

PASTOR SCOTT'S

MONTHLY MESSAGE



Simple Answers - NOT!

I am suspicious of simple answers. Frequently politicians, commentators, and sales people tell us "If you do "X" then the problem is solved." Life is rarely that easy. Life is not a game executed in a specified playing area for a given amount time or events - and then you go home. Only occasionally are the questions and challenges we face in life straight forward and solved by a single simple action.

If "the problem" is that the car won't run and the gas gauge needle is sitting on "E", then there is most likely a one-step solution - put some gas in the tank. Virtually every other aspect of life is far more complicated, largely due to the interconnection of the variables at play, and our poor understanding of the interrelated interactions of those variables.

In the above car problem, in most instances some gas will fix the issue. But, it could also be that the battery is dead, or that the battery is charged but a fuse is blown. The car could be low on fuel (but not "out") and the real culprit is an ignition or fuel-injection system problem. Question simple solutions.

Simple solutions:

- You probably heard promises in 2008 and 2009 that we can fix the economy if we just do *this* or *that*. The economy has made a significant recovery since then (because a lot of different things were done; granted, one or two of the plethora of actions might have been "this" or "that", but without the other actions "this" or "that" would have failed).
- Is the severity of recent hurricanes a result of global warming? Global warming probably has a part in this - as does other atmospheric and oceanic factors.
- Will purchasing an annuity guarantee you a safe and comfortable retirement?

So, my urging is that when you hear simple solutions being proclaimed, particularly to big problems, approach the proposal with a healthy skepticism. And that includes simple solutions from religious leaders - like me.

Christianity doesn't offer simple solutions. For starters, we have Ten Commandments; not one. "*But, wait a second. Jesus gave us the New Commandment: You should/must love one another as I have loved you!*" OK, that is a single commandment or prescription or solution to being Christian - but since when is "loving one another" a simple action.

In "loving another" do I give them what they want? In some instances *yes*, and in other instances a big *NO!* Do I respect the other? Most definitely, for they too are one of God's children. But "respecting" is not automatic response. When someone is vehemently disagreeing with us our first instinct is likely "defense" or "overcome"; it takes work and discipline for "respect" to be in the pole position. And so on, with the many other facets of "loving one another."

We shouldn't expect simple answers that require little work or sacrifice from Christ, God, or Christianity. We should engage in Christianity from a desire to form a closer relationship with God, not because it is going to be *easy street*, not because learning from Christ is going to confirm I am doing all things (or at least, *most things*) right.

Christ calls us to redraw our "maps" of how the world works according to *his* reality. "Redraw", because we've fashioned our maps from our poor comprehension of what is real based to some extent upon what society tries to sell us as real. Our maps are faulty, leading us to the wrong destination time and time again. Christ wants us to have maps that lead us to life!

Erasing chunks of our maps is uncomfortable (we've grown attached to our map and don't want to admit it contains misrepresentations). On top of that, drawing the new portion of the map takes work, it's not a "cut and paste" type of operation. But, we buckle down, acknowledge our map's fallibility, and redraw a part of our "how the world works" map improving upon what was there based on Christ's revelations. We are proud of our improved map. And then we hear Jesus say something else we hadn't heard before, and we realize we have to redraw the redraw. I can assure you this will happen repeatedly. Sometimes to little pieces of the map, sometimes to major sections.

My map isn't "right" either, it remains a work in progress. Also, I can't redraw your map. What I try to do as your pastor is to lead us (you and me) to places that facilitate redrawing. To lead us to places of safety and support making it easier to recognize and acknowledge the fallacies in our maps. To lead us to fertile grounds for comprehending what our map should be redrawn as. Places of support; places steeped in the wisdom of others' understandings and insights; a safe place to

express doubts, confusion, frustration, and hurt; places of the light, love, grace and mercy of God.

So, don't get comfortable with where we are. For we are always on a journey seeking out that next fertile place for growth in our relationship with God. Sometimes that place will be a nice glen, sometimes a hard climb up jagged rocks, at times walking across a hot desert with the sand blowing in our face, and other times every valley shall be filled in, every mountain and hill made low, the crooked roads shall become straight, and the rough ways smooth.

Peace,

Pastor Scott