

Words for an Emerging Church

Wednesday, September 8, 2021

The September Re-Start (Really!)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation.

—2 Corinthians 5:17-18

But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. —Philippians 3:13-14

Back in the late winter and the spring I began to joyously anticipate this fall—right about now—when we could all celebrate a glorious re-set and re-start. It seemed that by then the COVID virus would have run its course, and with the beginning of the program year we could start life afresh, free of all the virus restrictions and anxieties which have afflicted us over the past years. As I shared this anticipation with others, I was occasionally chided by those who felt that I was being too cautious, as they were convinced that this would be over well before fall. As it turns out, my hope for re-start was premature.

The old questions return. When will this be over? Those who confuse gross pessimism with wisdom are quick to solemnly chime in that this may be the “new normal” and it may all never end. Certain officials and professional worriers continue to grasp for every possible reason for fear in hopes that we will then carefully follow all their instructions. The media still delights in a continued fright-each-night litany of warnings. Again, we are left to do our best to read between the lines and try to make sense of the situation, and then determine our appropriate response. Sigh. So much for the re-start.

But Lord forgive me! How could I have been so blind? Yes, it would be wonderful if everyone went out and got vaccinated, or the germ suddenly evaporated, but that is not going to happen, and we are fools to hold our breath until that magic day. It should be so obvious. *Now* is the time for a re-start. *Today* is the day to press that re-set button! We may not be able to change the circumstances around us, but we can certainly change our outlook and call upon the re-starting power of God. At every New Year’s—that arbitrary date which starts our civilization’s calendar—we quote

2 Corinthians 5:17-18 and Philippians 3:13-14 and gladly claim the glorious new beginning which we receive from God. Now is as good a time as any for a New Year.

Let us joyfully claim a re-start. God is in control, and we need not fear. Let us hold the Covid germ and all the fears and troubles which it has caused before God in prayer. Let us present to God our wearied spirits, and the grief, frustration, and pessimism which this pandemic has caused us. Let us remind ourselves that most of us have faced greater crises and the Lord has delivered us from those dark passages. In the 23rd Psalm David rejoiced in the Lord's "preparing a table before us in the presence of our enemies." The persistent presence of enemies does not preclude God's presence with all its delights!

I cannot deny that this is not quite the September which I had hoped for, but I would be a fool to disregard my long-anticipated re-start. Won't you join me in the celebration?

Blessings,

Pastor Jim

Psalm 23 (King James Version)

The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want.

He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me;

thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever.