



ONE VOICE



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

Pastor Randy Baldwin & Pastor Bill Peters

Volume 14, Issue 8

August 2021

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; ..." Ecclesiastes 3:1, 2b



Whenever I think of the month of August, the color gold comes to mind. When I was spending my summers as a youth on my grandparents' farm, I remember the fields of golden oats. In July, the oats were green just like the corn and beans. But in August, the green oats would ripen to a bright color of gold. My grandpa had an old binder that he used to cut the oats. I would ride on the binder, operating the reels. Once in



a while, I would have to lower the reels to knock the shorter oats into the sickle blade and onto the canvas that moved them through the disconnected binder parts to create windrows. But most of the time, I just sat and watched the binder cut the oats as we drove round

and round through the golden field until all the oats were cut. Then days later, my Uncle Bob and I would drive our International H pulling a wagon to the Allis Chalmers two-row combine my Grandpa was pulling behind his tractor and my Grandpa would unload the golden oats into the wagon. A couple days after that we would bale the golden straw and put it up in the barn for bedding for the cows, pigs and chickens. Years later, when I was on my internship up in North Dakota, a few miles from the Canadian border, there was gold as far as the eye could see, which was about twenty miles. The fields were gold. There were golden barely fields. There were golden wheat fields. There were golden sunflower fields. So it is that when I think of August, I think of it as a season of gold.

The Preacher of Ecclesiastes wrote that there is a season for everything under the sun. August is the season of change. As I mentioned the green oats, barley and wheat change to a bright gold, with the grain and the straw ripening for harvest. The early harvest of the oats and the wheat and barely are just one of the changes we usually experience during the month of August.

In the beginning of August, there are still a number of county fairs going on with neighbors out and about visiting at



the fair. There is fair food and 4-H projects to admire. Then we transition into the dog days of summer, with the hot humid temperatures having us seek out the pools and lakes for swimming or the air conditioning. As the dog days of summer

come to an end, it is time to prepare for the starting of school. Moms and Dads head out with their students, looking for new clothes, new back packs, checking the list for all the supplies they need for the year. Soon the school buses are rolling, as summer comes to an end for our kindergarten through seniors. College students finish up their summer jobs, re-connect with their school friends one more time before they head of to campus with a carload of clothes and stuff for a dorm room or an apartment. Yes, August is a season of change.

Lutherans generally don't like change, but as the Preacher noted changes are a part of life, whether we like change or not.

The Preacher lifts up several seasons of change, besides the ripening of the oats, barely and wheat and transition from summer fun to school and college beginning. The preacher notes there is a time to be born, a time to die, a time to kill and a time to heal, a time to break down and a time to build up, a time to weep, and a time to laugh, a time to mourn, and a time to dance, a time to embrace, a time to refrain from embracing, a time to seek and a time to lose, a time to keep and a time to throw away, a time to tear and a time to sew, and time to keep silence, and a time to speak; a time to love and a time to hate, a time for war and at time for peace. We have experienced many of these seasons of life over and over again. Some seasons seem longer than others. For instance, we are now seeking a time of peace in Afghanistan after we have had a time of war for over twenty years. We are embracing once again after a year of not touching and not being able to visit. There are times when we laugh and dance with loved ones and it seems a season to short as death has taken them a way and we have a season of mourning and missing the loved one.

As we experience all this change around us, and it seems to me the changes are coming faster and more change than I am ready for, there is one constant, our Lord. A different writer, the writer of Hebrews wrote, "Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday and today and forever." That is, Jesus is always present with his love and grace to walk with you, no matter the season. Jesus has walked through the seasons of life, like you and me. Jesus had times of laughter with family and friends. Jesus had times of mourning as he lost his father Joseph and he wept with Martha and Mary over the death of Lazarus. Jesus knew a time of healing and a time of being wounded. Jesus knew a time of death and a time of death being defeated as he rose from the dead. Seasons come and go in our lives, some seasons of laughter and dancing with family and friends are blessings given to us. There are times of sorrow and stress and brokenness in which our Lord Jesus finds us and give us the peace of his love that is greater than the brokenness. No matter the season, a time to be born a time to die, a time to plant a time to harvest, a time to laugh a time to mourn, Jesus is constant in his love to you. Jesus is constantly present as your Lord of lords and King of kings, greater than the powers of sin and powers of brokenness and power of death. Jesus is present walking with you through all the seasons, until he brings you into the fulness of his kingdom, when the seasons cease and there is only a time of eternity of love.

