

ADVENT DEVOTIONAL -- Monday, December 10, 2018

Thank you to the choirs of Belton UMC and Harker Heights UMC for the marvelous cantata yesterday.

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Romans 12:2 (NLT)

Yesterday, Jannette and I held our Christmas open house. (Thank you to all who attended and those who helped). This means that much of Friday and Saturday was busy with decorating and other things getting ready. It also meant I was "sent" to Hobby Lobby. Not a place I would go on my own, or at least not admit to it 😊

The Christmas items are 50% off, so it seemed like a good place to go. I had been given a list with a few items. I wasn't having much success in locating the items on the list. I gave up and finally decided to ask an employee. I found someone in the blue vest. He and another employee were involved in resetting the aisle. That is, taking down the current merchandise, removing shelves, putting up different display hooks for new merchandise. I asked about the Christmas items on the list and the employee tried to be as helpful as he could. He pointed me to the aisles that might possibly have the items. And then he said, "I am not sure those items are still on the shelf, we are taking down the Christmas merchandise to make room for spring items." It was December 8th; today is December 10th; it is still over two weeks before Christmas! One aisle, which previously had Christmas trees, was already filled with spring items, including a wall-hanging that proclaimed, "Hallelujah! He is Risen!" Really? We haven't yet celebrated his birth, and Hobby Lobby already has him risen! I wasn't "sent" there to buy items for an Easter open house. It is as if they are in a hurry to get Christmas over with. And I confess I am bothered, because Hobby Lobby is a Christian-owned company. Personally, I would like to reflect on, enjoy, and celebrate the birth before moving on to the crucifixion and resurrection. I expect something different from a Christian company.

And it makes me think again about how we as Christians and the church are supposed to be different. I need to remember that there are people coming through the doors of the church who are expecting something different. I ask you to take a few minutes and think about,

What are you expecting to be different?

What do you think others are expecting to be different?

What would you like to be different?

Is there something you can do differently this year to experience Christmas?

Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. – Romans 12:2 (NLT)

May Christ make the difference.

Pastor Jeff

P.S. If you are expecting the sermon on Christmas Eve to be about how Jesus is risen, you will be disappointed.