



FPC Tidings

IT TAKES GRACE...(LOTS OF GRACE THESE DAYS)

If you're like me, I'm looking for something a bit on the lighter side these days. Not that all of us shouldn't be keeping up with all the negative things going on, but there is a point where I need a counter-point – something for my mind and spirit to relax with and enjoy without having to over-think.

Most of my newsletter articles are titled "It Takes Grace." That's an acknowledgment on my part that whatever issues we face, we need to be looking to see what God sees and then respond the way we believe God would respond. You might remember a couple decades back, the phrase "WWJD" (What Would Jesus Do?). Not a bad way of approaching life. But even more interesting to me is the question God might ask of Christians: "Knowing

Who Jesus Is In Your Life, What Are You Going To Do?" I kind of doubt that "KWJIIYLWAYGTD" would catch on (the bracelet would be too big). But if we looked at more of life from God's perspective, maybe then we all might live together, relying on His love always and His grace continually as we go forward... together in Christ.

With that being said, I'm blessed with friends who understand my search on God's radar for the lighter side. Marge Wilkerson passed along some light-hearted comments seen recently on church signboards. Thank you, Marge. I hope you all will enjoy them along with me...

- Creation is your last chance for a smoking hot body.
- Forgive your enemies.

It messes with their heads.

- The fact that there's a highway to hell and only a stairway to heaven says a lot about anticipated traffic numbers.
- Tweet others as you would like to be tweeted.

So there. Go ahead. It's okay to smile before you get back to your incoming Facebook posts and cable news. Really, it is. God loves you; that should be enough to make us all smile.

Blessings,
Lon

The "wow!" factor

After the final notes concluded at a recent symphony performance in Boston, the conductor hadn't yet lowered his baton when a child exclaimed, "Wow!" The break in protocol, magnified by excellent acoustics, didn't upset the participants or audience, however. Instead, several later said it brought them great joy. One even called the moment life-changing.

The incident was especially meaningful because the child, a 9-year-old named Ronan, has autism and is generally nonverbal. Music, his family

says, tends to attract his interest and make him happy. When symphony officials learned Ronan's identity, they arranged a private performance so he could meet some musicians.

How often do you shout "Wow!" – in a good way – at what you see and hear? You may tend to do so on vacation or while observing God's natural wonders, but what about during your day-to-day life? Think about the people you encounter and their talents – and your own. When have these sparked a "Wow!" of

thanks to God?

Every blessing, large or small, is a wow-moment – a gift from God that warrants our praise.

—adapted from HomeTouch
Ministry

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“Content?”

Over the past couple of months we have experienced the likes of things that are pointing towards doom, if you allow it to. Pandemics, financial crashes, job losses, , injustice and riots. It can all be overwhelming can't it? Are we in a place in time that the world seems out of control? We know, though, who is in control and even that can leave us wondering, “WHY?”

Our health is something that we can control only to a certain extent. Viruses like Covid 19 come around rarely and when we are unprepared people become sick and some die. I believe that my sickness in January was this virus, though I can't confirm that, because of my symptoms and that Denise got a lesser version of it 2 weeks after mine. I recovered and I quarantined myself from others except Denise. We try hard to stay healthy, we exercise, we eat as healthy as possible for us, we take our vitamins, try and get plenty of rest and drink a lot of water but still we can and do get sick.

Our finances are something that most believe we have pretty good control of too. But things like pandemics can cause problems to even the financial markets. With businesses closed per guidelines and people unemployed because of those closures we get a domino effect that everyone has felt to some degree or another. We can plan and save and try and invest and protect but even with all of that sometimes we lose jobs, lose money and lose hope for our future.

Our society has been one of shaky stability for quite a while now, even though there have been struggles along the way. Prejudice and injustice are something we shouldn't have to deal with today, but it is. Oppression

of people and injustice have been happening throughout history and our nation is one founded on equality and that all are created equal in God's eyes and endowed by God to be a special gift to our world. What happened? How are we here now? I believe God is not surprised by all this and I am certain that He wants us to be loving Him and others more than we can imagine in the ups and downs of life.

“For you have been called to live in freedom, my brothers and sisters. But don't use your freedom to satisfy your sinful nature. Instead, use your freedom to serve one another in love. For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” But if you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another. So I say, let the Holy Spirit guide your lives. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. The sinful nature wants to do evil, which is just the opposite of what the Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are the opposite of what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, so you are not free to carry out your good intentions. But when you are directed by the Spirit, you are not under obligation to the law of Moses. When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, the results are very clear: sexual immorality, impurity, lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, division, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other sins like these. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the King-

dom of God. But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against these things! Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there. Since we are living by the Spirit, let us follow the Spirit's leading in every part of our lives. Let us not become conceited, or provoke one another, or be jealous of one another.” Galatians 5: 13-26

Does that help? God has given us hope in Christ Jesus who has given freedom to us from our slavery to sin and what that life was for us. None of us are perfect and only Jesus showed us a perfect life but we are given an opportunity to be led by the Holy Spirit. What we do with the life we've been given is up to us, whether we choose to be content with life led by the Holy Spirit is a freedom God gives to us. How then will we choose? May we all rest in the peace of Christ Jesus our Savior and Lord. Be blessed and be a blessing!

In Christ's Love,
Rob
Romans 12

**BE LIKE A TREE PLANTED BY THE RIVERS OF WATER...**

Psalms 1:1-4

Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night. And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

If the last few of months has taught me anything, it's that God is my stabilizer.

In Him, with his presence and his promises, are life...life with peace that is contrary to this world.

Over the years of my Christian walk I've ruminated over these Scriptures, especially this line “*And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,...*”

I'm sure you have heard of the Giant Sequoias in California. Some have been standing for 3,200 years, depending on what website you read, and 310 feet tall, again, depending on what website you read.

The giant sequoia is the most moisture demanding of that species. It requires a year

round soil moisture of at least 15-20 percent.

Can you imagine 15-20 percent of your daily life enriched with God, delighting in the law of the LORD, mediating day and night on it.

When the world gets too much, “*Be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,...*”

When worries get to be too much, “*Be like a tree planted by the rivers of water,...*”

Well...that's what God has been saying to me anyway.

Stay Safe and Enriched,
Dawn

SUBMISSION TO AUTHORITIES

Romans 13:1-8

History has shown that there is an adverse reaction to people with authority. It would seem that orders always come from the top to the bottom. While reaction to the orders from bottom to top.

The desire to attain independence fosters negativity towards authority figures when young, the desire to maintain independence can foster animosity to those in authority when we are older. Things we could do when we were younger, we may not be able to do now without assistance, and it fosters the idea of losing self-worth.

Negative attitudes to those in authority start with the simplest of commands. "Clean up your room", "You don't leave this table until your vegetables are gone." "Get your homework done."

There is negativity towards teachers, those in other professional occupations, lineups at the checkouts, down to entertainment. Wherever we look, there is an animosity to those in authority over us.

It is also true that we want to be the people in authority. We want to be the ones giving the orders making decisions. We want to be the ones people look up to and we are so sure that we can do a much better job than the one who was there before us so that the animosity isn't there with those who work for us, as it was in the past. On

occasion this may be the case, but not as a rule.

Even the disciples wanted to be in positions of authority. James and John made the request to be Jesus' authority figures when he set up His kingdom. Matthew records that they sent the most authoritative figure in the world, then and now, to make the request of Him. That's right the most authoritative person in the world. They sent their mother.

Matthew 20:20-22: *Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of Him. "What is it you want?" He asked. She said, "Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom.*

Jesus was really under pressure. Jesus deals with religious leaders, Pharisees, and Sadducees all the time, but when it comes to saying no to a mother, what is the saying, "Hell hath no fury like that of a mother denied."

Jesus also in his answer gave the cost of authority when he said: *"You know that the rulers of the gentiles lord over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave just as the son of man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many."*
Matthew 20:25-28

Jesus answer here is the key component in submitting to the authority of others. Jesus did not come to be served, but to serve and if we are to be transformed into the image of Christ, as Paul teaches in Romans 8, then we have to practice this as well, as much as Biblically possible. The Bible will determine what we are to submit to.

It is easy to get sidetracked when dealing with this issue. We are tempted to apply Paul's teaching to various specific situations, and each of these has elements that need to be dealt with and they can lead us further from Paul's real purpose. Paul's purpose was one teaching that we can apply to any situation.

"Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.

Free on the Inside,

Pastor Pete

May 2020 Finances

Income	\$41,745.17	YTD	
Expense	<u>\$19,535.04</u>	YTD Income	\$139,122.32
Net	\$22,210.13	YTD Expense	<u>\$112,443.21</u>
		YTD Net	\$26,679.11
<u>Undesignated</u>		YTD Undesignated	
Income	\$40,613.17	Income	\$126,528.84
Expense	<u>-\$18,065.05</u>	Expense	<u>-\$102,181.54</u>
Net	-\$22,548.12	Net	\$24,347.30
<u>Designated</u>		YTD Designated	
Income	\$1,132.00	Income	\$12,593.48
Expense	<u>-\$1,469.99</u>	Expense	<u>-\$10,261.67</u>

Operating Funds

Beginning Balance	\$79,696.64
Ending Balance	\$100,746.84
Investment Account	\$190,865.67



A BIBLICAL RESPONSE...

Our nation, and the world, is reeling right now over news reports of police ill-treating specific groups of people across the USA. Racial tensions are running high. To be sure, there have been racial tensions for more than the past few weeks, or even months, years, and decades. In the midst of 24/7 cable news with whatever bias we choose to follow, I have recently devoted more time to listening to the stories of people I know and respect – people on both sides of the issues being raised. Some things jump out at me from both sides.

In reflection, it seems to me that most everyone has an opinion based on their own reality, including me. Rather than trying to figure out who's opinions are right (since it seems differing opinions are met with hostility from both sides), I'm opting for listening for God's Word. In order to hear God's Word from a life-perspective not like my own, I've searched out some sermon notes from African-American pastors I've respected over the past three decades. The following comes from a sermon given by

Rev. Dr. Tony Evans, pastor of Oak Cliff Bible Church in Dallas. I believe this may be the first sermon I've ever introduced in our newsletter, but it seems important to me. I hope it is to you, too. My prayer for us is that we might begin to hear God clearer as we listen to other Christians share their points of view on God's Word for us all. Lon.

A BIBLICAL RESPONSE ON RACE (Sermon Delivered July 21, 2016)

Father, we need You today at a level that is beyond the ordinary. We need the supernatural extraordinary now. Because You have allowed it to be clear that we have human limitations. So, we cry out to You, Lord, for wisdom and knowledge and understanding, starting in this house. Amen.

Every four years, there are Olympics where the elite athletes come together to compete. They have worked hard to be viewed and be seen as the very best of the best. However, when the gold medalist stands on the platform, they play the national anthem of the country of which they are a part, with their flag flying high because it is understood while that athletes used their talents and skills and effort, they represent a bigger country. They represent a bigger kingdom; it's not just about them.

God has a kingdom. It's made up of citizens. Some black, some white, some red, yellow. His intention was never that the individual uniqueness would cause them to lose sight of the flag flying over them. The flag of the cross. America in particular is reaching an all-time low in this issue of race and culture and class. Just under the surface there is this ever-bubbling problem that has gone unresolved.

We have voices about which life matters. All life is created in the image of God. All lives matter. However, underneath the banner that God has created all people in His image, there are inequities that must be addressed. For example, the life of the unborn matters. And so, there is this emphasis on injustice in the womb. But that injustice in the womb must be under the umbrella that all life matters. Black lives matter, as a subset of all lives matter. So, any injustices to a particular group must be addressed specific to that group, but under the banner that all life is created in the image of God.

Once you extract any specific scenario and remove it from the umbrella of God's creation, you create your own independent cause. There is no discussion of sociology that, at least from a Christian point of view, should not be plugged into theology; that is, God's view of it.

The Samaritan woman looks at Jesus, after He offers to drink from her cup. She is shocked. She can't figure Him out: "You, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan, for a drink of water?"

Why is this important? How did she know He was a Jew? He never identifies Himself. He's obviously a Jew, His look, dress, accent – He's obviously Jewish. In other words, Jesus didn't stop being who He was to reach somebody else. He didn't find out how to speak Samaritan and find out how they dress. He was able to maintain His racial and cultural identity, even though He didn't let it get in the way of doing what His Father called Him to do. And that is to reach across the railroad tracks to reach someone who was different from Him who the rest of His culture would not reach out to.

God is not calling any of us to give up how He made us. He is not expecting us to use how He made us to relate inappropriately to people He has made different from us. God is not asking you to be anything other than what He's made you, as long as you submit to *how* He has made you, to how you relate to other people who He has made different than you.

