

Summer is not yet over, but we have survived many things. We survived the Warren Jeffs trial and all of that disturbing publicity. Our children and grandchildren are going back to school this week. As we progress into the fall season, we soon will be experiencing a new set of challenges. We will be watching the leaders of our country convene in order to select candidates for the presidency of the United States. Even though we have presumptive candidates, it will be important to observe the various ways in which the Democrats and Republicans use their airtime to convince us to vote for the respective nominees. We should listen and then do responsible fact checking. We should not fall prey to scare tactics. We should actually listen to what the OTHER political party has to say-who knows- maybe we can learn something!

Jesus always listened. He listened to what everyone said. He looked past the razzle-dazzle, the outer garments, if you will, and he looked into a person's heart. He listened not just to what came out of people's mouths, but he listened to see if their words came directly from their hearts. He looked past Peter's many failings-his speak-without-thinking-foot in the mouth statements based often on excitement, and sometime based on selfish motives. And, Jesus is still doing that today. Jesus looks beyond our failings, our own hardness of hearts, beyond our

sometimes stiff necks, and invites us to help him rebuild the kingdom of God.

Isaiah's words of prophesy speak to us still: "Listen to me, you that pursue righteousness. . .you that seek the Lord." He tells us to look to where we came from, in that Garden at the place of Eden, Garden of Righteousness, and Garden of Delight; in that perfect place where we were first created. Isaiah prophesizes that there will be a time when God will bring deliverance to God's people. A time when we will be able to go back and return the Garden, that original Paradise.

When Jesus came, he fulfilled that prophesy. Our job is to listen to Jesus, to understand, and *then* to act. Sometimes I think we make it too hard for ourselves. God does ask us to do our best, but God does not ask us to punish ourselves for doing less than what our egos tell us we should do. Listen to St. Paul's words again from his letter to the Romans: "do not think of yourself more highly than you ought to think, but think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned." Each one of us is unique; we all have different gifts. We are one body with many members, and not all members have the same function "so we, who are many, are one body in Christ."

Sometimes we forget that individually we can't do it all, get everything done. Conversely, we should not expect any one person other than ourselves to do it all either. For example, I was selected to be the leader of this team that we

know as Emmanuel Church during this period of transition. I work to lead you spiritually, and to help you grow this place we love more fully into the grace of Christ. Together with the Search Committee and all of your feedback, we are figuring out what steps to take to lead this community into the future. Ultimately you will choose the person to lead you into that future place. Not one person will decide; it will be a group effort, guided by the Holy Spirit.

As I have attended search committee meetings, I have seen that each one of us has individual gifts. And I also see it; experience it in other aspects of our church community life. Some of you have gifts that I don't have; some of you have the same gifts as me. But it is only together that we can do what God asks us to do in order to provide a place to know, celebrate and share the love of God through Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. It is only together, as a team that we can provide a place of worship for all people and to help serve all people in this place and in the world.

Jesus gave the keys to the kingdom to Peter- that flawed human being; the one with the too quick to answer-often times putting his foot in his mouth-disciple. You see, Peter finally got it right. He knew that Jesus is the Lord, Jesus is the Messiah, and Jesus is the Son of the Living God. If we can understand that, if we can get that right, if we can understand that Jesus is the one, the only one

who can bring us back to the Garden, bring us back to that perfect place, then we will be able, together, to join with Peter and continue to build God's Church, God's kingdom, rebuild that Garden here on earth.