Or are the buses going to stay in the bus garage and the students learn on line? Or will it be a combination of both? I think even our Administration, who is working hard for us, doesn't have a hard solid answer on those questions. Everything has to be flexible because Covid-19 keeps interrupting our normal. Still summer has come to an end and it is the season for Students and Teachers to begin a new journey of learning once again. Even though we don't know what that may look like. It is the season.



classrooms and buses may or may not be full. How do we learn when we have to be apart. Friends will have to spend time on social media to stay in touch. How do we be friends when we have to be apart? Families will be present to celebrate life. But how do we be family when we have to be apart? Tough questions all of us are asking. Each of us are finding different answers that work for us.

We wrestle with these difficult questions, which answers seem to elude us or when we have an answer the situation changes again and we have to struggle to find a new solution. The words from Ecclesiastes give us hope. The Preacher reminds

It is the season for the crops to change from growing to finishing and a time of harvest. Hopefully and prayerfully, we will have enough time of sun and time of rain to finish the season of growing and prepare for the time of harvesting. We know a lot of Iowa farmers were preparing for a great harvest, when a strong wind storm just flattened everything, a freak storm, never seen in Iowa before. So for many Iowa farmers, a time of harvest is now a time of "now what?"

Covid -19 has also brought about a time to refrain from embracing. We can't shake hands. We can't give a hug to family and friends. Adult children can't visit their parents in the nursing home or the hospital. They cannot embrace. Maybe they can wave through a window and talk on a phone. Or maybe they can face time or skype so they can see each other while talking. But it is a time of masks and gloves. It is a time to refrain from embracing.

It is a time to be born and a time to die. Covid-19 cannot stop the seasons of life. Children will be born. Parents and grandparents will be thrilled at this miracle of life, this gift of love and joy which opens the heart to love more than a person thought possible. There is a time of growing as babies grow to be toddlers, toddlers grow to be pre-school and kindergarteners, kindergarteners grow to elementary, elementary kids grow to be junior High, Junior High grow into high school, high schoolers grow into college or the military or the work place. It is a time of growing and changing. It is a season for every matter under the sun.

Yet in the midst of this time of growing, we are experiencing more of a time of change than usual. The time of learning and growing, as I mentioned is interrupted as

us that there is a season for every matter under the sun. There is a promise undergirding the seasons. The Lord promised Noah and creation, "As long as the earth endures, seedtime and harvest, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night shall not cease." Our Lord who promises the season also brings blessings within the seasons. Our Lord blesses us with the gift of new life born into the world. Our Lord blesses us with the wonder of the miracles of children born into our lives. Our Lord blesses us with the joy of learning and discovery of new information, the discovery of a new gift, a new talent that is mastered. Our Lord blesses us with family to support, to love and uplift us. Our Lord blesses us with friends to share and enrich our lives. Our Lord blesses us with our creativity to take on new challenges and overcome them. Our Lord blesses us with sun and rain. Our Lord blesses us with his unconditional love and presence. Our Lord walks with us so we never face a moment of the day alone. Our Lord walks with us, so when we fall, He places his hand in ours and lifts us up. Our Lord is with us so when we sin, He draws us into our arms, removes our sin and guilt and whispers, "I forgive you." In our ears, drawing us into a tighter hug affirming the truth of His words. Our Lord is present to bless us a thousand different ways every day.

We are living in a difficult time. There is a season for everything. We wonder when the season of the pandemic will come to an end. We don't know the answer. But what we do know, is our Lord is above time, that is our Lord is eternal. Our Lord is also the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. Jesus, the Heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit hold our beginnings, our present and our future in their hands. Scriptures reveal over and over again, that our Heavenly Father is faithful, full of grace and mercy and steadfast love. No matter what the season, what time it is, our Lord is present with you. No matter the season, the Lord is present to bless in abundance. It is a different time, but God is with us all the time, every season.

