

...from the Heart

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2022

Expectations

Two years ago, when we returned from Florida, we went to Costco to pick up a few things. We saw people with flatbed carts loaded to overflowing with cases of toilet paper, paper towels, napkins, paper plates, and water among other stuff. We didn't know what was going on, and this was not what we expected at all.

Then we heard the news of the COVID-19 virus and people should prepare for a two-week lock down if necessary. Of course, that triggered people to hoard and go crazy in the stores. We decided to go back to Costco and pick up some supplies. When we got there, the store was picked clean of all paper goods and water. The back section looked like an empty warehouse with nothing but empty shelves in a big empty space. This certainly was not what we expected.

The virus turned into a world-wide pandemic that has lasted two years, and the two-week lock down was never a reality. This is nothing any of us expected.

We shut down the church for months, which has been unheard of in the past. We had to learn how to record our services and then to stream them for all who were either stuck at home or chose to stay away. Nothing we expected.

Fast forward in time, the price and use of fuel oil in our three buildings rose considerably and impacts our church finances. Unexpected.

We started to function somewhat normally as a church for a while until this past Christmas time. Suddenly, many in our congregation came down with a COVID variant that was alarming. As a result, we decided to shut down the sanctuary for two to three weeks in January 2022. This was also not what we expected.

Add to all this, our pastor came down with a bad case of COVID and wound up in the hospital with pneumonia and other issues. He is still recovering at home and not able to be up and around yet. This was totally unexpected.

Corinne and I planned a trip to Florida months in advance. The week were to arrive, the temperatures in Central Florida was in the 30s. This was not what we expected either.

What is it about our expectations? We all have them. How often do they pan out as expected? Sometimes it seems our expectations aren't realized or they fall apart right before our eyes. So, what can we do about this? Fortunately, God knew this would be our reality all along. He has prepared us in advance and tells us in the Bible many ways to avoid this dilemma.

I want to offer you a passage from John's gospel that may help us focus on proper expectations.

John 14:2-3 (NIV) - *My Father's house has many rooms; if that were not so, would I have told you that I am going there to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am.*

In our world and in our lives, expectations often fall flat and let us down. We have to focus on expectations God offers that are sure and will never let us down. Jesus said, ***"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*** John 16:33 (NIV)

Rather than focus on this world and the things of this world, that always disappoint and crush our expectations, I have to focus on the promises of God that we can count on. In this world, I can expect the unexpected.

My expectations for my future are sure. Jesus went to prepare a place for me in His kingdom. Either I will go there when I pass from this life, or He will return and take me with Him there. I can count on this. It is not speculation or hanging my hat on my own desires or even on my own expectations. I expect it to be true and real, and you can too. Most of the events of the past two years were not what we expected. Next time you think things are not what you expected, think about what Jesus promised and make those things your **expectations**.

God Bless you all. Stay well, safe and warm.
Blessings,
Pastor Nick



WOMEN'S MINISTRY



Even though there is two feet of snow on the ground, I am trying hard to think of spring. It does help

that it is still light outside even after 5P.M. and that the robins have been around all winter. During the past two years, so many of the ministries of the church have been put on hold. We haven't had any Ladies Saturday brunches in all that time and I hope that very soon we will be able to start gathering for those special

times of fellowship. I'll be sure to let you know when we pick a date to have a brunch. Our Thursday group didn't meet for the last 2 weeks in December and the whole month of January but got back-on-track in the beginning of February. We started another book which is entitled "Becoming A Woman of Strength" by Cynthia Heald. I think this is a topic that we all need considering the times we are living in. All ladies are invited to join us in the church sanctuary on Thursday mornings at 10A.M. Even if you can't attend every week, feel free to come whenever you can. I think you will be blessed.

Faithfully,

Mary Ann



This devotional is from The Secret Place and was written by Dan Nicksich

"Do not work for the food that perishes but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you." John 6:27a

If you ate only as often as you read your Bible, would you lose weight? Would you be close to starvation? Would you put on a few pounds?

Jesus called Himself the Bread of Life-a sustaining, satisfying bread that satisfies hunger forever. The question, then, is "Do I hunger for God's Word as I do for physical food and drink?" This question takes us beyond setting and adhering to a daily schedule of readings. It's more a question of internal desire. Have I reached point where my desire for God's Word is as powerful as my craving for physical food and drink?

Jesus said those in this way will be filled. Their quest, their desire will be satisfied. There are many distractions in the world. People are searching for ways to fill their empty lives. Here is the simple solution: crave God's Word. Feast on it more than anything else and you will be satisfied.

The Idol of Idle Worship

An idling vehicle is running but going nowhere. Idyllic moments are sweetly pleasant but fleeting. Idle thoughts are easily distracted, like driftwood on the sea. They float wherever the wind takes them with no particular destination, agenda, or objective in mind. And such is idle worship.

What an affront to the Godhead! What an insult to the apostles and early church, not to mention the martyrs and persecuted Christians of today who gave and still give their lives to spread the Good News. It seems, to me, that Biblical standards of worship have been exchanged for rock concerts and bazaars attempting to be seeker-friendly, inoffensive, fun, rewarding, feelings-based, and exciting.

