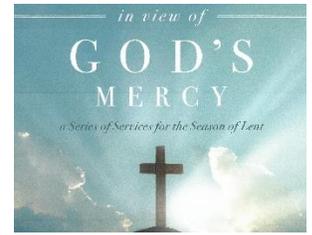




ONE VOICE



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

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From the Pastor's Desk

"Athletes exercise self-control in all things; they do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable one." 1 Corinthians 9:25



We have recently been able to see some top athletes of the world compete. The season of NFL football ended with post-season play off games that were really competitive, bringing about the best efforts of many athletes with many of the games being decided in the last seconds of the game. The Super Bowl again displayed some great athleticism of players on defense and offense as the game went back and forth and the victory also being decided in the last minute of the game. Surrounded on both sides of the Super Bowl are the Winter Olympics. I know I have enjoyed watching some sports that I never get to see. For instance, the Monobob Sled race, the Skeleton sled race, the Giant Slalom, the Slalom, Freestyle Snowboarding and Freestyle Skiing, Speed Skating, Figure Skating, Ice Dancing to just mention a few. These Olympic athletes spend countless hours of training over a period of months and years. Everyday rising early to exercise to



strengthen their whole body and mind. Then practicing their sport over and over again until the muscles and mind create a memory and know exactly what to do on the day of competition. It is amazing to see the snowboarders and skiers fly thirty, forty feet into the air, all the while twisting and turning, breaking out of the turns in the last second to land perfectly on their snowboard or skis, at least most of the time. It is amazing to watch skiers racing down a mountain at speeds of sixty to

eighty miles an hour with just an edge of their skis to cut into the snow to make a turn. Some races have been won by four hundredths of a second. We watch figure skaters jump up into the air, twirling three to four times to land on the narrow blades only to jump into the air again to another twirl and recover again on the narrow blade, all in time to music. It is amazing to watch what these athletes can do as a result of all their devotion to their disciplines.



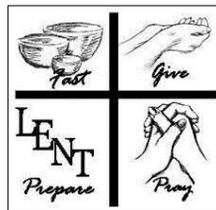
This year as we enter into the month of March, we will hear the call to also enter into our Lenten discipline. This is not an exercise to compete or a discipline to win a prize. It is a call to a discipline for our spiritual warfare against evil and the seductions of the world. Listen to the call to the Lenten discipline. *"As disciples of our Lord Jesus, we are called to struggle against everything that leads us away from the love of God and neighbor. Repentance, fasting, prayers, and works of love – the disciplines of Lent – help us to wage our spiritual warfare. I invite you therefore, to commit yourselves to this struggle and confess your sins, asking our Father for strength to persevere in your Lenten Discipline."* This call leads into a confession of sins, listing our failures to persevere in our spiritual warfare all year long, leading into a cross being formed by ashes upon our foreheads with the words, *"Remember you*

are dust and to dust you shall return." It is a somber reminder of the truth we often deny or at least don't think about very often. It is a truth reminding us that our time is a limited time, and we should not take our spiritual warfare against sin and evil lightly. After we receive the ashes reminding us of our mortality, we receive a word of hope. *"Almighty God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, does not desire the death of sinners, but rather that they may turn from their wickedness and live. Therefore, we implore him to grant us true repentance and his Holy Spirit, that those things may please him, which we do on this day, that the rest of our life may be pure and holy, and that at the last we may come to his eternal joy, through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

The absolution declaring forgiveness also lays out the reason for our Lenten Discipline. We live in the world. As we live in the world, we discover each day there are lots of demands upon our time and our talents. Our families need our time and our love. We need to love, nurture, support and lift up one another in our families, so our families became a safe place to grow and live. Our extended family and our friends also need some of our energy, attention and love. Then we add on the demands of our jobs, the different responsibilities and roles that are required of us, expend a lot of our time and energy as well. Plus, it seems we are moving at a faster and faster pace. Just like the athletes' races are determined by hundredths of seconds, our lives our often divided up by quarters of an hour to minutes and then we whisk off to the next thing on our schedule.