Pastor Randy



WANDERINGS AND WONDERINGS



And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray... the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. But when the disciples saw him ... they were terrified ... immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him"

(Matthew 14:22-33)

Cowboy writer Curt Brummett likes to tell how proud he felt the day his father gave him his first real rope. All young cowboys dream of owning their own rope, which they can use to rope steer. As his father tied the rope into a lasso, he gave Curt one important piece of advice, "Never . . . never, put it on anything you can't get it off of."

That evening, company came by for coffee.

Curt and his little sister were playing in another room. He was trying to rope her feet as she ran by. She retaliated by tying a knot in his rope. He decided that next time she came through the room, he would catch her for sure. A few minutes later, the kitchen door opened. Curt, hiding behind the door, swung out his lasso. It landed firmly around a single female foot. He gave the rope a tug. The next thing he heard was a tremendous crash. Curt peeked around the door to see that he had just roped his mother by the foot. She had been carrying a tray loaded with coffee cups and coffee. That evening, Curt's mother cut up his brand-new rope into little, tiny pieces. And his father's only words of comfort were, "I told you not to put that rope on anything you couldn't get it off of."

That's good advice. There is a place for caution in the Christian life. There are risks we should not take. Anything that endangers our relationship with God, anything that endangers our relationship with those we love, anything that endangers our emotional, physical and spiritual health must be handled with greatest care.

Keep that in mind as we enter this fall, trying to resume some "normal" activities – indoor worship, Sunday School, Bible studies, confirmation, etc. - we are still at risk in this time of the pandemic. Six months and it hasn't gone away, and we are beginning to realize that it will be with us for some time. We have to take seriously what many are calling "risk management." And realize that we might seemingly do all the right things, but that does not eliminate all the risks.

Risk management. As we resume church activities, we will try to do what is recommended to keep everyone safe. And we need you to understand your own situations as to what you can, want, need – to do. We need to commit to one

another, not to judge and pressure one another, but to be understanding and supportive of one another as we make our decisions.

There are a number of people in my family who have been sky diving. But not me. I openly acknowledge that I would find it exciting, a thrill, a high – I would enjoy it. But it is not a risk that I'm willing to take.



And though some churches/believers have made the proclamation that because they are Jesus' people, they won't get sick, They are wrong! And circumstances have proven that. Just because we have faith . . .just because we

trust Jesus with our whole life . . . just because Jesus claims us as his own – that does not exempt us from the hardships and sufferings of this world. Refresh yourself with the Biblical stories – Joseph, Job, Jeremiah . . . Peter, Paul, the rest of the disciples . . . and ultimately "Jesus" – that is God himself in the flesh and blood. Even Jesus suffered in this world.

There is an old joke about three ministers out on a boat fishing. One of them, suddenly realizing that he had left his tackle box in the cabin, stepped out of the boat, and walked on the water over to shore. Just then, the second one said he had forgotten his faithful fishing hat on the front seat of the car. He too stepped out of the boat and walked on the water over to shore. When they had both returned, the third minister who had watched this remarkable demonstration with mouth open and eyes wide, reasoned to himself "My faith is as strong as theirs. I can do that too."

So, he stepped out of the boat and promptly sank to the bottom. His two companions dragged him out, but once they got him in the boat, he was determined not to be shown up. He stepped out once more, and immediately sank again. As his friends pulled him out, he sputtered, "My faith is as strong as yours. Why can't I walk on the water?"

The first two looked at each another and one finally said, "We'd better tell him where those rocks are before he drowns himself."



In the midst of all what's going on, let us know for sure who our rock is. **Our rock is Jesus Christ.** That's the bottom line. He tells us to not be afraid, "**Take heart, it is I;**

do not be afraid." But that does not mean that we are not going to get wet. Look what Peter does as he begins to go down – he knows who is his rock – he cries out to Jesus, "**Lord, save me!**" **Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him.**" Take note it is Jesus who reaches out to Peter, and pulls him up.

There are a lot of things we do not know or understand – the last six months have proven that again. But there is something we do know, without a doubt – **Jesus is our rock ... our Savior ... our Lord and God.** It is in Jesus, we put our trust.

Wanderings and Wonderings,
Pastor Bill Peters