

Newsletter Reflections for May

As I have watched the news and observed both the reports and the footage of the various behaviors recorded for the reports, it occurred to me how much some of the thoughts I had about perspective this Easter were relevant to what was happening. I considered the difference it might make if you thought of the tomb/church as empty or open, especially now. Now the buildings are definitely empty, but the church like the risen Christ is out and about—definitely open. When people speak of being optimistic versus pessimistic, they are often referring to this tendency we have of a one way view—lens—perspective—or whatever term you wish to use to describe the filter which you apply to ALL those messages your senses transmit to your brain for meaning to be attached. Of course past experience also influence the interpretation, but that perspective will determine to a large degree how you respond to the events which occur in the present as well. I know that a great deal of my reactions to both what I have seen and heard recently is based on my first area of interest and training which was in the fields of biology and medical research. My first two degrees were in Bacteriology/Microbiology which included Virology. I spent over a decade in medical research which involved the use of sterile technique and how to prevent contamination. So when those who come to the microphones are trained in the fields of science and infectious disease, those are the ones that I want to hear. Those are the ones whose statements are those which seem to have the most valuable information to frame the perspective for guidance on how to deal with the dangers and pitfalls of the current situation. Then there is the other major perspective which guides my life. This perspective is one which was taught to me early in life by parents and grandparents, by extended family and by the church family which helped raise me. This perspective is a much more generally applied one in my life's decisions and views. It colors my world. Much later in life, this perspective has been given a vocabulary by formal training and a degree—but the perspective is too deeply rooted to have been altered by that training. As we prepare to enter the month of May, this ending of what has been a tumultuous April, my thoughts like most everyone's is centered on how do we proceed? What is the right course of action? I really am not about to give an answer that I am not in possession of enough facts to give. My reflection is more about how much damage we are doing to each other because we are so focused on only our own perspective. I fear that we are heading in the direction on this issue that we have headed on so many others recently. We are so focused on our own view, our own issue, that we cannot look to see or admit that there may be another or that there is value in finding a middle way. We are, as human beings, meant to live in community. Community means caring for one another—that each and every member has value. When individual members forget that, then community as a whole suffers. The whole community becomes unhealthy. At the height of this crisis it seemed that we might come together. There have been many examples of people working together, of barriers being crossed. The crisis has also shown how deeply some of these barriers have wounded some within our society who

have become marginalized and never allowed to participate. As efforts to abate the imminent threat have shown success, the tendency to focus again on that perspective of self-interest has also begun to emerge. This crisis has created shock waves throughout our culture. The questions which are truly most basic for us to answer are not those about the virus and the vaccine; not about the market, jobs and employment versus unemployment. Those will be worked out. In this broken world the answers found will not be perfect, some will benefit wrongly, some will be hurt needlessly. The question which we each need to answer for ourselves at the end of our day, is what perspective did we apply to our actions as we moved through the decisions we made. Did our actions follow the guidance of the teachings of the One crucified whom we claim as Lord or did they follow only the interest of self?

Shalom,

Pastor Libby