The month of August is a season of change. It reminds us of all the seasons of change we experience and will experience. Jesus is the one who walks with you through all the seasons with his unchanging love and mercy and grace for you.

Pastor Randy



WANDERINGS AND WONDERINGS



There is a story told of a bishop who was upset because a woman in his diocese claimed to have daily conversations with Jesus. A little cult had grown up around her, and every day people surrounded her house, got on their knees, prayed, sang hymns, and said the rosary.



The bishop thought all of this was getting out of hand, so he went to visit the woman. He told her that while he knew she thought she was having conversations with Jesus, he was pretty much convinced it was all part of her imagination. To prove his point he said, "If Jesus is right here in this room with you now, and you can talk to Him, then ask Him to name the three sins I confessed this morning when I went to the confessional. After having what you believe to be a conversation with Jesus, if you can accurately name those sins, I might believe in what you say."

The woman sat for a long while. Then she smiled and turned to the bishop and said, "I asked Him, but Jesus said, "I forgot."

God can do what we cannot. "Forgive and Forget." For that we are forever grateful for our loving and merciful God. We have all heard the cliché "Forgive and Forget." I don't think that is humanly possible. If we can forget it, then we probably don't need to forgive it.

And to forgive ... well we are expected to forgive as we have been forgiven. It is so hard ... not just to do it, but wanting to do it. I believe to forgive is humanly impossible, but with God all things are possible. We are asked, expected, "need to for our own spiritual health" to forgive one another. But we don't forgive by our own will and power. We are able to forgive by the power and grace of God working and living through us. We must let the love of God flow to us ... and through us.

There is an often mis-applied verse in Matthew 18:20, "where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." It is a powerful and reassuring verse, and can faithfully be applied in many ways. But the context of this verse is not worship ... not prayer ... not fellowship ... the context of this verse is forgiveness. It is by the presence and power and grace of God, we are able to forgive.

Sometimes we feel defeated, because after working real hard to forgive, and getting there, we wake up one morning and all those feelings of resentment, anger, and ill-will are back, festering in our hearts and minds. For us, forgiveness is not "once and done" It is often an ongoing process ... we repeatedly receive and realize God gift of love and forgiveness for us, and then apply it, share it with those we need to forgive. Over and over and over again.



Tony Compolo tells of the time, when he was a young boy, an evangelist came to his church, and told them that on Judgment Day they would pull down a movie screen and run a film (or in today's terminology, a video), and flashed up on that screen would be pictures of every dirty, filthy thing we had ever done. Then, he looked at me (Tony) and said, "And your mother will be there!" I shuddered at the thought!



During the Watergate hearings, prosecutors produced a cassette tape alleged to be an actual recording of Richard Nixon ordering two staff members to proceed with the cover-up of the whole Watergate affair. During the hearings they put Rosemary Woods, Nixon's private secretary, on the stand as they played the tape for all to hear. A good part of the American public watched the whole thing on live television. It was the highest kind of drama.

The tape played to the point where the crime was allegedly recorded, then suddenly the tape went dead. America watched and listened for eighteen and a half minutes while the tape played, but they heard nothing. Rosemary Woods had erased the tape!

There probably isn't a videotape with all of our sins recorded on it. But if there were, here's the good news of the gospel: Jesus has erased your tape.

God is able to do more than you and I. We have a God who not only forgives. He forgets. He takes sin away from us and forgets it was ever ours in the first place.

Wanderings and Wonderings,
Pastor Bill Peters

