

THOUGHTS

By the father/son team
Pastor Paul R Schroeder
Douglas W. Schroeder

SPEAKERS ON THE WORD TODAY

J
A
N
U
A
R
Y

FAITH SERENE IN 2015

Each year at Our Shepherd Lutheran Church we have a theme to focus on, and this year it is *Faith Serene in 2015*. Serenity means quietness, peacefulness, which should be the spiritual state of the believer, at rest in God's presence. We may be buffeted by strong winds of change, under trial by temptation, suffering mental or physical ailment, enduring a period of job loss or family stress, but we should be able to find solace in faith.

We need to watch that we do not attempt to take comfort from our faith, but rather faith in God; there is a difference! If we seek to "steady ourselves" by our faith practice, we note that often we are inconsistent. Many times we are not the "super saints" we would like to be. At worst, we are guilt-ridden when we see how often we sin and consider how much it must displease God.

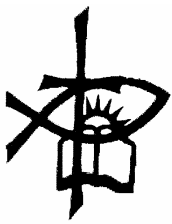
This serenity in our spirit is to extend to the body of Christ, that is, to other Christians. A common faith practice of churches as they prepare to partake in the Lord's Supper is to join in "Sharing of Peace." This is not just symbolic, but rather a semi-formal recognition that we are united in faith. Peace is supposed to characterize the nature of a Christian church. The Body of Christ is to be vastly different than a secular organization such as a business or social club in that it should not experience the turmoil which occurs in these other groups.

How is an individual or a church to attain such serenity? We are reminded, "Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above (3:1a)," and are to let the word of Christ dwell in us richly (v.16). Though it is not axiomatic, generally if a person immerses themselves continually in prayer and Scripture reading, they will have a transformed mindset. The Holy Spirit works through the Word of God to change our mind, to have us think in a more Christ-like fashion than we would otherwise. In addition, when we pray, we place the events and people of our lives into the perspective that God is working for their and our good.

Just as Paul the apostle of Jesus wrestled with sin, but ultimately knew he was not condemned by God (see Romans 7:14-8:4), so also we "wrestle" at times to allow the peace of God to rule in our hearts. It's a matter of submitting our will to God, and we do get better at it as we practice it, "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him (v.17)."

2015

Thoughts
Box 77
Greendale
WI
53129



*The Bible is God's Word . . . Jesus is God's "Word" made flesh . . .
His death and resurrection, the message needed Today.*

January

2

RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Those in the Western world, who know a rule of law quite different than in the Middle East or East, need to fervently thank the Lord for *freedom!* We have religious freedom, whereas with the uprising of hostile forces to Christianity, as well as other religions, now *75% of the world does not have religious freedom.* Stop to take that statistic into your mind; the bulk of the world is unable to openly worship God, and in many places not even take the name Christian publicly, unless one is prepared to actually suffer and/or be marginalized.

It is also no coincidence that so many places hostile to faith are hostile in physical respects. Preachers of the Gospel are beaten, or worse, beheaded. It should be abundantly clear to thinking people that Atheism and Islam are horrific ideologies, which abuse people for advancement. Both are founded on false premises, in the one case a warped pseudo-scientific world view of a material universe which made itself, and the other a power mongering religious fanatic.

We need to be aware of creeping Secularism in America, which foments ever-increasing pressures and limitations upon faith. *Faith in the Christian God* is the keystone to our country's greatness, our openness toward other viewpoints and individual expression. If faith gets shunted aside, so will your freedom. The best way to protect against this happening is *to be overt and vocal about your faith.* Not in a nasty way; be pleasant, understanding, but also be firm about your right to hold your beliefs. Others need to *respect* our faith. It doesn't go one way, where we have to respect all manner of illicit behavior and indecency! Tolerance is something we deserve as well!

SUNRISE

Morning people get a special gift from the Lord, a peek at the new day! I enjoy being outside or working out in the morning when the sun rises. The warmth and brightness is invigorating!

God's blessing to believers is likened to the strength of the sun rising as it grows hotter (Judges 5:31), the coming of the Lord portrayed as the rays of the sun (Malachi 4:2), and the redeemed in eternity compared to shining with glory as the sun (Matthew 13:43). The sun is *glorious* in its power and beauty, so no wonder the Lord and those in Heaven are compared to it!

There is a condition called Seasonal Affective Disorder, and it's real. I was the closest to being depressed ever in my life my first year serving a dual parish in Canada. The nights were loooooong, and daylight skimpy. I had to invite myself over to people's homes to fight a dim mood.

If the sun is good for us, imagine how much more the Son of God is precious for our spirit! I urge you to let Jesus' words illumine your life every day!

Blessings!
Douglas W. Schroeder

0

1

5