

## **Developing an Attitude of Gratitude**

Viewing the daily newscasts has become, for many, a journey into doubts and even despair. The reports routinely feature case after case of bullyings, murders, rapes, kidnappings and carjacking as well as others too gruesome to mention, leaves one with a sense that the world is steadily sinking into a morass of trouble and woe that defies solution.

So is there any remedy for all this bad news? Strangely a number of the sermons I heard last Sunday advocated the need to develop an attitude of gratitude instead of dwelling on the negatives to the point of “abandoning all hope.”

This is particularly crucial for the Christian, because dwelling on the negative erodes one’s faith and blots out the essential good news that, come hell or high water, loneliness, sickness, financial disaster, or abandonment by friends, we, if we are saved, have a joyous future awaiting us – the gift of eternal life with a God in whose very presence is “fullness of joy” in a heaven more amazing than words words can express.

My mom’s favorite Bible verse gives it a try: “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the mind of man, the things that God has prepared for those who love Him.” (I Cor: 2:9).

“That’s all well and good,” a sufferer might say,” “but I need help now; the ‘somewhere out there’ promise does not fit my present reality.”

Here then are a few trade-offs one might ponder to get his/her mind off the world’s gloom and onto God’s bright promise of hope:

You say your friends have abandoned you? Be grateful you have a friend in Jesus “who will never leave you nor forsake you.”

You say gas has reached \$7.00 a gallon in California? Be happy that N. Dak. will likely be the last state to ever run out of gas.

You say the corrupted culture of the world persuaded you to have an abortion and now you can't live with the guilt? Take heart, the Bible says that every aborted and abandoned child is adopted by God and nursed by angels until his parents come “home” to raise it in Heaven. David says of the child he and Bathsheba lost: “He can't come to me, but some day I shall go to him.” (II Samuel:22-23.) And elsewhere we read, “If my mother and father forsake me, then the Lord will take me up.” (Ps. 27:10) We can be grateful we have such a loving and compassionate Heavenly Father who wants only the best for us.

Wahpeton recently lost one of our finest citizens, Craig Caspers, a one-time student of mine, who has richly blessed our twin towns for so many years. I saw him at Econo Foods just a couple of weeks ago, and he seemed very much his old self, handsome, friendly, inquiring after my health. He did say he was dealing with some troubling symptoms, but I never dreamed he had so little time left. His “Craig's list” of virtues is impeccable: he was a man of boundless good will: considerate, generous, gentle, kind, humble, a great family man and truly involved in many areas of our community.

He was the kind of citizen our “common enemy,” Satan, wants nothing to do with except to bring them trouble. But we can take comfort in this, that even though the enemy has stolen him from us far too early, he is now

joyously reunited with his beautiful wife, Sue and his brother Woody, and they all wait for us in a “Glory Land that outshines the sun.” We must be grateful he was with us as long as he was.

So we are left with the choice. We can dwell on the dark side’s seeming victories, or we can take shelter in the “great and precious promises” of the Lord. Psalm 37 puts it well: “Fret not thyself because of evil doers, neither be envious of the workers of iniquity; for they shall soon be cut off: “For yet a little while and the wicked shall not be; yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. -- But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.” (vs. 10 & 11)

George Herbert, the matchless 17<sup>th</sup> century pastor poet’s lovely poem, “Peace,” came to mind as I thought about Craig Caspers: “There was a prince of old/ In Salem dwelt/ Who lived with good increase of flock and fold. /He sweetly lived/ But sweetness did not save his life from foes.”

Sadly, that is the reality behind the loss of so many of the great people dedicated to leaving the world a better place than they found it. Thankfully, the Lord keeps turning out these great human beings. And it’s people like Craig who supply these youngsters coming up with heroes to emulate.

Gene Pinkney 24-12-04- For the Daily News