

*"The Chief End"*      3/9/2011      Kenmore UMC Joel 2:1-2, 12-16, Matt 6:1-6, 16-21  
 Rev. Dr. Peter W. LeValley

Oh, of course.

We read these words from Joel and Matthew,

The word of the Lord from the prophet Joel,

The words of Jesus,

And we sort of yawn and say of course AS IF these were words we live our everyday lives by!

First of all, how much piety, almsgiving (whatever that is?) praying and fasting do we do anyway, let alone when and if we do, is it for God or for us to look good before others and God?

We say our treasure is God and we wouldn't store up for ourselves treasures on earth instead of in heaven, why we even have it printed on our money that it is "In God we Trust".

Really

In truth words are more an oxymoron than a truth.

I know I used to chuckle under my breath at how much cash my parents always carried, or at least until I ran out of cash and had to borrow some from them. And now that I am their age, I have as much or more, even though I used my bank card more than cash,

Of course I am storing up treasure in heaven and not on earth, and thankfully my savings account is in better shape and I am glad for the market up turn.

It is so easy to get caught up in the way the world works, that I miss out or forget how it is in God's world that I have committed my life to really works.

It is not to say that savings and investing are bad or wrong, it is to say how easily we can lose track of The MAIN THING is and what is the **The Chief end of faith**.

It is easy to worry more about how we look to others, than how we live before the One who is the source of our being.

It is easy to get caught up in the charade instead of the charity, in the pretense instead of the prayer, in the flaunting instead of the fasting in the Fool's gold instead of the Lasting Treasure, as Dr. Robert Bryant puts it.

Ash Wednesday particularly and Lent in general is God's gift to us to help us remember, help us redirect, help us repent; Turn from that which is not life, back to the One who is life, Jesus Christ our Lord. To turn back from all the wanna be gods and lords in our world and in our lives and turn back to The Lord of our Life so that we serve the Lord God of all Creation.

Jesus is calling us; the prophet calls us just as he called ancient Israel, to the Prime directive,

You shall love the Lord your God with all your, heart, all your mind, all your strength and all your Soul, AND your neighbor as yourself.

Ash Wednesday is a time to remember and return, and Lent is the time to practice and get good at the living of the faith, and the following of our Lord Jesus.

We offer ashes to remind us of our mortality, "from dust we have come and to dust we shall return."

They also remind us that it is from dust that God has breathed the breath of life into us and given us this amazing gift called life, and not only that life eternal as well.

It is easy to forget, so Joel proclaims **Blow the Trumpet in Zion! Sound the Alarm on my holy mountain!**

Pay attention people, the day of the Lord is upon us, a day of darkness and gloom, but also a day that **Even now, we can return to the Lord.**

We just have to let these words of Joel and Jesus sink into our heads and ears, into our hearts and lives.

WE need to hear them and let them encounter us and call us to return to the Chief end of our faith. Is as

Dr. Douglas John Hall paraphrases the Westminster Confession, the Chief end of our faith is know and be known by God, it is to glorify God and enjoy the fullness of life God offers us as we give our lives away in extravagant gifts, in risk-taking mission and service, in intentional faith development and passionate worship and Radical hospitality to others, forgetting ourselves, entrusting ourselves to God and God's care and turning to others in service and love, thus giving glory to God in all we do.

Ashes are a reminder of the inward transformation and return God calls us to this night.

The chief end of our faith, to know and be known by God, to give glory to God and enjoy God's love.

Thanks be to God.

***“O Lord, you made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless until they rest in you.”***

St. Augustine

Throughout Lent we read in the gospels of Jesus' encounters:

Matt 4:1-11 Jesus and Satan

John 3:1-17 Jesus and Nicodemus

John 4:5-42 Jesus and the woman at the well

John 9:1-41 Jesus and Blind Man

John 11:1-45 Jesus and Lazarus

Matt. 21:1-11, Matt 26:14-27:66 Palm/Passion Sunday

John 20:1-18 Jesus and Mary at the Tomb

Where will we encounter Jesus on our Lenten journey