This is the misuse of worship.

If we are born-again, Bible-believing, Christ-following disciples, God expects worship from us, therefore it is not something to trivialize, take lightly, or water down for unbelievers to whom the cross is an offense, a joke, or irrelevant. Why? Because worship is for believers alone, and it is an outward expression of submission, adoration, humility, and reverence. Indeed, even *believers* cannot attempt to worship with unresolved sin because this blocks communication with God, and it creates a barrier that can only be broken by repentance. *This is the requirement of worship.*

When we worship God, we are not worshipping our pal, buddy, the big guy/man up there, a short-order cook, or a drive-through where our prayers are answered our way, fast, and cheap. The objective of worship is to glorify God our Father, the LORD God Almighty, the Sovereign One, Omnipotent, Omniscient, and Omnipresent. He is *Holy, Holy, Holy* therefore we must also be holy.

This is the reverence of worship.

In addition, we worship God because we love Him and because He loves us! Perfunctory, rote, mindless idle worship is as unloving as it is wrong. Think of any relationship in life that is bound and knit together in love and look at how that love is expressed. It's purposeful, thoughtful, intentional, and meaningful! When expressed in this way, both the giver and the receiver are blessed.

This is the joy of worship!

"Come let us worship and bow down, let us kneel before the Lord our God, our Maker.
For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture . . ." Psalm 95
In Christ alone,
Sue Cerruto

Additional scripture references: 2 Cor. 7:9-11, Isaiah 6:3,
Revelation 4:8, Psalm 51, James 4:7-10.



Easter Blessings

So it's a New Year and everything is New right? We turned the page right? Well that isn't true is it? We started the New Year with the same things that we ended with the year before. COVID hit us hard in January causing us to go virtual once again. Pastor Vinny and Kathy were included among those hard hit by the seemingly never-ending pandemic way of life. Unfortunately our church donations have also been hit by the COVID shortages, so to speak. Even when the doors are closed our church is still ministering. Children and teens meet virtually when not in person. Food is still going out from the Pantry. Services are being live streamed. Even when the doors are closed the bills keep a comin'. And some have been particularly higher this season such as heating oil and snow plowing.



At our annual meeting we will vote on a new budget for 2022. We have planned on having a “normal” year ahead with ministries moving forward in their efforts to reach our youth, teens, adults and the neighborhood. Some things are a given such as salaries, utilities and insurance. We do not want to short change any of our active ministries for that is our future. But we cannot do it without you. Your giving keeps us going and the “doors open.”

“God makes us rich in every way so we can be generous on every occasion, which will result in thanksgiving to God. ... God doesn't bless us to provide for our own needs; he blesses us so we can be generous.” —Rick Warren (based on 2 Corinthians 9:11)

I want to encourage you to make giving a part of your life's routine. It doesn't need to be confined to Sunday mornings. You can make regularly recurring gifts through PayPal or your bank bill payer according to your pay schedule. That was the heart behind Paul's instructions to the church in Corinth: “On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income” (1 Cor. 16:2).

To those of you who have been faithfully giving during this time – thank you. If it hasn't been something you have really thought about, there is no time like the present. You can make donations safely by using the PayPal button on our webpage (Patchnaz.net) or send checks directly to 65 Franklin St, Patchogue, NY 11772. If you are unable to give during this trying time your prayers and presence either in person or online are appreciated. God is Faithful! Corinne Franco, Treasurer

Tithing is a gift of love

It is important to remember that tithing is an attitude of giving. The amount you give or how it compares to the gifts of others doesn't really matter.

What matters is that when you give, you give of yourself, all your loving concern, your affirmation of devotion to God, your good will to humankind, and your service to Christ. When you give with this spirit, then you are giving the fullest capacity of your spiritual, physical and mental resources. A true gift is a portion of yourself. When you give in this manner, you become an instrument of God. It is the gift of love.

Practice Makes Perfect

I know that this is supposed to be the Spring newsletter, but as I write this, I have been binge-watching the Winter Olympics in Beijing. Like everybody else, I don't like shoveling snow, or driving in snow, or slipping on snow and ice; but at the same time, I am entranced by the games people play on the snow and ice. I'm amazed at the speed of some of the alpine skiers – over 80 miles an hour downhill! I still can't wrap my mind around the precision that the biathletes have to shoot 5 targets on a range immediately after skiing 5 kilometers. And the competition in the speed skating and luge races is as close as you can get – some of the scores are determined by hundredths of a second.

All this is to say that when I watch the Olympics, I watch the years of practice condensed into one event. People train for many years just for this or that one race. Lindsey Jacobellis worked for 16 years after her mistake to be able to win a gold medal. And I don't even want to know the number of hours Nathan Chen put in on the ice rink to master all of his figure skating events at this Olympic game. All I can do is marvel at the elegance and technicality of those routines. It reminds me of a verse Paul wrote to Timothy many years ago. "Train yourself to be godly. For physical training is of some value, but godliness has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come" (1 Tim. 4:7-8).

