

Dear FPC family and friends,

Take a moment if you will and read Romans 12:14-21. Read all of it, allow it to sink in, and then picture yourself in church on Sunday, September 16, 2001 and imagine how those verse would have struck you. Take some time, picture yourself here, and imagine what you would have felt. Churches all across this nation were full that Sunday morning. Families grieving an innocence that was now lost, loved ones who had died in the horrific tragic events of that day, were gathered trying to make sense of a new reality in which they found themselves. Twenty five years ago this was the Scripture that I read to my congregation as they were huddled together for two services each with standing room only.

Today we are able to point to that time in our history as a people and say that it changed us. There are few moments like these in history that we can point to and say that this is true. Today we are now able to point to six years ago and our living through Covid as a time that we can say definitively that it has changed us. As a pastor who has charge of his flock I have to say that it is somewhat sobering to realize that events that take place in our world, as tragic and consequential as they may be, probably have more impact upon us than a well-placed sermon or a Scripture that speaks to us. The influence of Jesus in our lives is often superseded by the influence of life events. That simply should not be, but it is.

If we have become more fearful because of 9-11 then it is because we have forgotten the words found in I John 4:18 that tell us that perfect love casts out fear. If we are more angry and prone to vengeance and violence as a people and as a nation then it is because we have forgotten these words of Romans 12. If we laugh at the plight of the stranger and disregard those whom the King loves as seen in Matthew 25, then we have forgotten that our call is to righteousness, not greatness.

None of this minimizes the seriousness or the gravity of what took place on 9-11. I have a brother who called in sick on that day and he was supposed to be on a cleaning crew in those towers, so this day strikes me hard. But what we should all try is to have Scripture and our relationship with Jesus strike us harder than what we have lived through together. My hope is that one day all of us will be able to weigh our life experiences with Scripture on our hearts and the words of Jesus on our lips.

Last Sunday I preached on what it looks like to live peaceably with all as Hebrews commands us to do. Today I am writing on what do we look like 25 years after one of the most tragic events in the history of our nation. We know that our nation has changed, but unfortunately it has changed us in a way that is taking us away from the kingdom of God. How have we changed over these past 25 years? Are we moving closer to the kingdom of further away?

My prayer for us today is that we would ask for God's blessing upon the families of the victims of 9-11 who continue to suffer and continue to look for answers to some very basic questions. My prayer is upon us as a church community that we will always allow Scripture to dictate our future, and not the current events, even as tragic and as consequential as they may be. Your servant in Christ,

Pastor Bob

HAPPENING IN THE LIFE OF FPC...

COMMUNITY WIDE WORSHIP: Gather with all the churches of Strasburg for worship at the Strasburg Park next SUNDAY, September 20th at 10am. Bring a lawn chair or other comfortable chair or a blanket for seating during the service. There will be no worship here at FPC, so come and join our brothers and sisters in Christ from Strasburg to worship on this day. In case of rain, we will worship at Strasburg Mennonite at 10am.

BIBLE CHALLENGE: Began this past Monday, September 7th! It's not too late to join us for a 90-day read through the gospel Challenge. Each day you are given an opportunity to read one chapter from the gospels and to reflect on it with a journal. You can also find the blog post here on our website: <https://www.straspres.org/category/bible-reading-challenge-blog/>. Challenge journals are available on the table under the TV in the Well and on the glass table in the foyer.

WOMEN'S BIBLE STUDY: Please mark your calendars that we will be starting a new Bible Study on Tuesday, September 22nd. Classes will be held at 9am and 7pm in room 4. All are welcome! This fall, we are using a study by Kristi McLelland entitled "The Gospel on the Ground - The Grit & Glory of the Early Church in Acts." For any questions please contact Linda Bredin, Stacy Bronkema, or Sandy Wenger.

TODDLER GYM: is back starting Friday, September 18th ! Join us weekly on Fridays from 9 – 10:45am (Sept. – May) for playtime for ages 1 – 6 with their caregivers. This program is free and open to the public and follows the Lampeter Strasburg School Calendar. For more information, contact Alyssa Gregory at 717-495-3939 or agregory@straspres.org.

GOLF ANYONE?: Join Pastor Bob at Meadia Heights for golf on September 29th at 1pm. The cost is \$75 and there are 8 open spots. Let him know if you are interested!