

THOUGHTS

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SPEAKER ON THE WORD TODAY



J AN HONOR AND AN OPPORTUNITY

I have been invited to India next January for a celebration of the milestone of the Gospel being broadcast in 150 languages! I intend on going and will look forward to bringing personal greetings and blessings from you – the faithful who are working to make The Word Today a bastion of Gospel preaching globally!

U PICKING UP PENNIES

Pastor Paul was a change hound and he often had one eye on the ground wherever he walked in case there was a nickel or dime to be found. Dana has more of his thrifty character than I do. Though I am not a spendthrift, I have given up stopping at garage sales or scrounging along fairways for golf balls. Scrounging golf balls works; Dana and Don have amassed more than 3,000 of them! When my sons were learning the game they were well supplied with woods and water balls! It reminds me of the joke about a friend boasting of his incredible golf ball that had bright colors, glowed in the dark, and even emitted a beep when hit out of bounds. The friend was impressed, “Where did you get it?” The proud owner replied, “I found it!”

I used to rib my father occasionally by stepping over a penny, saying, “It’s not worth the wear and tear on the spinal cord to pick it up!” I reminded him of the time as a young boy when I found a \$20 bill in the snow in our backyard, which made up for many years of scrounging! Dana and dad had a running contest annually who could find the most change. It was a good friendly competition and they relished it. One time when the boys were younger, Dana was walking with one of our sons and they both spotted a coin. Dana shoved him out of the way to get it! Now, that’s motivation to save! Dana is kind and generous, but not when it comes to coin-finding competition.

Pertaining to the values of society, I recall the story of the Native American who was in the city and told his friend he heard a cricket. Buses, cars, and people walking and talking filled the air with sound. The friend was incredulous, but the sharp-eared man homed in on the sound and found the cricket under a bush. Then, as a demonstration that we are led to what we are listening for, he dropped some change on the sidewalk and nearly everyone’s head swiveled in response. I share this to encourage that we filter out the noise of the world and listen carefully to the voice of God in His Word! You won’t hear it in the deafening din but must intentionally listen for it.

There is no facet of culture that is not tainted by sin and the attempt of the wicked to impose their wretchedness upon others. I just saw a warning in a news article that suggested that if you find one, you do not pick up a folded dollar bill lying on the ground because it may be laced with Fentanyl! The drug can be so toxic, so concentrated, that if it contacts the skin,

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it can put a person into a deadly overdose! The wicked are not content to reserve their sin and its negative consequences for themselves. They think it fun to plague those who wish to have nothing to do with it.

An additional thought; as believers, we may suffer in this world because of others' sinfulness. As much as we may wish to insulate ourselves from the fallout of sin, we cannot eliminate it. A difficult lesson that all believers occasionally experience is being victimized by persons with unlawful and ungodly intent. Such occasions call for the very best from us not to blame God, nor wish the perpetrator to go to Hell but rather repent and be saved!

FEAR AND TRUST

The Bible classes I lead at Our Shepherd recently studied the book of Judges, which I refer to as the Wild West of the Old Testament. If you are fearful that we live in scary times due to uncertainty and human wickedness, Judges is a book that will convince you that all ages are fraught with such problems.

Gideon's story deserves attention, for he displays both confidence in the Lord and at the same time seeks reassurance from the Lord. Repeatedly Gideon sought or was given signs of God's presence and power in order to gain confidence (see Judges 6:17ff; 6:36-40; 7:9-15). Our classes discussed whether Gideon had faith in God. I shared that faith is not like a light switch, either on or off. Rather, faith is on a spectrum. We can trust God but want further assurance. I appreciate how the father of the boy tormented by an evil spirit, who brought his son to Jesus to exorcise him, was transparent, "I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief (see Mark 9:14-29)!"

Satan wishes to keep us fearful, for then we are tempted to shrink back in faith, becoming silent and stingy. If we are intimidated by the wickedness of the world, we may be too worried about others' reactions to our witness. If we are fearful of our accounts shrinking, we may be tempted to cut our offerings. Like David, who fought the lion and the bear prior to confronting Goliath, there is always a new enemy, a new terror presented. The question is, will your knees buckle in fear, or will you stand tall and bend them in prayer for strengthening?

Never put your confidence in mankind, as we are exhorted, "It is better to take refuge in the Lord than to trust in princes (Psalm 118:9)." In uncertain times cling to the Lord. Remain faithful, expect the world to oppose your zeal for God. Keep your eyes focused on things eternal and anchor to Heaven, not this world. We are in a storm currently, but storms do not last forever.

Blessings,
Douglas W. Schroeder