Paul was fond of using athletic metaphors in his letters, which is a good thing because we can still relate to them today. I especially like this one because of the direct correlation between athletic training and spiritual training. No one is born with the ability to do a triple flip on skis; it takes training, and with training comes falling and wiping out on the course. Some of the athletes didn't make their jump, or didn't make their slalom course; but they got up and made their way down to the end and waited for their scores like everyone else. They knew that there is room for improvement. None of us is born naturally patient; it is a trait that needs to be worked on, like a muscle that needs to be worked on. Godliness, Christ-likeness, takes time and effort. Salvation comes through God's great merciful gift, but sanctification is a process that extends our whole life long; we will certainly stumble and fumble along the way, but God in his infinite mercy has promised that he will be with us through his Spirit until the end of the age. If we commit to training in godliness, God is more than willing to coach us along.

And the rewards, Paul writes, are exceedingly great - greater than any gold or silver medals. We don't train for this life only; athleticism will only get you so far, says Paul. But Godliness, writes Paul, carries us not only through this life with its many pitfalls and dead ends, but carries us into the life to come; life without end.

Jon Ollett



CONDOLENCES TO THOSE WHO HAVE LOST LOVED ONES

The Dennerlein family on the passing of John's mother, Barbara. Vickie Ortiz & family on the passing of her husband, Michael. The McKeever family on the passing of Kevin's mom, Sally. The Mueller & Fitzpatrick families on the passing of Patty's brother, Kenneth Fitzpatrick. Bill Hartley & family on the passing of his wife, Jeanne. Carol Mahood & family on the passing of her husband, Bob. Blanca Perez & family on the passing of her brother, Raul.

WHAT'S SO SPECIAL ABOUT FEBRUARY?



Perhaps because February is the coldest, snowiest part of winter, it feels like the hardest month of the year to endure. “Nothing going on in February.” is the complaint you often hear. But February is loaded with special celebrations.

One day that brings people together from all over the world is the prediction of a furry little forecaster. Punxsutawney Phil, draws thousands of people to Pennsylvania to experience his winter predication at Gobblers Knob. But did you know that Groundhog Day was originally called *Candlemas Day*? On February 2nd, Christians would take their candles to church to have them and their household blessed for the remaining winter. According to German lore, if the hedgehog saw his shadow on Candlemas Day there would be a “Second Winter” or six more weeks of bad weather. 1886 marked the first time that Groundhog Day was celebrated in Punxsutawney, PA.

How about Valentine’s Day? The history of this day is somewhat murky with at least three legends, but interestingly enough, all have roots in Christianity. Anyone see a pattern emerging here? According to one legend, an imprisoned Valentine actually sent the first “valentine” greeting himself after he fell in love with a young girl who visited him during his confinement. Before he was martyred, he wrote her a letter signed “From your Valentine.”

February also celebrates the birthdays of two of America’s greatest presidents, George Washington and Abraham Lincoln. Consider these two quotes:

It is impossible to rightly govern a nation without God and the Bible. George Washington

Whereas, it is the duty of nations as well as of men to own their dependence upon the overruling power of God ...and to recognize the sublime truth, announced in the Holy Scriptures ... that those nations only are blessed whose God is the Lord. Abraham Lincoln

It isn’t difficult to spot their public profession of faith in Almighty God.

All of these February holidays are still recognized, yet have somehow lost all but the faintest whiff of their Christian roots. That’s the difference between relationship and religion. If we’re not watchful, a living relationship with God can be replaced by a rote religious observance. Not sure about that, consider the origin of the word *holiday* ... holy day.

The relationship that God is seeking from us isn’t a long distance, remote religious experience. That’s why he sent his only son, Jesus to earth to live as a man, to experience our pain to offer us a friendship based on faith that could be touched, hugged and loved. More than 2700 years ago a biblical prophet named Isaiah penned these words:

“Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. Isaiah 43: 1-7 (ESV)

If the chill of winter has gotten you down, it may be time for a new perspective. You are not alone, unnoticed or rejected. Your life matters to God, he made you the unique person you are. God has a plan designed specifically for you and its time you discovered it. Perhaps this is the first time you're hearing this, if so you are in for the blessing of your life. Find a bible or just google the verse *John 3:16*. When you read the word, “whoever,” insert your name there. Then ask Jesus the creator of all things, including you, to take up residence in your heart. Your life will never be the same.

Serving Him Together,

John Mercurio

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FOOD PANTRY

**OPEN: MON, WED, FRI 10AM - 2PM
65 Franklin St. (Rear Entrance)**

**For our weekly schedule of meetings, check out our website at
www.patchnaz.net Sermons live stream on Facebook.
Find us on YouTube**

COMING UP...

MARCH

March 2 - Ash Wednesday
March 13 - Daylight Savings Time Begins
March 17 - St. Patrick's Day
March 20 - First Day of Spring

APRIL

April 10 - Palm Sunday
April 15 - Good Friday
April 17 - Easter Sunday

MAY

May 8 - Mother's Day
May 30 - Memorial Day



Baby Dedication

Elizabeth Audrey Rymer on February 12, 2022.
Born on June 6, 2021 to John & Lisa Rymer.
Her big sister is Rebecca Mary.

