

Another Word April 24, 2024

To our family and friends of First Christian Church

What a wonderful weekend we had! The wedding of Paige and Jeffrey Montague was a beautiful moment in time. And the reception was indeed a “sweet” treat! Thanks to all who attended and helped make this a special and memorable day. And as was said at the service, we are not just witnesses, but are now called to watch over Paige and Jeff and to give them our encouragement, love, and support as they begin their lives together. To the couple; God’s Blessings to you, and your church family is here for you, always!

As a brief update, LifeWise Academy wrapped up this Wednesday for the school year. What a journey it has been, watching the students learn about God and Jesus. Watching them grow in their faith and knowledge. Watching them either ask for prayer, or even asking to lead prayer. This coming fall, if all goes well, we will be hosting upwards of 130 students, 50 more than this school year. And it is all because you, the church, saw the need and stepped up to help. Thank you from the bottom of my heart, and a big thank you from the staff of LifeWise!!

Our scriptures for the next few weeks are:

April 28: 1 John 4:7-21, Shelley Carpenter is our Elder. John 15:1-8 “I Am the Vine, abide in Me.”

May 5: Psalm 98, Linda Gardner is our serving Elder. John 15:9-17, “Show Love by your actions.”

May 12: Mother’s Day. Psalm 1, Matt Henderson is our serving Elder. John 17:6-19, “Jesus prays for you and me.”

Let's go to the Lord in prayer.

Dear loving Father. We give you thanks each day for your gifts of merciful kindness and love. May we never lose sight of your presence, and your guidance. As we move to a rich and blooming spring, may our lives also spring forth in new ways to share your promise of faith, grace, and love to others. We hold up to you those in need of your calming and peaceful touch. May they feel your presence and find comfort in your arms. Help each of us stay connected to you, and bloom in ways that help others grow in your love. In Jesus' most Holy name we pray, Amen.

I read a story the other day about a pastor who was shepherding a small church of around 150 people in China, in the early 1950's. One day as the service was being conducted, soldiers entered, arrested the pastor, beat the people of the congregation and closed down the building. As punishment for leading a church, the pastor was made to deliver sacks of coal by hand to the entire village. It was degrading to his character, and punishing to his body. However, after a time, he began to think, "What would Jesus do? How would He act and respond?"

He concluded that Jesus would use His time and His interacting with the people of the village to show love and peace, regardless of the outcome. So, he began to smile, to speak to everyone he delivered coal to, and even helped them with day to day chores.

Years later, the restrictions against Christianity were lifted and he was once again allowed to start a church. The first few Sundays were rather lean with only a handful of people showing up. But, word began to spread that the pastor of the church that just opened was the man who delivered the coal; the very man who always had a smile or a kind word

for everyone he met. Within a month, he was blessed by God with a new and eager congregation of over 900 people.

What comes to mind is the scripture found in 1 Peter, chapter 2, verse 21. Peter writes, "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example that you should follow in His steps." Peter writes these words for some slaves who were owned by evil masters. What he was saying in essence was, "Do what Jesus would do. Copy Him." Show kindness even in the face of adversity. Sounds exactly the same as what the pastor in China did. And because he followed Jesus' example, not only was he blessed, but the whole community was transformed.

We may not be facing as daunting of challenges as our pastor friend faced, but we all face choices, decisions, situations that need to be seen clearly before acted upon. We need to ask more than, "What should I do?" To get the best answer we must first ask the question, "What would Jesus do?" If you start there, pray for guidance, and follow His example, I think you will find that the answer or solution you need will be shown to you.

Following in the steps of Jesus will never lead you wrong. You just need the courage to do what Jesus would do.

In His Peace,

*Rich*