

## **An Encouraging Word from Pastor Mike for September 3, 2022**

**\*\*\*\* There will be NO Wednesday Evening Zoom this week. It is a very busy time for Pastor Mike and he is hopeful to resume this prayer night in the near future. \*\*\*\***

**\*\*\*\*The Faith, Hope Circle will NOT be meeting this Thursday. \*\*\*\***

**Regular Sunday School will start on September 11th for children between 3 years old and students in the 5th grade.** We are continuing the tradition of presenting Bibles to the students entering the 3rd grade. This year we will present Bibles during the worship service on September 18th. Also, we are still looking for a volunteer teacher for the 4th Sunday of the month. If you feel young at heart, we are looking for you. You can talk to Leslie Fauconnet, Sarah Jenkins, Donna Helowicz, or myself to find out just how much fun you can have one hour a month. -Deb McMurtrey, Sunday School Coordinator.

**Attention Trustees** - The Fall season is fast approaching and work of the Church for the new season will begin. Due to the Labor Day holiday, the Trustees will meet on September 12, 2022 at 7:00 p.m., in the fellowship hall.

**Plans for the Harvest Festival are in FULL GEAR!** There is a sign-up sheet in the Narthex. 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. **Please SAVE THE DATE of 10/8!!**

**We are continuing our food drive for NCEON in the month of September.** For the entire month we will be collecting **canned vegetables and canned soups**. We will also accept any of the items we requested in prior months. We greatly appreciate all the food items you have given in the past months and they are always happy to receive our donations. NCEON stands for North County Emergency Outreach Network. It is located on 5th Avenue in Glen Burnie and helps people in our area with food and emergency services. Our church has supported this organization for over 30 years. NCEON is open on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings. You can check out their website at NCEON.com. -Thanks. The Outreach Committee

**We understand, summers can be busy. So, we want to remind you that we are still using Zoom for our Sunday Services.** Zoom allows you to join us from wherever you may be!! (Join us in your pj's with a morning cup of coffee) 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. 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. **If you should have any problems logging in, please alert Jennifer in the office.**

**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.

**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.

## **An Encouraging Word**

Arrogance, Conceit, Condescension, are all ugly words. They all describe an attitude that, rather than building relationships, destroys them. When I consider myself better than others, more superior than others, I am creating walls between myself and those others. Such an attitude also makes it possible for me to treat those others unjustly.

When I was a youth I played basketball, often in P.E. class but also just pick up games at the recreation center. Basketball takes teamwork and when the team is working well together the team wins, or at least has a good time. However, once in a while, we would have the misfortune of having a showboat on the team. By showboat I mean someone who played like he was God's gift to basketball and was the only person on the court. Invariably, when that happened, the team would lose in a mess of confusion, wrought by that one showboat putting himself before everyone else.

Humility is the opposite of arrogance. Humility before God like that demonstrated in the Lord's prayer where the emphasis is always on God and nothing else: "Hallowed be YOUR name, YOUR Kingdom come, YOUR will be done." It is the attitude that Jesus encourages us to demonstrate through this entire set of scripture, Matthew 6: 1 – 7. Here we are once again sitting at Jesus feet as he preaches his Sermon on the Mount. He describes three situations where people might be tempted to display arrogance or blow their own horn: in our giving, in our praying, and in fasting.

When a person makes a show of giving alms or giving to the support a charity, Jesus' first example, the giving becomes all about that individual. It's no longer really about devotion to God or out of concern for others. It is in fact placing themselves above others. An arrogant and divisive act. The person making a show of giving makes themselves the center of attention when it should be God or the needs of others that is front and center. This can be a way of demonstrating their belief that they are somehow above everyone else. The act is not exactly a relationship builder. Giving humbly and quietly places God in the spotlight and helps to erase walls of arrogance that otherwise might be erected.

Likewise, when a person shows off how holy and pious they are God is no longer the center of their pious act. They've placed themselves at the center. They are not doing it for God but in order to raise their stature in the eyes of others. Self has become the object of worship rather than God. It also becomes an act through which they set themselves above the other worshippers around them. This isn't the best way to be building relationships with God or others.

Fasting is something that has fallen out of use in the church but remains an effective and a legitimate way of humbling oneself before God and symbolically releasing ourselves from worldly temptations. It was much more common in Jesus' day as an act of humility emphasizing dependence on God. To make a show of fasting completely defeats its purpose. Once again, used in this way, fasting just becomes another way of demonstrating one's superiority. It becomes a way of setting oneself apart from everyone else.

Through highlighting these three negative examples of arrogant behavior Jesus urges the opposite, to enter into these acts with humility, and so not to set oneself against God or others. We are admonished to give, pray, and fast without calling attention to ourselves and so harming our relationship with God and the people around us.

There have been many admirable presidents of the United States. One that stands out for me is Jimmy Carter, primarily because of his humility. He did not try to elevate himself in his dealings with others. For instance, during the time he was president, and even today, he taught adult Sunday school in the church he attends. It didn't make the Secret Service happy. He never considered himself above teaching about his faith as just another Sunday School teacher. Since his presidency he has been actively involved in Habitat for Humanity. He's not above getting his hands dirty helping others, it's a way of life for him. In his humility he has been all about breaking down divisions caused by injustice and poverty. A positive example of how humble living before God and others can heal and build relationships.

As I said in my last encouraging word Jesus' sermon on the mount provides guardrails for human behavior that guide us toward righteousness, that is a right relation with God and with the people we share this planet with. Here in these first verses of Matthew chapter 6 we are encouraged to be humble before God and so strengthen our relationship with God. We are encouraged to be humble before others, not setting ourselves apart or above, but accepting all others as equally loved children of God.

Much of the negative pain and suffering we experience in this world is a result of human arrogance. The antidote for this condition is love lived out in acts of humility that accepts others as just important and loved by God as we are ourselves. This is the life that we, Jesus' disciples, are called to. To be agents of love and reconciliation through acts of humble service to God and all others

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

