

It is so great to be back among you, our church family. We had a wonderful time watching the waves as the sun shined and the seagulls continuously searched the sand for something to eat. As each wave rolled in, it left part of itself on the beach and yet this same wave also took from the beach. Each time it receded, something was taken back to the ocean to once again be deposited somewhere else.

One morning as the sun was coming up in the east, the moon was setting over the horizon of the west, and both were brilliant orange. The eastern and the western lights came together for a brief moment, reminding me how wide our Father's love is for us.

If we are not careful, these experiences can be stolen from us. Life gets in the way. Stress and anxiety blind us to the wonders of God right in our very sight. The sight of a bird riding the air currents, seemingly not moving a muscle and yet they are in constant motion to stay afloat. Little movements of muscle and feather at just the right moment, each timed perfectly. Even the water creatures glide so effortlessly in an environment that we as humans struggle to navigate for more than a brief period of time. The joy nature feels just being what it was created to be, loved by the Creator.

We too have been created for joy. God created man and said it was good. He saw Himself in them. How do I know this? In Genesis, He said, "*Let's make them in Our image.*" These images—God the Father, Jesus the Son and the Holy Spirit—are evident in us who have chosen Jesus as our Savior. This reality should bring great joy and excitement to our lives; this is something to be passionate about! To live in our created-by-God nature and not our sin nature (brought on by Adam and Eve's sin) is the gift of eternity with our Heavenly Father.

So, this is how I am going to lead up to the next of the Ten Commandments: *Do not steal* (Exodus 20:15). Of course, we know morally that we should not steal, take something of someone else's for ourselves. Every society in the world has this same law and if someone is convicted of this crime, there is punishment. Sometimes very extreme.

We as Christian have been given the gift of salvation. With this gift comes the responsibilities to glorify God and serve our fellow mankind. If we only live for ourselves and do not share the love of God with others, we are stealing from them. What are we stealing? Every good thing of God!

This dark world hates God and everything that strives to make the light of Jesus visible to all. This is the fight we are engaged in. We all know that one candle makes

a small light in the darkness, but when joined by many candles, the light will be seen by many. We as a congregation are many points of light joining together to reveal the love of our Heavenly Father.

This task seems so big, and quite frankly it is. It needs to be our lifestyle. We as individuals cannot do it on our own, and so must rely on the Holy Spirit moving in all of His children to accomplish His will. Jesus gives us an example of how this is done. In John 12:44-49, He tells us that He only says what He hears from the Father:

*<sup>44</sup> Then Jesus cried out, "Whoever believes in Me does not believe in Me only, but in the One who sent Me. <sup>45</sup> The One who looks at Me is seeing the One who sent Me. <sup>46</sup> I have come into the world as a light, so that no one who believes in Me should stay in darkness.*

*<sup>47</sup> "If anyone hears My words but does not keep them, I do not judge that person. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world. <sup>48</sup> There is a judge for the one who rejects Me and does not accept My words; the very words I have spoken will condemn them at the last day. <sup>49</sup> For I did not speak on My own, but the Father who sent Me commanded Me to say all that I have spoken.*

We hear the Father speak through His Word, and by the power of the Holy Spirit we can share these same words with those with ears to hear. In other words, make disciple of all mankind.

Simply put, if we don't use the spiritual gifts given to all of us who believe in the grace of God, we steal from Him. By keeping the gift of salvation only for ourselves, we become part of the darkness.

When God speaks, we speak.

Your Brother in Christ, Archie