

An Encouraging Word for November 6, 2021

Hello Everyone – The time of year has arrived for my watch to be correct again! I have a watch that is difficult to change. It came with instructions printed in tiny little letters and in every imaginable language which I promptly lost. So when daylight savings time began I just had to remember to add an hour to whatever my watch said. On Saturday night, or actually early Sunday morning, my watch will agree once again everyone else's! Hallelujah!

Don't forget to set your watches (and clocks or sundials) back this Saturday evening!

And now for something really confusing!

I want to thank everyone for the wonderful pastor appreciation gift I received! I am grateful for it and grateful to be the pastor of such a wonderful, thoughtful, and warm congregation. The gift will come in very handy as we prepare for Christmas. It was unexpected – Kudo's to those who organized it and to everyone who kept it a secret and helped make it a wonderful surprise.

Here are some announcements worthy of repeating.

There are several upcoming bible studies that I would like to announce. The first is an Advent Study which will begin on November 17th. This study will last 4 to 5 weeks and will conclude mid-December. It's entitled "Faithful: Christmas Through the Eyes of Joseph by Adam Hamilton. The student book is available as paperback, hardcover, or Kindle through Amazon or Cokesbury. The next bible study will begin in January, also by Adam Hamilton it is entitled Words of Life and is a ten weeklong study on the Ten Commandments. It is also available from Amazon and Cokesbury. Both will be Zoom classes since that format seems to work very well for most of us. I have sent the Zoom invitations to the list compiled from past bible study participants. If you would like to be included on this list please let me know or notify the Church Office.

Since the retailers around us seem to be putting out Christmas items, even before Halloween, let me include this promotion for a possible Christmas gift. We have lots of cookbooks for sale! THE AMAZING PUBLICATION – LOAVES & FISHES & UNITED METHODIST DISHES – Is once again on sale in our church office for the AMAZING PRICE OF \$20.00. This classic publication includes the tasty and mouthwatering recipes of some of your favorite Mount Carmel cooks. It even includes my own Chili recipe which was previously marketed as Pastor Mikes Hotter Than Hell Chili but renamed for proprieties sake. These make wonderful Christmas gifts for family, friends, co-workers, and even random strangers if you're so inclined. Buy a few of these timeless classics to save away for future generations! Hurry while supplies last! Proceeds will go to our general expense fund. There will also be a few on hand for sale on Sunday mornings.

"The Outreach Committee met several weeks ago to finalize opportunities for the upcoming holiday season. On October 17th we will start collecting certain canned goods for the Thanksgiving bags for our friends at the Soup Kitchen. Each bag should contain: a box of instant mashed potatoes, a can of cranberries, a box of stuffing mix, a can of sweet potatoes or yams, a can or jar of turkey gravy and a can of vegetables of your choice. If you want to help with this project, please bring some or all of the above items to the narthex starting October 17th. We will be handing out the "Fixing Bags" up until the Monday before Thanksgiving. Our church has been helping with this local project for many years. Last year we helped supply Thanksgiving dinner to 63 families. Watch this space for additional opportunities to help others throughout the holidays. Thanks, Outreach Committee"

Signing On For Zoom Worship Services. As most of you who Zoom our worship services know, I greet Zoom attendees as they sign on, take Zoom attendance, and assign names to phone numbers as phone callers sign on. I open the Zoom meeting at 9 a.m. in order to give people time to sign on. If you are Zooming, I encourage you to sign on early to avoid the crush of people signing on at the last minute. At 9:30 I have to make a mad dash from the office to the sanctuary to lead the service. The earlier you sign on the easier it is for me to attend to the greeting responsibilities. It also gives us a chance to chat, and share prayer requests

The Announcements and Bulletin for Sunday's service are included as attachments to this encouraging word. Please feel free to print them out and either bring them with you to the service or to use them as your guide as you Zoom the service. For those attending in person the worship order is provided on the monitors.

In person worship is open to everyone. We are not requiring the wearing of masks in the sanctuary but asking that you space yourselves appropriately. If you are not vaccinated are otherwise at risk, or simply uncomfortable going maskless we strongly suggest that you wear your mask. It goes without saying that if you are sick stay home! You can always enjoy our worship service via Zoom. We do have a fellowship time in the breezeway following our worship service.

