Looking Forward

January 23 2020

Hello dear friends. We returned from a delightful and sun filled trip at midnight last night. We are grateful that the cold weather did not invade Florida until we left there on Sunday.  Interesting to read the ‘Falling Iguanas’ Florida headlines today.  One thing you don’t have to worry about in Montana is ‘falling iguanas’.  We spent three days near Tampa, where Chris’s family lives (mom, sister and brother along with many nieces). Then a couple days with my daughter, Sarah and her two sons in Ormond Beach, Florida, followed by a couple days with my younger daughter, Melissa and her daughter and son in Pennsylvania. And let me pass on a valuable tip to preserve your mental health: do not take a 9-year-old grandson who suffers from an overdose of hyper kinetic energy to a put-put golf course. I’ll save you from the details.

On another note, there will be a brief congregational meeting on February 9th to elect a Pastor Nominating Committee. What this means is that very soon you will be searching for your next pastor. As an interim pastor, I am not eligible to become your next called pastor. Furthermore, as much as we love Montana and being your pastor, I will be retiring when my service here is done. I know that many of you pray for your church family, and this is a time to be doubly-diligent in prayer as you select your next pastor.

Finally, this week we will study the story of Jesus’ temptation in the wilderness. This is a profoundly relevant story because it deals with our constant struggle. The timing of this event is critical, for Jesus’ temptation comes right after his baptism; just before his public ministry begins. Notice that the same Greek word for ‘temptation’ is the same word for ‘testing’. And it says that Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness. Note also that the test/temptation didn’t occur until he had fasted for 40 days and nights. The question is this: was the 40 days of fasting a debilitating element or an enhancing element?  A forty-day fast is not outside the realm of human functioning. Fasting is hailed as a powerful spiritual exercise and has been a discipline all through the ages.  Our early spiritual leaders used fasting in the past and many believers still do. So then, rather than being an exercise that only the spiritual giants exercise, it has many benefits for us in these days.

The final note we can take from this story is that we are not destined to fail in times of testing or fall in times of temptation. Rather, the good news for us is that we can win our battles with temptation...if we want to.

Grace and peace to you.

Together in Christ,

Ron