

As usual this spring a lot of migratory fowl flew over our property heading to their usual destinations somewhere up north. They always know where they are going. Even the butterflies come from South America to our area. It is quite remarkable how they are “drawn along,” even if they are new hatchlings, to their destinations.

Lots of us rely on maps or our I Phone to give us directions. If we read the maps properly and remember we do well finding our way. Maybe it's easier having an I Phone with Siri to tell us to prepare to turn and when. Eventually we arrive at our destination.

Life is like a journey. Sometimes we wish we could be on auto pilot like the migratory fowl, or have someone like Siri always advising us so we wouldn't have to speculate or make so many decisions on our own.

In a way we have been drawn in for the long haul of life's journey. Remember the Lord Jesus saying, shortly before all the events of Holy Week, **“And when I am lifted up I will draw all men unto me.”** (John 12:32) This He said in reference to what death He should die. - And He has drawn us in, through the work of the Holy Spirit we have been drawn in. The Lord Jesus is our homing beacon through all the troubles and traumas of life. And gladly and confidently we have followed. We have sung hymns like: “Jesus lead Thou on 'til our rest is won” - “Draw us to Thee, for then shall we walk in Thy steps forever” - “Christ be my Leader.”

The Christ was not only lifted up on the cross but He also rose from the dead on the third day! And there is even more to the story. After confirming the fact that He was alive over a forty day period with hands on experiences for many, He ascended into heaven to prepare a place for all who love Him, promising that He would simultaneously be with them on earth while He was doing the preparations for them in heaven. That's still not the end of the story: He will come again to take them, to take us, to live with Him in heaven forever. **And that story will never end.** Consequently we “believe in the resurrection of the body and life everlasting.”

Our Savior from sin, death and hell is also the one who walks us through the dark and stormy times of life, never leaving us or forsaking us. Many times in the Gospel of John He identifies Himself as THE LIGHT of the world, the One who is light for our dark days. And finally “we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.” So, not to worry, We have a Leader who knew where He was going, a Leader who knows where He is taking us. Heaven will be our home.

After the doleful songs of Lent we sang: “Jesus Lives! The Victory's Won!”

Resurrection peace and blessings to all of you, Pastor Lemke

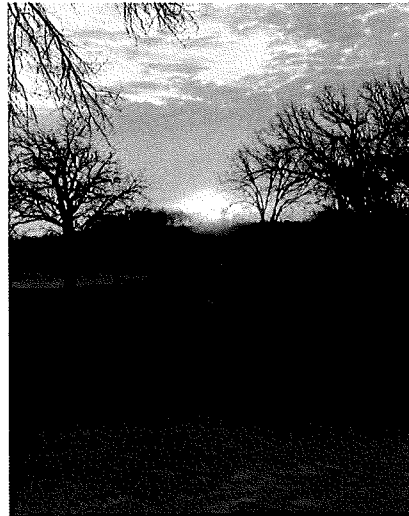
Looks count. I am not thinking about how you look. But at the looks given and the looks received. Sometimes they can make us feel comfortable or cower in fear. Walking down the street people give us all sorts of looks, and we them. Looks have consequences. They can push people apart or pull them together. A look can begin or break a relationship. Sometimes we wonder “what did that look really mean?” There are looks of approval and looks of disapproval. Another person's look can hurt or make one feel good. We have all had experiences with looks. Some have caused us to laugh and some have caused us to cry. A certain look can build up self assurance or tear at the very foundations of our being.

We can all remember some of the “looks” that parents gave us when we were young. A look of disapproval caused us to back off from bad behavior. A look of approval spurred us on to do better. - In school the look from another student sometimes showed approval or disapproval of what we were wearing. Another look indicated “liked,” or disliked. As adults we have all monitored the looks between another husband and wife, and wondered “What's going on between them?” Also there are certain looks people have when they come across horrific scenes, maybe of compassion, dismay or anger.

What kind of look might you have had on your face when you received your most wanted Christmas gift, or when you saw your grandchild for the first time, or when your son or daughter introduced you to their “true love,” or when you saw your mom or dad cry for the first time, or when you were at the bedside of a dying parent?

Looks count positively or negatively, they portray what we feel on the inside. I have always appreciated the “looks” of Christ. I will share a few from the Gospels: “When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.” (Matt. 9:37) - “There was a great throng, and He had compassion on them and healed the sick.” (Matt. 14:14) – To the widow at Nain: “When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, 'Do not weep' and he touched the bier.” (Luke 7:13) – From the Good Samaritan story: “When he saw him , he had compassion.” (Luke 10:33). What kind of look might Jesus have had for the woman caught in adultery, or for the dying thief on the cross? Or for Peter sinking down into the water? Or for James and John when they asked: “Can we each have a seat on your right and left hand when you come into your kingdom?”

Looks count! I especially rejoice that we can be assured that Jesus looks on us with compassion, because we are so often laden with the cares and problems of life, burdened by the memories of past sins and failures, unsure about the present and worried about how things will unfold in the future. His look says: “You are loved, you are forgiven and you are mine in time and for eternity.” Looking forward, Pastor Lemke



'JUST BECAUSE...!' I heard that phrase a lot when I was younger. It carried a lot of weight with it. Why couldn't I do something? "Just because!" Why do I have to do that? "Just because!" - "Just because I said so.....Just because that's just the way it is.....Just because you are too young.....Just because that's the way it is done here.....Just because that's what's expected.....Just because no one has ever done it before.....Just because I want to.....Just because I can." Now I hear: "Just because you are too old."

Just because He could, God created the world, establishing a functional functioning universe. Just because He could, God created mankind breathing into his nostrils the breath of life. Just because He loved God went in search of sin-broken mankind in the Garden. Just because He loved, God sent His Son to become the Savior of the world.

Just because of the power is Christ's blood we are cleansed from all our sins and iniquities. Just because of the the work, and only because of the work, of the Holy Spirit through Water and Word we have been brought into the family of God for time and for eternity. Just because we are weak and weary, heavy laden, cumbered with a load of care, the Lord Jesus comes as our Good Shepherd, walking with us through all the dark valleys of life, comforting and consoling, helping and healing, guarding and guiding.

I included a photo of a morning sunrise in Holy Week. It reminded me that just as "The Sun Also Rises" (Ernst Hemingway) so God is faithful to us each day with His love, mercy and grace. Just as the sunshine follows the storms, so God keeps coming to help us and heal us during and after the storms of life.

"WEEPING MAY TARRY FOR THE NIGHT, BUT JOY COMES WITH THE MORNING!" Psalm 30:5b

Blessing to you each new morning, Pastor Lemke