

Another Word, February 28, 2023

To our family and friends of First Christian Church

Donita had a really great idea for our newsletter so I asked her to write her thoughts. I'm sure you will enjoy her message.

We had a beautiful Ash Wednesday service, and then on Sunday we had our first lesson from the book of Mark, chapter 14, covering Jesus' time in Bethany and Jerusalem and the last Supper. This coming Sunday we will follow Jesus to the Mount of Olives and Gethsemane. We hope to see you this Sunday...and bring a friend.

Thanks to all who took a baby bottle to fill over Lent. All the money collected goes to the Ashland Pregnancy and Care Center. There are a few bottles left if you didn't get one. The bottles are to be returned on Easter Morning.

Associated Charities is in need of shampoo for men and women. Over the next 2 weeks if you find yourselves at the drug store or grocery, please consider buying a bottle or two that can go to help others, thanks.

The Jazz Society is back and there will be a concert Monday, March 6 at 7pm. The All Star Dixieland Band will perform.

We will be bringing the message to the residents of Belmont Tower this Sunday at 2 pm.

For those of you who like to read ahead, our scriptures are as follows: March 5- Psalm 27, and Mark 14: 26-52. Todd Witmer is our serving Elder. Our message, "In Gethsemane."

March 12- Isaiah 53: 1-3, 6-9, and Mark 14: 53-62. Our serving Elder is Alan Girard. Our message, "In the house of the High Priest."

Let us go to God in prayer.

O Holy and Gracious God. We praise you and exclaim that no one is greater than you. As we enter this season of Lent, show us the way to follow Jesus, even to the cross. To more clearly understand the pain and suffering Jesus took upon himself, on our behalf. This is a payment we cannot repay except in following and believing in the one you sent for our redemption. Though we are not worthy, we open our hearts to you and say thank you for your great gift of grace and love. Guide us so we may pass on your love and compassion to others that they too may know of your great love for the world. In Jesus' precious name we pray, Amen.

Hey, Donita here. With all the extra things Rich has been through over the last couple of months, I thought that I would give him a little break and write his message for him.

As I watched him prepare for the numerous funerals he has officiated recently, his efforts reminded me of a parable Jesus told, and I would like to share my thoughts.

I think we all know the story. It's where the owner of a vineyard hires workers in the morning, and then hires more workers at mid-day and even more workers in the afternoon as well as close to sundown. As the workers were paid, the workers who were hired last were paid first, and they received a full day's wages. The workers who went to work

early in the morning saw what the last workers were paid and thought they would get much more.

We know how the story ends. Each worker got the exact same amount of wages, regardless of how many hours they worked. Matthew 20: 1-16.

In a society based on money, this story makes us feel a little uneasy and even that the outcome is unfair. In fact most of us would agree that someone who works 8 hours should get more than someone who works just one hour. However, the owner had every right to do with his money as he saw fit. But to possibly get a clearer meaning of this parable, let's take the money out of the lesson and replace it with something else.

I've watched Rich prepare sermons, special services, weddings, and funerals for many years. And I have seen firsthand the efforts and sometimes anguish that he goes through. But over the past few days his efforts brought to mind this parable, and another way to see its meaning. Here's how:

First, he had a funeral on Saturday. Rich met this gentleman along with his fiancé about a year and a half ago and officiated their wedding. After the wedding there was very little contact with the couple until a month ago. The gentleman had cancer and Rich was contacted. He visited with the couple and sadly, the gentleman passed a few days later. Rich was asked to officiate the funeral.

Yesterday, Rich again officiated a funeral, this time for the husband of one of his close cousins. Rich and I met John over 50 years ago when he was dating Rich's cousin, and we even attended their wedding. Since

then, we have stayed in contact and over the years have enjoyed each other's company.

I guess this is where Rich would say, "OK Donita, so what is your point?" Rich put in the same energy, the same effort, and the same time for both services, regardless of the fact that he knew one a short time, and the other almost a lifetime.

I think the lesson of the parable, and the lesson for each of us is to treat each person as the owner of the vineyard did, as equals. It doesn't matter who the person is, how they may act, or even if we've known them for a long time or just met. God loves each of us completely, so we should never favor one person over another, but to give the same love and respect to all of God's children, always.

In His Peace,

*Donita*