

HEARTBEATS Staying Connected 9/4/2023

Dear Friends in CHRIST,

ONE AT ONE – *Every day this week beginning on Tuesday, September 5 you are encouraged to pray for one minute at one o'clock. This week, pray for the victims of crime. Pray for law enforcement and others who work to protect the public from criminal action. Ask GOD to bring about a reduction in crime and greater protection and support for those who are targeted.*

I had a moment of panic this past Saturday. Actually, it was longer than a moment. I had come to church for the Men's Breakfast and Bible study, and then was going to meet with a family about an upcoming memorial service. After that, I had to get some things ready for the Sunday worship service and then was going to go home. When it came time to leave, however, my backpack was not in my office. I was pretty sure I had brought it. In fact, I remember putting it in the back seat of the car before I left home. But it was not in the office.

My backpack serves as my sort of briefcase, containing a variety of resources I use at different times for work. I have note pads and extra writing tools, highlighters, Post-It notes, anointing oil, business cards, a charging cord for my phone, an extra bottle of medication, and a few other things that I utilize from time-to-time. I checked the other rooms in the office area where I thought perhaps I had set it down when I first came in. I double-checked the Fellowship Hall where the men had met, though I was very sure I hadn't carried it up there after getting the Bible study from my office earlier that morning. I pondered who could have come into the office and taken it, though that seemed highly unlikely, unless it was someone who had a key to the offices, but I know these people and I like them, and I think they like me. I looked through my office one more time, but it was not there. Finally, I checked my car and there it was, sitting on the backseat without my ever having gotten it out.

So, why the panic. Everything I mentioned before could be replaced fairly easily, even the medication. The backpack itself is very nice—a gift from my kids—but also replaceable. But there is one other thing that my backpack often carries, and the potential loss of this was the thing that bothered me so much—my Bible. Now even Bibles are easily replaced, so you may wonder why the possible loss of this Bible was such an issue. Well, it's not the Bible itself, but what is in this Bible.

I've carried this Bible for over twenty years. I finally got it after wearing out my previous Bible—the Bible that I bought when I started seminary. And within these Bibles are the notes I've written into them for nearly forty years. When the first Bible wore out, I spent about two weeks transferring my notes to the new Bible so that I would continue to have them, and I have added mightily to those notes in the subsequent years. These are notes that expand what the text contains. It explains meanings and provides different ways of understanding the text. My notes include lists of steps to take for Christian behavior or connections from the Old Testament to the New Testament. I bring my Bible with me whenever I attend worship or Bible study as a participant with the expectation that I will learn at least one new thing that I can add to my notes, and rarely have I been disappointed in that expectation. In addition to GOD'S Word, my Bible holds a lifetime of learning.

I didn't really consider, however, how valuable this Bible is to me until the moment I thought it lost. I know that I have enjoyed looking at my notes when I read a passage. Often, I have found insights that have helped me when preparing a sermon or Bible study. But this was like a new revelation. I hadn't realized how valuable my Bible was and is. And it led me to wonder if we think about what a great treasure the Bible is (even without any notes we add). GOD has given us this tremendously precious collection of writings that reveal GOD'S love for us and for all people, especially as it is shown in the life of JESUS CHRIST. GOD has blessed us with a remarkable, incredibly valuable gift in the Holy Bible, and I hope all of recognize this and treasure what we have received.

In CHRIST'S love,
Pastor Jeffrey