So it is that we need our Lenten Discipline. For a period of time, it takes us out of our rushing here and there to refocus upon our relationship with our Lord and with one another, as we answer the call to serve and love one another in the same manner we love our Lord. So we take a break from our routine and we gather for fellowship as we eat together, strengthening our fellowship as Brothers and Sisters in Christ. We gather to worship, with the worship focusing on our Lord's love for you and for the other. We close our worship singing together the Holden Evening Prayer, with our prayers rising up as incense. We are invited to take some extra time during the week for some devotional reading of scripture and a time of prayer.

All our Lenten Disciplines remind us that we are in a spiritual warfare against sin and evil. We discipline ourselves so as not to drop our guard and let sin and Satan create more brokenness in our lives. We join the Lenten Discipline leading us to Easter morning, where we celebrate the good news that our Lord Jesus has won the victory and you are his victorious reward. So let us answer the call to our Lenten Discipline so we may have a closer walk with our Lord in the midst of our broken world in which we live.



Pastor Randy



WANDERINGS AND WONDERINGS



Life is full of transitions. And yet we have all heard somebody say or respond nonverbally – “I don’t like change.” Often that “somebody” is ourselves. And some of you have heard me say, “That’s not true. We all like change. We just like to be in control of it.” For example, most of us do not like eating the same meal three times in a row no matter how good it is – thus our aversion to leftovers. We notice when somebody wears the same clothes 3, 4, even 5 days in a row. Though I must admit, there are some clothes I change into at the end of the day that brings me much comfort and help me unwind. 😊



Change can be a bit unsettling ... it makes us nervous ... sometimes even irritable. Change can be exciting ... hopeful ... and even necessary. Most change embodies all of the above.

Right now, I and my family are in the midst of a host of transitions. All of the above feelings are true, and natural, and ok. One on the lighter side of things is that I have found it fascinating watching our granddaughters grow (it has been a few years that we have had that age so close to us— just for a few months as you know) and deal with change. As their bodies grow and mature – we cheer them on, but they are not always that happy about it. As they are handed from one person to another – we are excited, they are not always so sure. And then they are sure, and we find ourselves handing them back to mom or grandma. We are encouraging them to rollover, they rollover and we cheer. They are frustrated because now they are further from the toy they were seeking to get their hands on.



of a true,

It is the same transition, but we have different responses. It is the same transition, and in the course of time, it means different things to us. We are faced with transitions, and often we are not so sure, but we really do not know what to make of it. Ultimately, we don’t always oppose the change, the transition, but we want some assurances, some peace with the situation.

Often, we are not going to find our peace in our self. Nor in the circumstances. Nor even in “our believed control/planning” of the events that are unfolding. Too many uncertainties.

We want ... need peace, but it needs to come from another source, God. We might say and experience, peace in our hearts. But it is not about us, it is about the God who we have turned to ... who we have handed things over to ... who we have let take control – it is God who gives us that needed peace. Not something we have figured out nor achieved. That is what we call the “peace of God” because that is who gifts us with what we need.

That peace of God does not change the circumstances or makes the transition any easier, but it does empower us to move forward with a confidence that is not our own.

The Lenten season is one of the transition. We don’t always think of it that way, but it is. We move in the story of Jesus where we are now – Jesus is the most popular guy, on the top of the world. To the end of the Lenten season and we see him rejected and betrayed by his own people and see him hanging on the cross. That is some transition. And though Jesus knows that is what he is to do, it is not an easy journey as witnessed by his prayers in Gethsemane. But by the time he is done praying that evening, he is given a peace and strength to move forward.

In the midst of the same transition – God succumbs to pain, helplessness, and death. And we experience hope, power and life. It was all part of the same events. All part of the plan.



Trust God in the midst of your transitions, in and through the life changes that you are experiencing. He is there with you. He is there for you.

Wanderings and Wonderings,
Pastor Bill Peters