

Manna Moments

Thursday, March 11, 2021

Scripture Romans 13: 8-10

Owe no one anything, except to love one another; for the one who loves another has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery; You shall not murder; You shall not steal; You shall not covet"; and any other commandment, are summed up in this word, "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore, love is the fulfilling of the law.

Devotional

Pastor Tom Pederson

thomaspederson@sbcglobal.net

"Can You Be Christian Alone?"

I served a congregation in Brookfield, Wisconsin, a suburb of Milwaukee. Walking the neighborhoods and visiting residents was a way to introduce myself and the ministry of the church. Most of the homes were 1950's Cape Cod designs and many remodeled their basements to add livable space.

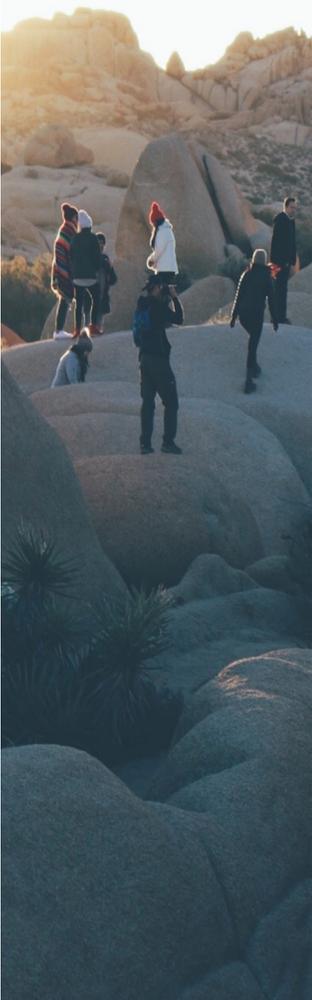
Les Paul, the famous guitarist who innovated on the electric guitar was said to have played jam sessions in some of the basements of these Brookfield homes in the 50's. He was the first to lay down multi-tracked recordings and used a Gibson guitar (made in Kalamazoo.) I always hoped I would meet someone who had experienced this musical basement community first hand. Les Paul and Mary Ford were a superstar duo in those years with 28 hits. Check out "How High the Moon."

I never did discover that home, but I did meet a man who, when he realized a pastor was calling, wanted to show me his remodeled basement. We descended the stairs and he proudly displayed an altar he had built at the end of the room. It was bathed in dimmed light and had candles and a cross displayed with care on this special table. He had created a room with great care where he could privately worship God.

While I have never met another person with a personal chapel, many of us do share the sense that salvation is a personal experience. We become involved in trying to save ourselves, and like this man, become individuals isolated and alone, not really assisting others or relying on others. Religion becomes our personal "thing" and it often makes enemies of others.

Of the two basements, the one filled with music and musicians building on one another, resembles Christianity. Each person relies on the others and helps the others. You cannot make music without community nor, even with the best of efforts, can you be Christian alone.

Cont.



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Abraham was the first person to believe in one God. God was simply named "I am who I am." God made a covenant of love and promises, but it was a promise not given to Abraham individually, but to the whole nation of Israel. The truth was, if the nation was saved, so individuals in that nation would be saved. Faith was received in community, not alone in an isolated place.

Together, people would love as God had loved them. Love meant desiring the well being of others....even enemies. Love, the summary of all God's laws, was sacrificial love. To sacrifice meant to give up something of value because you had found something you valued more. People loved by sacrificing for the well being of the nation and gained much more than they gave. They came to realize that they were only as well off as the least among them. If one suffered, then anyone could suffer and no one was safe or saved. Sacrifice for the least meant well being for all.

Today the vaccines that fight the coronavirus are examples of this kind of love. We benefit freely from the miracle of God in science that has turned genetic mRNA into a code for our healing. This vaccine was not of our making, nor do we do anything to deserve its benefits. We don't even have to pay for what we could never afford. We rely on the work of others for our salvation from the virus and in doing so our immunity contributes to the well being of the nation. That's the kind of love I'm talking about.

Prayer or Thought of the Day

So, salvation turns out to mean justice, health, freedom from death, reunion with friends and family, school for children, return to worship and more than we can even know. We celebrate what we never would have received without community.

Notes:

