

April 1, 2020

Dear Sunday School Class,

I am writing this to each of you so you know what is going on with the Adult Sunday School Class. I am sending this to anyone who has been in the class in the past, just so everyone is included.

This last Sunday Matt Merfeld and Chris Watson facilitated an opportunity for us to gather via technology by using a program called "Zoom USA." How it worked was that they opened a session called "Meeting" and anyone who wanted to and had the capability to log on via the internet, could participate in a group meeting and share in the discussion. It was a good time of fellowship in spite of most of us not having done such a meeting before. Technology can be wonderful, but is also frustrating at times, but we will work through any glitches. We will do it for the next few weeks until we are able to gather in person again. However, I know some of you don't have the technology to participate in such a meeting, so I will try to keep you in the loop of the lessons and the discussion that takes place.

We are going to be using Andy Stanley's study "Why Easter Matters" which is a really good study on some interesting aspects of Easter, and the weeks leading up to it.

Last Sunday the lesson was entitled "The Risk of Surrendering to God" and Andy highlighted the lessons we can learn from Judas and his disappointment in, and betrayal of, Jesus. Even though Judas had been a close companion of Jesus, it would seem he was in it for the money. He was in charge of the money that was given to Jesus and the disciples, and was known to steal from that money, which of course Jesus must have known, and yet as far as we know, Jesus never made an issue of it. According to the study, Judas wasn't so different from the other disciples in that he really thought Jesus would rise up and be a political leader, the actual King of the Jews, which the other disciples also believed, and thus he became bitter and disappointed when he realized that what he wanted wasn't going to happen; he would not have attention and political power through his relationship with Jesus, but it was only going to be about a faith relationship. So, when his aspirations were not met, he became very bitter and hostile, and sold Jesus out for a mere 30 pieces of silver. And interestingly enough, he didn't sell Jesus out to the Romans, but to the High Priests of the Jewish faith. Judas became so bitter he separated himself from the rest of the disciples and formed a cruel plan to have Jesus arrested, so he could get paid; for him it became about the money. To draw a comparison with us in our faith walk, Andy asks the question "What are we expecting from our relationship with Jesus?" It comes down to us bargaining with God to get what we want from our relationship with Jesus, and from the Body of Christ. In truth, Andy suggests that we all try to bargain with God to get what we want at times, and we bargain with other people in our lives to get our way.

The class brought up the issue of Peter betraying Jesus too, much like Judas, so what was the difference between the two betrayals? Both were adamant in their betrayal, and both alienated themselves from the rest of the disciples. The conclusion is that Judas regretted what he did, and even called it sin, but he never repented and sought Jesus' forgiveness or a restored relationship with Him, and never went back to be a part of the disciples. Peter, however, not only regretted his betrayal, but repented and went back and joined the disciples again, and sought Jesus' forgiveness the first time Jesus had contact with them again in the Upper Room. That begs the question of how do we handle our desire to have our own way in our relationship with Jesus? To quote Andy, "It should scare us that we decide something is more important than a relationship with our Heavenly Father. God will not get in the way of us having our way. He won't rob us of the responsibility associated with our

decisions.” So the bottom line is that we must surrender our will to Him, and be willing to repent, or only suffer regret and walk away from Jesus. The good news is that He will take us back every time!

This week is Palm Sunday and we head into what the church calls “Holy Week.” It goes through the week of Jesus going victoriously into Jerusalem with the people hailing him and shouting “Hosannah,” to His being tried, convicted and horrifically crucified. What a horrible, amazing story. Our study will look at the thief on the cross and how Jesus ministered to Him, and it’s called “The God Who Can Be Trusted.”

Read Luke 23:32-43 and ask yourself the question, “Do I get disappointed with God when things don’t go my way?” “If so, do I pull away from Jesus, or when those times come, do I realize my sin and truly repent and strengthen my relationship with Him, or do I walk away from Him and become bitter?”

I hope you can join our Zoom session on Sunday at 9:30 a.m. Directions for logging on will be provided in the BECC weekly newsletter. Matt Merfeld (896-5608) Chris Watson (896-2059) and Kim Clinton (896-5620) are also willing to help you if you need assistance logging on to the meeting.

Be sure and either listen to Pastor Steve’s sermon via Facebook on the internet, or go to the church website and read it. You will be blessed.

In these frustrating and uncertain times it is so important that we as the Body continue to read our Bibles, pray, and seek ways to stay connected.

Pray for the needs of our church, community and world, and know you are being prayed for as well.

Let us remain faithful!

Blessings,

*Judy and Stephen*