

Another Word September 1, 2020

To family and friends of First Christian Church,

I had the hardest time making my brain think and fingers type "September." In many ways, the year seems to be at a stand-still but then, here we are, on the verge of fall. I guess the old saying is true; "time waits for no one."

I'm sure most of you noticed that the entrance drive was not completed. One of the pieces of machinery they needed was unavailable, so we are rescheduled for Sept. 10 and 11. (Weather permitting)

Be sure to come and celebrate with us the baptism of Brendan, Marlee, and the dedication of Emersyn Henderson this Sunday during our morning service.

And continue to remember in your prayers the family of Ruth Miller as well as Kim, Dick, Donita, Mike, and Arlene.

May we be in prayer. Dear creator God. With hearts open to you, we send our love, praise, and devotion. Please continue to instruct us so we may follow in your perfect way. Our days, at times, seem to be filled with fear and uncertainty. But we know that even in these times of trials, you are there, teaching, guiding, and strengthening us. We pray for our doctors, nurses, our peacekeepers, and protectors. May your blessings continue to guide them as they work to keep us safe. Thank you for the countless blessings and provision you shower on us each day. We pray this in the perfect name of our risen Christ, Amen.

One of my favorite "newer" (30 years old) Christian hymns is "Refiner's Fire." The first verse goes; "Purify my heart, let me be as gold, and precious silver; purify my heart, let me be as gold, pure gold. Refiner's fire, my heart's one desire, is to be Holy, set apart for you Lord. I choose to be Holy, set apart for you my Master, ready to do your will." The song gives you range, harmony, and a wonderful way to express emotion and devotion to God.

Let's take a quick look at this Refiner's fire. Gold comes in different caret weights; 12, 18, and 24caret. Silver is graded in percent's; 90, 99, 99.9 pure. Heat is first applied to the mined ore. The high heat (fire) allows the dirt and impurities to separate and float to the top so they can be skimmed away. The process is stopped when the desired purity is reached.

OK Rich. Why the joint chemistry/geology lesson? Years ago, I heard a story of how refining used to be done, long before the exacting furnaces that are used today. The forge was lit, the bellows were pumped until a glowing fire was made. The mined silver or gold was placed in an iron cup and held over the fire. As the impurities began to surface and burn off, the refiner's sole job was to watch the surface, and to wait for the moment he could see his face in the shimmering gold or silver. If you went too soon, the silver or gold was not a good quality. If you waited too long, it became useless. The image of the refiner made all the difference.

Isn't that like our lives today? Our lives have been or are right now in the furnace of life. Cancer strikes, you lose your job, you are facing a major surgery, or a loved one dies. And then a worldwide pandemic rocks us. Feel the heat of the fire? These are not tests. They are the trials of life. We all live in a sinful, impure world. But we need to remember that we are being refined by our creator, to be drawn to Him, and made pure. Look into the depth of your life, gaze into your soul, as the heat increases. You will see the shimmering face of God, knowing He is there "setting you apart, to do His will."

In His Peace,

Rich