



Weekly Newsletter
Monday November 23, 2020

Note from Pastor Steve

God has blessed each of us with more than we can understand or imagine. Our lives are full of gifts and blessings. This Thursday is Thanksgiving Day. A day where we gather together as family and friends to acknowledge how blessed we have been this year. This year has been an odd year for our world. The things we would normally say thanks for are still there, but there is some other things that have been added to our lives. Things that most of us would not view as a blessing, but rather as struggles. I wonder if the roller coaster we have been on this year is somewhat similar to what the early followers of Jesus felt before and after the resurrection.

Jesus followers scattered quickly when Jesus allowed himself to be arrested. Their hearts would have been overcome with doubt and fear. It was the middle of the night, they had been disturbed in their camp. They would not have had time to pack up their things. The mob was on top of them too quickly. It was in the middle of cold night and they were left alone. Mark's gospel even tells us that one of them, "fled naked" Mark 14:52. Can you imagine how scared, alone, helpless they felt? Our fears of feeling alone that came last spring would have been only the tip of iceberg of the emotions that Jesus followers were feeling on that last night. A feelings of helplessness and emptiness. Last Spring, like the disciples, we did not know what to do, we were all lost with the world closing around us.

Jesus followers only had to wait three days before word of Jesus resurrection started to get to them. Their world that had crashed the Friday before was not a total loss. They did not know what was going to happen, but Jesus was not gone anymore. There was hope. We have lived the ups and down of hope over this year. The promise of a vaccine, the drop in cases, and deaths has given us hope at moments. But we do not always feel like that last.

Jesus forty days after rising from the death, left again this time in the clouds with a command to wait. The emotional roller coaster of those last forty days must of weighed heavy on their hearts as this year has on our hearts. Jesus said it was for their good that He would leave, but that would not of made it easy. Jesus nevertheless knew what he was talking about. The gift of the Holy Spirit that was coming to them just ten days later was worth the wait was exactly what was needed.

This year we have had a lot of ups and down moments when Hope was not there. The crazy thing about all of this, the gift that was worth the ups and downs for those 53 days for Jesus followers is still here among us. No matter what happens in our world the Spirit of God is here. The exact gift that we need has already been given to you and me. We can always want more toilet paper, or disinfected wipes. But we already have the one thing that we should be most thankful for the Spirit of God that is the source of our hope, strength, love and grace that we all need and desire. Give Thanks that God's Spirit is with us today!

Shallow and Profound By: Oswald Chambers

Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. —1 Corinthians 10:31

Beware of allowing yourself to think that the shallow aspects of life are not ordained by God; they are ordained by Him equally as much as the profound. We sometimes refuse to be shallow, not out of our deep devotion to God but because we wish to impress other people with the fact that we are not shallow. This is a sure sign of spiritual pride. We must be careful, for this is how contempt for others is produced in our lives. And it causes us to be a walking rebuke to other people because they are more shallow than we are. Beware of posing as a profound person— God became a baby.

To be shallow is not a sign of being sinful, nor is shallowness an indication that there is no depth to your life at all— the ocean has a shore. Even the shallow things of life, such as eating and drinking, walking and talking, are ordained by God. These are all things our Lord did. He did them as the Son of God, and He said, “A disciple is not above his teacher...” (Matthew 10:24).

We are safeguarded by the shallow things of life. We have to live the surface, commonsense life in a commonsense way. Then when God gives us the deeper things, they are obviously separated from the shallow concerns. Never show the depth of your life to anyone but God. We are so nauseatingly serious, so desperately interested in our own character and reputation, we refuse to behave like Christians in the shallow concerns of life.

Make a determination to take no one seriously except God. You may find that the first person you must be the most critical with, as being the greatest fraud you have ever known, is yourself.

“Jesus asked, ‘Were not all ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Has no one returned to give praise to God except this foreigner?’” Luke 17:17- 18

“Gratitude recognizes that a gift has been given, a favor has been done by someone. There is a gift and a giver. But there is more. Gratitude also calls for a response to that gift. We thank the giver with an expression of appreciation — a handshake, a hug, a note. A gesture of gratitude completes the exchange, closes the circle, lets the love flow back to the giver.” — Don Postema, Space for God.

I needed to read that quote. It was an “ah-ha” moment for me — it made so much sense. Many gifts I have given in the past have left me with a sense of emptiness because I never heard back if the gift was appreciated or not. The circle was not closed — I didn’t feel love flow back from the recipient of my gift.

But there have also been so many times when I have not taken the time to thank the giver of a gift for me. Those who gave me a gift would have likewise felt empty because I didn’t take the time to let them know the gift was appreciated.

How often do we take all the blessings and gifts from the Lord for granted — we almost feel entitled to them. Far too many times. You may relate to this thought. I encourage you to say this prayer with me.

Lord, thank You, for You are the giver of so many beautiful gifts. I thank You for them all. Enable me to remember to thank You and thank others when they give a gift of kindness. Cause me to express my gratitude. Let the circle of love close — let love flow back to the giver. Amen.

— Katherine Kehler