

WEEKLY DEVOTION – Tuesday, July 2, 2024

Pastor Bruce Kischnick, Grace Lutheran Church, New Albany, IN

“What’s Wrong with Those People?”

READING: 2 Timothy 3:1-5 – But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God – having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with them.

I mentioned in last week’s devotion that I am still a runner – not fast, not stylish, but I get the mileage done. I keep telling myself that this is good for me – even as my muscles and joints complain. As I run I am often assailed by and offended by something I see too much of: litter.

Once a week I run back into the industrial park along Barack Obama Way. It is a beautiful parkway that has woods all along its northern and western edge. It has a broad bike and running path that runs alongside the road. It’s a lovely, quiet place to run. But...last week what did I see? A Chik-fil-a dinner box lying in the grass along with napkins, forks, wrappers, and assorted trash. I see this kind of thing all the time, and every time I wonder to myself, “What’s wrong with these people?”

Now, I sort of understand their logic when it comes to alcohol cans and bottles. If they happen to get pulled over for a traffic violation, and the officer sees those bottles, or smells their contents, that’s a serious offense. So if they down a can of beer, there is some incentive to get it out of the car as fast as possible. Out the window it goes. Not right, not good, but there’s some logic to it. But why throw the Chik-fil-a box out the window? Why throw a Burger King sack or a candy wrapper or a Coke bottle out the window? Surely those things can ride along until you get home or to some place where trash cans are available. I just don’t get it. What’s wrong with those people?

St. Paul prophesied it in our reading for today. He makes a “Rogue’s List” of offenses, attitudes, and behaviors he says will be prominent “in the last days.” We are in the last days. We’ve been in them since the day the Lord Jesus ascended into heaven. The final countdown has been in effect since that day. And what St. Paul predicted has come true again and again in every age since that day. Honestly, his prophecy was not all that hard to make, right? People do these things because they are sinners – unrepentant, ungodly, uncaring, selfish, self-centered, ornery, mean-spirited, ignorant sinners.

The people who through all manner of litter out their car windows DON’T CARE. They feel entitled, or they feel oppressed by their daily grind, or they despise authority, or they figure “someone” will clean up after them. Whatever is their reasoning, they just DON’T CARE. No one cares about them. No one will know. None of it matters anyhow. The littering is often just a symptom of a deeper issue. They do not honor creation because they do not honor or know the Creator. They do whatever they wish, whatever they feel, and don’t feel beholden to anyone, least of all the God of the Universe.

Now that’s not to say that Christians never litter, or despise authority, or feel entitled, or just don’t care. That’s really the whole point: we are like that sometimes simply because WE TOO ARE SINNERS. We have to be on constant guard against falling into the old patterns of the world. We, who know the Gospel, who love and praise and worship the Lord, we, too, are susceptible to sin and its effects. That’s why self-inspection, confession, and God’s absolution are so important in our lives. “If we say we have no sin, the

truth is not in us.” It’s when we see the sin in “those people”, but fail to see the sin in ourselves, that we are vulnerable to the devil, the world, and, especially, our flesh.

Littering is just a microcosm of the greater sins and failings of humanity. We pollute our rivers, our oceans, our lands. We abuse our bodies, our families, our neighbors. We ignore the poor, the broken people, the helpless. We abort our babies, warehouse our elderly, exploit the needy. We abuse our offices, feather our own nests, accuse our opponents of the very things we ourselves are doing. This world is plagued by sin as it was before Jesus, during his life, and since his resurrection and ascension. In these “last times” things continue to be as they were before. Except...

You and I, the Christians of our day, can do our part to make things different, even in small ways. Imagine what this old world would be like if there were NO CHRISTIANS in it! Imagine what WE WOULD BE LIKE without Christ in our lives! Repent of your sins. Receive his forgiveness. And by the Holy Spirit’s prompting find ways to share his love, his Word, his blessings with others today. Don’t just show those things to other Christians, but to those who are decidedly not Christians. Heap burning coals on their heads. Let them see your Heavenly Father in you. And, please, put the trash in approved receptacles! Amen.

PRAYER:

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- 1) BARDSTOWN VISIT: Wednesday, July 24, we’ll go by church bus to “Museum Row” in Bardstown, KY. There are several museums to visit including: The Women’s Museum of the Civil War and Col. Moore’s Military Museum. We’ll eat lunch at the famous Talbert Tavern. Sign up at the office. Room for 25 only.
- 2) FRANKENMUTH BUS TRIP – September 29-October 2. Registration is now open. Find information and forms in “News & Tidbits”, online, and in the Narthex. 53 seats available.