It is technically incorrect, technically, to call yourself a "black Christian," or a "white Christian," or a "Hispanic Christian." Then you make your color or culture an adjective. It's the job of the adjective to modify the noun. If you put Christianity in the noun position and your color or culture in the adjective position, you have to keep shaping the noun so it looks like the adjective that describes it. So, if your color stays in the adjectival position you've got to keep shaping Christianity to look black or to look white or to look red. A lot of folks want to tell folks about Jesus who are not willing to drink out of the cup. "I want to get your soul into heaven; I just don't want to deal with you on earth!" "I'll witness to you but I won't eat with you." "I'll witness to you but I won't drink with you." Jesus demonstrated by His touch; His sociology gave validity to the theology that was to come.

We are operating on illegitimate standards that are not rooted in God, but rooted in culture, rooted in history, in background. And all of that may be facts, but the question we must ask is: Is it the truth? You can have facts, but it not be the truth. The truth is an objective standard by which reality is measured. It's God's point of view on any subject. Just because you were raised a certain way once, if how you were raised disagrees with what God says, then how you were raised was

fact, but it was wrong!

If our pulpits were right, we would have solved this problem of racism a long time ago. Slavery would have been solved, Jim Crow would have been solved, segregation too – all of this would have been solved. But because the pulpits were anemic and allowed what was evil to take place in America, we are still fighting that evil today! Because pulpits were silent biblically on this issue, our nation maintained a manifest destiny ideology that was in contrast to biblical theology! But that also explains why the Civil Rights movement was able to change it, because the church got out in front of it.

Truth overrides tradition! Truth overrides color! Black is only beautiful when it's biblical!

You must be Christian first. If we could get enough Christians to be Christian before being white, be Christian before being black, be Christian before being Spanish... it wouldn't take 240 years to fix this. It takes about two minutes and forty seconds:

We had a guy come into our church some years ago noticing more and more Anglos are coming to our church. He was getting upset. He said, "You know how they are." I said, "What do you mean?" He said, "They got this way of doing things, trying to take over." I could tell he had some bad experiences. I said, "You better keep winning blacks to Christ so we can outnumber them!" He answered, "Well, I don't know if I can stay here." I said, "Bye!" That didn't take so long to deal with racism, did it?

From the Pastor

June 17, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ,

I knew one day this letter would be written; I just never knew what the circumstances might be. After nineteen years of ministering with the church family we've come to love here in Madisonville, God has impressed on Pat's and my hearts that it is time to retire. He has allowed for so many good and meaningful memories – I have truly been blessed to serve with you as pastor. The reality is that in a few short weeks, I will be 68 years old, and God has convinced me of some things over the past several months.

At First Presbyterian Church, we provide many opportunities for personal spiritual growth, outreach, and evangelism. For those who are active in the church, I feel very good about where we are. And yet, there are many more beyond our building we could be and should be reaching. In order to follow Christ's mandate to "Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation" [Mark 16:15], I firmly believe it's time for fresher ideas and perspectives to rise up, building on what has been done to date.

Retirement is not an easy decision for me to make. In all my years of ministry, I have had very few days I did not want to "get up and go to work in the morning." Retirement is not an easy decision for Pat and me to make, but feeling God is leading us through the process has made it simpler to understand.

The past year and a half brought a lot of changes within our own family dynamics. I believe through the events we've recently lived, coupled by the freeze-time forced-time of COVID-19 introspection, God is showing us all many things. What I'm learning is to listen as well as I can for God's word in the midst of a plethora of voices. Pat and I have been so blessed to be a part of First Presbyterian Church's history. You have taken us in, and you are our family. We have together served God in so many ways, we've fellowshiped together, and learned together. The church's prayer life has sustained us and the community. Our outreach has brought in the homeless, offered sanctuary to all kinds of folks without spiritual refuge, gone beyond our walls into the community, throughout the country, and into the whole world. You are amazing

and we will thank God continually and always for who you are. But we also pray fervently that who you are might become more – all that Christ has intended for you as His church, by the power of His Holy Spirit.

With all this being said, my official retirement is scheduled for September 1, 2020. There are still details to be worked out for the church going forward and for Pat and myself, too. My intent is for all of us to be as open and transparent as possible in all things.

Blessings,
Lon





2nd Jane Mosley
 4th Pastor Lon
 7th McKenzie Conover
 9th Justin Tabor
 14th Susan Fischels
 15th Joel & Cindy Lansden (A)
 16th Peggy Phelan
 19th Greg & Cheryl Lane (A)
 20th Abbie Sills
 23rd Noah Taylor
 25th Lisa Ladd

26th Judy McLean
 Gayle Tabor
 30th James & Janet McClain (A)
 Delores Steinfeld

July 2020

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4 
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
		6PM Session Mtg				
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	