



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; ..."

Ecclesiastes 3:1-2



September is a time of change. The month begins with the warm summer like days, with the sun still having enough strength to make the temperatures still climb into the high seventies and low eighties. The nights begin to be a little cooler as the days slowly begin to be shorter. In the beginning of September, the fields of corn and beans are still a bright vibrant green with the leaves waving in the breeze. The wind still whispers through the bright green leaves on the trees, making the branches sway to the wind. But as September goes on, the nights begin to have a crisp coolness, that brings out the fall jackets. At the end of September the leaves on the trees begin to change, exhibiting colors of bright red, orange and yellow. The beans begin to lose their leaves and the lush green fields begin to be filled with brown stems holding the pods of beans. The corn begins to dry and the green begins to fade from its leaves and stalks.

September also brings changes to our daily lives. The free unscheduled days of summer are over for our kids in the community as now the school buses are picking up students in the morning and the school bells ring to begin a new day of learning. No more sleeping late in the mornings. The baseball and golf season gives way to the football season. Soon parents and grandparents will be sitting on bleachers in the cool fall nights cheering on the home football team. Cold lemonade gives way to hot chocolate. The college students have returned to college, sharing stories about summer jobs and fun had during the summer. Back-packs are filled with books as they too return to classes. September also brings change to our attire. Short sleeve shirts, shorts and sandals give way to jeans, long sleeve shirts and a light jacket. Yes, September is a month about changes.

One would think, as Lutherans, we would hate the month of September, because we really do not like, "change". Perhaps you too have heard the old joke, "How many Lutherans does it take to change a light bulb? Change?????" We Lutherans do like our traditions, which is ironic since our birth story is all about reforming changes.

The thing we don't like about change, I think, is it makes us uncomfortable. With tradition, we know what to expect. We are pretty sure what is expected of us and how we think the day is going to go. Change brings the unexpected, unfamiliarity. When things are unfamiliar, and we don't know what is expected of us and we are not sure of the outcomes of the change, we become stressed. For most of us, "familiar", fits our comfort zones.

Yet, there are those among us, who love September, because they thrive on change. The same old, same old routine becomes boring. They love the thrill of change. They enjoy discovering what the unknown might bring and the

change and unknown brings joy instead of stress. September is a witness to the truth declared by the Preacher of Ecclesiastes. Change is constant. *"For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under the heaven; a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted."* We live in a time when change is not only constant but seems to come quickly.

New technology keeps the change we experience at a rapid rate. I remember ten years ago people were unsure of using cell phones. Now we can hardly imagine going without them. Our cell phones have changed from being a phone, to being a small computer with a phone function. We can use our phones to shop on the internet, google all kinds of information, use as navigation tool to guide us to new addresses. Our cell phones can remote start our cars, turn down or up the temperatures in our homes, keep track of our spending, count our steps and record our heart beats. Plus, our phones can take amazing pictures, videos, even making movies. We also have smart watches, smart coffee makers, smart furnaces and air conditioners, smart cars with all kinds of safety features. With all the "smart" technology surrounding us, I am feeling not so smart. Most of the time the new technology changes help make life easier. At the same time all the new technologies contribute to our old habit of trying to get more and more things done in our day. If it only takes forty-five minutes to mow the lawn instead of an hour and a half, we add three more activities to our day. We don't save time, we fill it. The more we fill our lives with more activities, the more we can become overwhelmed. We can be lost in all the change.

When that is the case, we can rest in the One that does not change. As the letter of Hebrews declares, *"Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today and forever"*. Jesus is always present. Jesus is always seeking you out. Jesus' love for you never wavers. Jesus declares to you, that the Father has given you into his hands and no one, no authority can ever take you out of his hands. Jesus revealed God's grace and love that is constant never changing for you. When you turn to seek forgiveness, Jesus is ready to forgive. Jesus is still the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the ending. Jesus is always Lord, victor over sin and death. So when we feel lost in this ever fast paced changing world, we can rest in the unchanging love and constant presence of our Lord Jesus. Even as the seasons change, even with change as a constant force in our lives, Jesus' love for you is greater. Jesus' love for you is a sure foundation, that never changes. Find shelter and rest in Jesus' unchanging love for you.



Pastor Randy



WANDERINGS AND WONDERINGS



We all know we live in a divided world ... a divided nation... in a divided culture ... divided families. Everywhere we turn, we see division. And we experience the pain it causes. We don't like how that feels. We don't want that. But we don't know what to do with it. We are stuck. We are paralyzed. Thus we accept it. That is the way it is.



Is that line of thinking consistent with the God we read about in Scripture? If you think so, read the Scriptures again. If we were asked "Who's side is God on?" we would say, "Our side, of course."

But let us read some more. One of the problems that people had with Jesus is that he didn't always side with those they thought he should. He ate with tax collectors and sinners. He lifted up Samaritans. He welcomed home prodigal sons. John 3:17 reminds us "he did not come into the world to condemn it, but to save it."

It is not that Jesus opposes one side over the other, he opposes division. We are reminded in Ephesians 1:9 "he has made known to us the mystery of his will...as a plan for the fullness of time, to gather up all things in him, things in heaven and things on earth."

(An excerpt from "Dinner with a Perfect Stranger" by David Gregory)

When I was about nine. My sister Chelle must've been five. We had stopped at a burger place for some ice cream, and Chelle, wanted a big vanilla shake. Dad tried to talk her into a small one, but she insisted on a large. So we all got our orders, got back in the car, and drove off. Then Chelle started on her shake. But the thing was so think that she couldn't use a straw. So she took the plastic top off and tilted it toward her mouth. Except it was barely moving, and she kept tilting it up farther and farther, and the main blob still wasn't moving. So finally I said, "Come on, Chelle!" and reached over and gave the bottom of the cup a whap. When I did that, the whole thing came cascading onto her face. When she opened her eyes, all you could see were these two big, brown circles poking out through the whit ice cream."



Jesus started laughing with me. I continued, "She looked like a ghost. I burst out laughing, she

burst out crying, and my dad burst out yelling – at me. He never used to do that, but his time he did. He slammed on the brakes, got out, wiped her off as best he could, then bent me over his knee and gave me my worst spanking ever. He was not happy."

I wiped my eyes with my napkin. I hadn't thought about that in years or laughed so hard in a while, either. "I think that was the last vanilla shake I ever saw Chelle get. She always ordered chocolate after that."

We both took a drink of water, looked at each other, and chuckled a bit more as we returned to our salads. Finally Jesus got us back to semiserious conversation. "So your dad always handled the spanking."

Yeah. Mother just screamed at us. But Dad didn't spank much. I probably didn't get half a dozen spankings growing up." "Why not?"

"I don't know." I thought about that for a second. "I don't know. That just wasn't his way of handling things. Usually he made sure we understood why what we had done was wrong. Then he always made us apologize to the other person. Especially to Mother."

I took another bite of tortellini. He had a sip of wine, then said, "It sounds as though your dad had a lot in common with God."

That one cut short my next bite en route to my mouth. "How so?"

They both focused on restoring relationships." I wasn't quite getting the connection. "Meaning..."

You dad had you admit how you had hurt someone and apologize. He was interested in restoring relationships."

I guess that's true. I've never thought about it that way.

"God is like that," he continued. "he's not interested in people trying to perform well enough for him. They can't. He created people to have a relationship with him, to enjoy his love. But humanity rejected God and severed that relationship. His program is putting it back together.



Wanderings and Wonderings,
Pastor Bill Peters