

***Please disregard the earlier email with the Sunday Zoom Information. THERE WILL BE NO ZOOM THIS SUNDAY. So sorry for the confusion.***

**An Encouraging Word from Pastor Mike for July 9, 2022**

**From Pam Mertz** – During March and April, craft sales and mask donations earned \$39 for the general fund. A special thanks to Penny Pellegrini for making and donating trivets. Thanks to all for your continued support.

**"The Outreach Committee is conducting a food drive for NCEON for the next several months.** Each month we will ask for a few items to help restock their pantry. For the month of **July** we are asking our congregation for **Peanut Butter and Jelly**. These are listed as some of their most needed food items.

Please bring your jars of Peanut Butter and Jelly to church and place them in the box in the narthex. We will see that your contributions are delivered promptly."

**We now have a sign-up sheet in the narthex for the Harvest Festival!** Feel free to sign up at any time! If you have any questions or ideas, please contact the office and we will send you in the right direction. You can also donate to the event. Please just specify "Harvest Festival" in the memo line of your check.

**Summer Sunday School is underway!!** This means you can come to Sunday School in your play clothes and enjoy some crafts, maybe outside activities, and some videos. So if you are between the age of 3 and 10 or 11 (just finishing the 5th grade), come join us for a fun time during our church service at 9:30 am starting June 5th. Hope to see you there! Deb McMurtrey and Mt. Carmel Sunday School

**We need to train, and have available, several individuals to operate the technological aspects of our Sunday Worship services on those days when Shannon and Joe are unable to.** Please let us know if you are interested in helping in the ministry of our church in this way. You can contact either myself or Shannon Shanefelter.

**If anyone is interested in volunteering to staff our nursery on Sunday mornings please let me know.** We may not be able to staff every Sunday morning, but we can let our young families know those Sundays when nursery will be available.

**If you have prayer requests,** even if you plan to share them at Sunday worship, you may forward them ahead of time to Jen at the church office and she will compile a list to be used on Sunday morning.

**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. I encourage you to sign on early to avoid the crush of people signing on at the last minute. 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.

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### **An Encouraging Word**

Anger is a treacherous emotion and something that we need to treat with caution. This is especially so when it comes to anger for which we feel justified – and we all harbor that sort of anger somewhere in the depths of our being. It's an anger, I'm finding, that is far too prevalent these days. We need to be careful; this kind of anger has the potential to destroy our lives and our souls.

Paul declares in Ephesians 4: 26, "Be angry without sinning". In this Paul is recognizing the treacherous nature of anger and also stating one of the most difficult imperatives found in scripture. How can we be angry without sinning? It's really easy to be angry, but it's a lot harder to be angry and not sin. We are all familiar with anger and what we might do in anger, but what we are not so familiar with is what anger has the potential to do to us.

Righteous anger or indignation is kind of like red meat. We like it but it can do us harm. Red meat clogs arteries, and anger can clog our spirits. I know this because I've gone down that path. There have been times in my life when I have been deeply hurt by the behavior of others. Not only is my anger aroused, but I feel that the anger is justified and therefore O.K. So, I nurse the anger. I hang on to it. I savor it. It becomes part of my daily diet. What I've come to realize is that this righteous anger can rot my spirit from the inside out.

Anger has a way of escalating, especially righteous anger directed at another person or group. In this way anger can become a self-perpetuating cycle that leads eventually to extinction and death.

In Luke 13: 1-3 we find Jesus' countrymen nursing a lot of righteous indignation and anger over an atrocity committed by the Romans under the command of Pilate. They want Jesus to share their anger. They want him to feast on it as well. Jesus, of course,

doesn't take the bait and instead turns the exchange into an opportunity to invite everyone to examine their own motives and the sin that was even closer to hand, the sin that they themselves participate in or harbor in their own hearts. One of those sin's was self-righteous anger and it was going to get them into trouble.

The sin that was in the hearts of those Jesus was addressing that day in Galilee was the sin of self-righteous anger, righteous indignation that wanted bloodshed to happen. Jesus invited them to examine their own motives and see just how un-godly they were. Jesus invited them to examine their own hearts and see that they weren't exactly sinless themselves. He gives this advice elsewhere in his teachings as well. "He who is without sin cast the first stone." Also how about "taking the log out of our own eye before dealing the speck in our brothers." In other words, before we start judging and responding to the sin of others – take a look in the mirror.

These days we are very concerned about very real injustices and atrocities taking place in our world. Yes, these are things that should make any sane person angry, even justifiably angry. What would Jesus say to us? I think he would probably tell us what he told those Galileans. Do we think we are blameless? Do we think we are sinless? I think he would advise us to be careful with our anger because it can take us to places that God does not intend us to be. Sin is crouching at our door, especially when our anger and fear leads us to do things like demonizing others because they don't think, act, or look like us, adhere to another political party, or identify with alternative gender identifications. (This list seems to be expanding every day.)

It's easy to be angry. It's a lot harder to be angry and not sin. How then should we handle our anger, even anger we feel is justified, in such a way that it does not lead to sin?

Jesus declares to those who were filled with anger on that day in Galilee, and us as well, that we need to repent. That is to turn from those thoughts and acts that lead us away from God and turn to God who deals with the atrocity of sin, not with angry violence or escalated atrocities, but with grace and forgiveness.

We need to note that Jesus follows this call to repentance with the parable of the unproductive fig tree. The owner of the orchard wants to cut it down. He is angry with the performance of this fig tree and his answer is to kill it. The gardener in the parable encourages a different response, one of grace and forgiveness, one of second chances. Some of us, like the owner, in our anger would strike out against those who anger us. Yet God deals with us, those of us who sin and those who sin against us, with the same even-handed patience and grace.

Perhaps, in the end, anger that is without sin, is anger that is directed, not toward destructive ends that satisfy selfish needs for vindication or revenge but is focused

instead on the sin that is the source of all injustice and evil in the world. This is anger focused on hating the sin and not the sinner.

In order to do this we need to start by examining the sin in ourselves and asking God for forgiveness. That is repentance. It's the same response that Jesus advised to those filled with so much anger that day in Galilee long ago. He would advise it for us as well. He would tell us that if we are so concerned about sin and doing something about it that perhaps we need to begin with the sin in ourselves.

There will always be atrocities and injustice in the world as long as people harbor sin in their hearts. The way to deal with sin in our hearts is repentance. My encouraging word to you today is to turn your hearts from anger, turn them toward Christ, turn them toward forgiveness.

That's all for today. I'll see you on Sunday either on Zoom or at in-person worship. 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