

WHAT THE WIND BLEW MY WAY

In last week's message I shared how I can feel a bit anxious some Monday mornings when I place my garbage out for pickup, especially when I have large amounts of cardboard included in my recycling or am exceeding the number of bags I am allowed. I had no anxious feelings at all this Monday because I only had a few bags of garbage to put out and my recycling bins just had normal items included in them.

When I put my garbage out, something unusual turned the corner that caught my attention. It was not a car, nor a person, nor an animal but rather a balloon being carried along by a slight wind. While it was surprising to see, it was not shocking as I quickly remembered how there was a birthday party going on Sunday night not far from us and it probably came from their yard. The wind was gentle at that time of morning, so it just kept the balloon slowly moving along the opposite side of the street.

Two hours later the wind picked up as it poured down rain around 8:00 a.m. If the balloon was anywhere near our house at the time, I am sure it got quickly whisked away by the high winds. I did not see the balloon when I drove my daughter to school at 8:30, nor when I returned home. The winds must have changed direction two hours later. When I went back out at 10:30 the balloon was once again across the street close to where I first saw it at 6:00 a.m. I returned home again around 11:45 to find the wind had now carried the balloon across the street to our lawn and halfway up our driveway. This balloon started off at a birthday party celebration on Sunday, but the winds on Monday took it on quite a journey.

Seeing the journey the wind took this balloon on got me thinking about the various directions life's storms and high winds can try to blow us in. The apostle Paul uses the analogy of being blown around by the wind when describing the benefits as it pertains to being mature or immature with respect to our faith. In Ephesians 4, Paul warns believers about being tossed and blown about by every wind of new teaching like they were susceptible to prior to believing in Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. He goes on to explain how once believers begin to grow and mature in their faith instead of being tossed about by these winds, they will be able to do the following:

We will not be influenced when people try to trick us with lies so clever they sound like the truth. Instead, we will speak the truth in love, growing in every way more and more like Christ, who is the head of his body the church. (Ephesians 4:14-15)

Paul is encouraging new believers to keep growing in their faith so that whenever the winds begin to blow strong, they will be able to know the truth and not be deceived; they will be able to speak the truth into situations in a loving way; and they will be able to continue growing in Christ-like ways regardless of the wind level.

Just as believers back in Paul's time faced a variety of winds and storms that would toss and blow them around, we experience this same challenge. Rising costs from inflation is a strong wind we are enduring of late. The pandemic had a whole series of strong winds and gales that challenged our security and way of living. An illness or death of a loved one can act like a strong wind challenging our sense of well being. Broken relationships, abuse, acts of violence, anger and so on are all strong blasts of wind that take us back. We cannot avoid these strong wind gusts from occurring but what is within our control is growing our faith in every way in order to become more like Jesus in order to withstand these gales.

Having come through perhaps the most difficult three years of our lives and all the changes we have seen occur in our society as a result of COVID, now might be a good time to ponder how well our faith has sustained us through all of these wind gusts. For instance:

- Have we been speaking in love to others coming out of this or have the gusts of wind that have blasted us caused us to speak more in terms of anger and bitterness like we have seen happen to so many coming out of COVID?
- Have we grown and become more Christ-like through these wind gusts or have we allowed these winds to blow us away from faith and drawing closer to Jesus?
- Have we continued to live by God's ways and truths through these wind gusts or have we allowed them to take us in the direction of lies and unrighteous living?

- Have we maintained our attachment to the body of Christ by continuing to be involved in worship, or did the strong winds blow us away from making worship part of our Sabbath experience?

Just as the wind had a way of blowing that balloon around in various directions on Monday, so too can the winds from life's storms try to blow us off course from God's path for us to become more Christ-like. If we have been intentional in growing in every way in our faith as Paul encourages us, then we should be able to look back over the wind gusts from these past three years and say we have stayed the course with God's help. However, if we have allowed some of these wind gusts to take us away from growing in our faith it may be time for us to be honest with ourselves and ask God to bring us back to a better place again positioned to grow each day with Him.

A balloon being guided by whatever direction the wind was blowing on Monday caught my attention. It might have started off being used to celebrate a birthday on Sunday night, but God used the balloon and a wind to remind us how **growing in our faith can help us not to be tossed and blown off course by life's strong winds**. Little signs like these are a reminder to us how present God is and how He loves to make His presence known in unexpected ways.

Take care and God Bless

Pastor Dean