Thank you to everyone who has been diligently supporting our ministry with your tithes and offerings. Your contributions have kept us open and in ministry through a very difficult period. Your faithfulness in supporting our church with your prayers, presence, gifts, and service has made all the difference!

An Encouraging Word

"Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor."

- Romans 12:10

When I was a kid one thing my parents insisted on was respect. My brother, sister, and I had to respect, our elders, our teachers, our friends, and even people we didn't know. Most importantly, we were expected to respect each other. This meant listening to each other and responding to each other in appropriate ways – even when we were mad at each other. Respect meant apologizing when the need arose – even if we believed our actions to be above reproach and as innocent as the day was long (my parents knew better). Respect meant accepting apologies graciously and humbly. We were expected to respect each other's and other people's property, space, privacy, feelings, and beliefs. The Golden Rule was woven through all of this. "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets." Matthew 7:12 It was woven through our relationship with each other as brothers and sister, our relationship within our family, and our relationships with everyone else.

We were also taught that others should respect us but might not. If others disrespected us, it was not permission for us to disrespect them. An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth was definitely not the rule to follow in our household. We were taught to turn the other cheek. We were also taught that our respect for others was an important part of respecting ourselves, that disrespect invited disrespect, and that in disrespecting others we dishonored ourselves.

For their teaching me the importance of respect I am eternally grateful. The lessons have served me well in life so far and have – I hope – helped fit my soul for life beyond this earthly one. I grieve that somehow in our modern day it has become O.K. to disrespect others. Somehow, for some people, the disrespect of others, and sometimes the violent disrespect of others, has become the standard response toward others they may disagree with. It is unfortunate that far too many people now equate disagreement with disrespect and respond to those of differing opinions in ways that demean or vilify rather than respectfully disagree. Respectful speech and respectful listening are quickly becoming a lost art.

This state of affairs grieves God. Respect of others is as much an expectation in God's household as it was and is in the Fauconnet household; if not more. In truth we are all brothers and sisters in the household of God whether we want to admit it or not. As such we are called to treat each other, including those we disagree with, with respect. That our behavior and respect for each other is of great importance to our heavenly parent is made clear throughout scripture and is most apparent in Jesus Sermon on the Mount where the Golden Rule is found. Treating others with disdain, or to vilify, demonize, disparage, or demean another for any reason rejects God's desire that we treat each other with respect. To practice that behavior ourselves or to encourage that behavior in others, to deliberately divide the community that God intends, is an affront to God and rejection of God's law of love.

This really makes a lot of sense since our expectation as Christians is that when our sojourn on this earth is through, we will exist together in the same place, a heavenly home, through eternity. How can we sit at peace with our brothers and sisters at the table of our Lord in that place if in this life we have treated them with disrespect? It

would be awkward to say the least. Our deeds do follow us as it says in Revelation 14:13; but what if those deeds are disrespectful of others?

We are living in a difficult time during which the bonds of civil society are being stressed to the breaking point. We have entered hazardous waters that are becoming increasingly difficult for Christians to navigate as persuasive voices invite us to abandon civility and behave in ways that disrespect and break the bonds of fellowship God intends. The encouraging word to you today is one I have shared before. We have been provided a guide in scripture to follow through times like these. That guide is Jesus Sermon on the Mount which I've referred to before. You can read it in Matthew chapters 5, 6, and 7. It will take you about ten minutes. In there you will find a great deal of guidance for living respectfully, graciously, and humbly. Most importantly it teaches us how we can live in such a way as to be the leaven of civility during times like these and demonstrate how to respectfully treat all others, even those we don't agree with, and so preserve the bonds of peace. We can't control how other people treat one another but we can plant the seeds of respect in the way we treat others. In doing that we can make a positive contribution to the world around us.

That's all for today. I'll see you tomorrow either in person or on Zoom. Until then be well, stay safe, make good decisions in this Coronavirus environment, and in please stay connected to each other and to God. Blessings & Peace, Mike