

Another Word March 2, 2021

To our family and friends of First Christian Church

It is truly nice seeing so many coming again to our live services. To be able to worship together is indeed an uplifting and sacred experience. The feeling of community and of not being alone is a priceless gift from God. Of course, if you are unable to be with us, please know that as you participate in our online services, each of us, as well as God through the Holy Spirit is with you. (Our God has not deserted us. Ezra 9:9)

I am thinking of starting a new Bible study after Easter. Two possible ideas would be the study of either the book of Mark, or the book of Romans. If you are interested, let me know your preference.

The scriptures for this coming Sunday are: Psalm 19, John 2: 13-22, "It's time to clean house", and the Crown of Thorns scripture will be Mark 14: 1- 11. Shelley Carpenter will be the Elder for readings and prayers.

The cards collected last Sunday will be delivered to Crystal Care.

Please keep the front-line workers in our prayers. Also, prayers for the smooth and effective distribution of the vaccine, and the continued fight to eradicate the virus from the world. May we be in prayer.

Most Holy and gracious God. To you, and to you alone do we raise our voices in praise and adoration. Your love is abounding and unending, even when we turn our thoughts away from you. There are so many who are lost and are struggling to find their way home. May we, your servants reach out to others with your love and compassion. Guide us

daily to help those who are lost find their way back to you. Search our hearts O God. Test us, cleanse us of our shortcomings, and direct us in your way of everlasting peace. In the Good Shepherds' name, we pray, Amen.

Lonely and lost! Ever felt either of these emotions? I dare say, we all have.

I remember once when I first started my career as a sales rep. I had quite a few customers around Chattanooga, Tennessee. In fact, more customers than I could see in a week. Wanting to be a good employee, I decided to spend the weekend there and be ready to work the next Monday morning. That was the longest, and loneliest two weeks of my life. I had already been gone five days. Then I stayed through the weekend, and still had a solid five days before I could return home. Let's just say, it was quite the learning experience. I missed my family, was alone, and realized it was an awful plan. Did I mention I was lonely?

Being able to get home, to be with family is one of the strongest drives and deepest needs of the heart. I learned that you can only be away from home for so long before that deep need sets in.

I remember as a child the feeling of being lost. We would always go to Johnny's Food Basket on Friday evenings for groceries. One time, I wandered off down a different aisle, looking for the comic book display. Suddenly, I realized I was surrounded by strangers; not a familiar face in sight. I can still recall the feeling I had that evening. It was a feeling of panic, of fear, of being deserted, alone, and lost! I also remember the relief when I saw my mom and dad pushing a cart at the far end of the building.

The Bible uses the words “Lost” and “lonely” a lot when it comes to describing us. In fact, Jesus announces His purpose for coming to earth. “The Son of Man came to seek and save what was lost.” (Luke 19:10) If you think about it, like my two stories above, the majority of the world is Spiritually lost and alone, and they don’t know how to find their way home.

For those of you who were at church Sunday or watched on YouTube, you heard me mention a survey that was recently done, asking “What was the average American looking for in life.” I found it so telling that I believe it needs to be revisited, examined, and understood in the context of the church, who we are, and what we have been given to offer the world.

The top three most sought after needs in life are: 1- A sense of community. In other words, a safe place to be with others. A place where you can belong. A place where you won’t feel alone, lost, or betrayed. 2- They are looking for something of substance, nothing superficial. Something to rely on, to believe in. Material items we own wear out, break down, and even fail us. People are looking for something that will always be there and not desert them. 3- Also, they are looking for some form of guidance in life. Something that can instruct them through the daily maze we call life. I guess the thousands of self-help books out there aren’t filling that need. So, what can the lost and lonely do? Where can they go? What should they believe in? Where can they get true guidance?

Hmmm, let me think.... Could it be.... the church?

We have community. We care for each other, watch out for each other, and love each other. We can help fill the deep need we have for home.

We have substance, a belief, and a God we can always rely on. We were made by Him and for Him. (Col. 1:16) He loves us and will never desert us. Jesus gave His life for us. Believe, and have everlasting life.

And as for guidance, The Bible, the best-selling book of all time, is the greatest self-help book ever. You will always find, within its pages the answers to your most pressing questions.

Isn't it interesting that we in the church, are scratching our heads wondering how to bring more people to God, when God has already placed in our hands, exactly what the world is searching and crying out for. Our job is to offer to others, this gift our gracious God has already given to us. This is not a gift to keep, but a gift to freely give to our neighbor. (Don't worry, it's a gift that will never run out)

There are a lot of people who have been thinking that there is nothing in the world out there for them. But we have the answer for loneliness, fear, and a desperate feeling of being lost. All we need to do is have the courage to share these wonderful gifts from God with our neighbors.

In His Peace,

*Rich*