

From the Pastor's Desk *Late summer/early fall 2024*

*"See how the flowers of the field grow. They do not labor or spin.
Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed
like one of these." Matthew 6:28-29*

I had a wonderful summer this year with my granddaughter, Aubrey. She wanted to spend the summer with her grandparents and their friends. She has grown particularly fond of Sandy Russell from the Albright church. Imagine a fifteen-year-old girl wanting to pal around with a woman who is...well, not fifteen any more. And yet, it is a true friendship that warms my heart each time I see them together.

This summer, I took an overnight trip with some friends to Gettysburg. We toured the battlefield and went to the visitor center to see the museum and the cyclorama. The cyclorama was of particular interest to me. I was pulled into the painting of "Pickett's Charge" and could have spent hours studying each scene. But after fifteen minutes, I was made to leave with everyone else. So I bought a couple books about the painting by Paul Philippoteaux so I could study it more. And even though the painting is very vivid in its portrayal of the battle, I know that it must pale in comparison to the actual event.

Later, Bev, Aubrey and I took Sandy with us to Niagara Falls for another overnight trip. We went on a guided tour around the area that included the "Maid in the Mist" boat ride and the "Cave of the Wind", where we got completely soaked even though we were wearing those rain covers that must have been made in the same place they make Dollar General bags.

As I looked at the power of the rushing falls, I was also taken aback by the splendor of the local flowers and plants. In that moment I felt the beauty and majesty of God's creative hand. Awestruck as I was by the cyclorama at Gettysburg, I was even more amazed at God's creation. All that power... all that beauty...marvelous! It was then that the words of Jesus from Matthew 6 came to mind as he had spoke of the flowers of the field. But Jesus continued to say that God, "clothes the grass of the field, which is here today, and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you— you of little faith?"

God, who creates waterfalls and mountains; trees and flowers; ants and elephants; oceans and canyons; all of creation—still, he cares and loves us more. He still considers us his crowning achievement. As I looked around at my fellow tourist, I saw people from so many different walks of life: different skin tones, different religions, different national origins. And looking into the faces of all these different people I was reminded that in them was the beauty of God's creative hand. Just as each flower is unique, so are we.

How wonderful it is to know that in all that God has made, he loves us best. I know this is true because Jesus told us so in his "Sermon on the Mount". He told Nicodemus in the gospel of John, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in him shall not perish, but have eternal life." 3:16

Prayer: Thank you, O Lord, for the beauty of your earth and all that your hands have created. Help us to appreciate the splendor of it all. Just as we can appreciate the artist's skill in a painting, may we marvel even more at the works of your hands, including our fellow brothers and sisters. As your love transcends our perceived differences, may we also love one another as you have loved us. This we pray in the name of our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

See yinz Sunday and God bless,

Pastor Steve