

Pastor's Corner

May 2015 – Rev. Eric Lane

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!

—2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV

Our District Superintendent in the Appalachian District gave the clergy a book at Christmas. entitled *Shift* by Phil Maynard, which addresses the topic of “Helping congregations back into the game of effective ministry.” In the “Forward,” Paul Nixon wrote these words: “...all growing churches constantly experience the temptation to get lazy because their ministry is thriving. When we get lazy, we tend to fall back into old habits and ways of thinking.”

As I read this book, I began to see how the message in it fit not only the church but us as Christians, too. No one likes to be considered lazy. We all prefer to be seen as vibrant, hard-working, Christians who are “on fire” for the kingdom; but the truth is that is not always the case. The author does not use the term “lazy” to mean that we don’t care, but rather that we “burn-out, tire out, or perhaps just plain give up.” To prevent this from happening, we must continually exam our lives and seek God’s direction for our lives while seeking fresh ideas. If the Word of God is alive, then let’s keep it alive and fresh.

When we study the people within the Bible, and in the history of the Christian faith, what we see is that God is continually shaping and changing them into vessels that are used to pour out his message to the world. The clearest example of that is the twelve “rag-tag” bunch of men that Jesus called to become his disciples. If you wanted to start a business or a movement today, I don’t think that you or I would have given any of these men a second look or asked them to join our team.

Yet, Jesus saw something within each of these men and that was faithfulness. Jesus called to each of them to “Come and follow me...” and they stepped out, leaving their pasts behind, to follow Jesus.

When we examine their journey, we see that it is a lot like our own. They had questions; they jumped to conclusions; they had doubts; at times, they were amazed and showed fear—and we even see one that gave up. Yet, those who remained faithful, pressed on; and with God’s help through the gift of the Holy Spirit, they brought forth “new life.” It may be hard to imagine, but I expect that they too became “lazy” at times. Soon after the resurrection we read of Peter and John who have returned to their old ways—fishing.

They had gone as far as they could on their own. Now they needed a new direction, and Jesus provides them with that direction. Gathered around that fire with Jesus, Jesus instructs Peter to feed the lambs, care for the sheep, and to feed the sheep.

These are words that we need to be reminded of when we become “lazy.” For when we become comfortable, we tend to fail to be faithful. When we fail to be faithful, we fail to feed the lambs, care for the sheep, and feed the sheep.

When we become “lazy” in our personal relationships, they, too, tend to become stale, and “unfulfilling.” Then, the relationships grow apart instead of growing closer. That’s when you hear phrases like “we are no longer in love or we have fallen out of love.” The cure is to bring freshness back into the relationship—to “stir things up.” The same is true in our relationship with God. While God is always ready to bring freshness and newness to our lives (we are reminded of this with every sunrise and sunset), we are the ones that become lazy and, thus, stale.

So, I leave you with this question. What does God want to do in your life and in the life of our church to bring about a spirit of “new life;” so, that the lambs and sheep are fed, and that the sheep—his sheep—are cared for?

Pray for one another and pray for our church as we begin to seek God’s will and God’s direction in ministry.