Good Morning!

We have been examining Hebrews 11 and we will return to this rich passage of scripture. It is difficult to leave it. However I need to inform and warn the church of a most serious problem. Satan has invaded. He has invaded our country, and so he has invaded our work, our homes, and he has invaded our church. He has done this by an old stand-by tactic of his; anger.

This quarantine, this virus, this narrative that we have, has created a tidal wave of emotions mostly being anger and its companion, fear. It has become the perfect breeding ground for fear, mistrust, hysterical conjecturing, accusations, and sin. Lots of sin. I am not talking of what some governmental entity may have done in overreach or mistake, I am talking of our anger towards brothers and sisters in the church. In web pages and YouTube videos, supposed Christians have stated extreme positions in a “take no prisoners” attitude. You are either with them or you are a tool of the devil. They make you angry, but since you cannot take it out on anyone, you become frustrated. That frustration has to spill out somewhere and it has been doing that in the church. We make it the focus of our fellowship. We make it the topic of every conversation. We cannot understand anyone who does not agree with our point. And we *show them our anger*.

In James 1:19-18 he says, “*This* you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak *and* slow to anger; for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.” Our first calling as believers when we enter the Church is to show love and compassion. When fellow believers approach us with their fears and even heartache we don’t blow them off or try to correct them. We love them where they are. We love them where they are *without trying to correct their political error.*

It is in the midst of these problems that James says, “Submit therefore to God. *Resist the devil* and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you” (4:7-10). This was written after he chastised believers because they “fight and quarrel.”

Isn’t this the perfect work of the Devil? He doesn’t care which side you are on, he only loves that this is destroying churches everywhere. Each side believes that they are being “faithful and compassionate” when they are offending the brethren and breaking the church apart. There is more self –righteousness here than anyone seems willing to admit.

So what can we at Pine Ridge do as we begin to come back together? We can care about each person more than we care about ourselves (Phil. 2:3 & 4). We can love them just where they are. Now you know brethren, that we have been loving in the past. You have enjoyed our fellowship for just this reason. And this problem is not overwhelming in our congregation otherwise I would have addressed it earlier. But as we do come together, it may be seen as an opportunity to vent your frustrations on the body. Rather than that, this is an opportunity for the church to show the love we are known for – not to give the devil an opportunity to use anger against us (Eph. 4:26-27).

For those of you who spend a lot of time reading and exchanging web pages, I recommend *7 Reasons Christians Should Avoid Conspiracy Theories*, by Pastor DJ Harry on YouTube. He explains the subtle sinful attitudes we fall into when we accept, often blindly, what someone has sent us. He also explains how this attitude among Christians destroys our testimony.

Looking forward to seeing you all tomorrow.

In Christ Pastor EA