

Sermon Notes

REFLECTIONS



WHY DO
I KEEP
LIVING
THE SAME
OLD WAY?

1-10-10



Reflections

When I was a sophomore in high school, we had a beautiful Siamese cat named Ming Joy. I remember a time when she had just given birth to a litter of seven little kittens. They were playful, cute, and cuddly, all the qualities that endear such little creatures to their owners. Ming Joy had the custom of sleeping on the top bunk with me and she apparently decided that having kittens shouldn't be a cause for changing her habit. She would carefully carry each kitten up to my bunk where she would contentedly purr while the wiggly little critters nursed and mewed softly. I would then wake up and awaken my brother to turn on the light and remove them lest I roll over and harm the little charmers.

Within a few days of her litter being born, some friends had a dog that had a litter of her own. She perished after giving life to thirteen little pups. Now, with the mother dog gone, they were farming out the little pups to willing hands to see if they could be kept alive by hand feeding. We, of course, had to see if our Ming Joy would nurse a puppy along with her own little brood. She adopted him as if he was her own. Little Nicky, as we named him, never really knew that he was not a cat. He played with his litter mates as if they were his brothers and sisters, much to our delight, and their antics were the source of many a laugh and Ming Joy would care for him as if he was a kitten.

Circumstances had changed, however, because Nicky was too heavy for her to carry to the top bunk. She would continue to carry the kittens to my bunk but, with her and his "siblings" gone, he would get cold and would wake me up with his squeaky little bark seeking attention. I would then have to, once again, wake my brother on the lower bunk and ask him to please turn on the light so we could account for all the parties in this little drama. This went on night after night. Something clearly had to be done.

While the memory of this is, to me, merely a poignant story of the special place the cat and her brood held for me, it also seems, to me, to be a short parable of how one can continue with the same choices regarding things, habits, and attitudes with which one is accustomed, even though circumstances have changed that require a new outlook, complete with new ways of doing life activities.

Ming Joy's behavior could be a metaphor for the results of persisting in old ways of thinking regardless of any changes in circumstances that may have taken place. We would not expect an animal to be so

sophisticated in her limited ways of seeing and understanding, that she would make these changes, but what of a person? What about one who claims to have met Jesus and invited Him into their lives? What should have been changed for them and their life choices?

The Bible addresses what should be seen in such a life. *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.* (2Corinthians 5:17 NKJ) When we are told that old things have passed away and all things have become new, what would a keen observer expect to see in regard to our life choices? *Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ "A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.* (Matthew 7:17-18 NKJ) So if we have been given new life in Him why would we want to keep doing the same old things? *For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light ⁹ (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), ¹⁰ finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. ¹¹ And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness...*(Ephesians 8-11 NKJ)

It continues to amaze me how God can use simple events in our lives to instruct us in these basic principles of being His disciples. Watching Ming Joy perform this little ritual many nights in a row made us realize that we needed to help her change her ways. We then provided her with new and different circumstances that removed the set of stimuli that had driven her to make that same fruitless effort time after time. In the same way, by submitting to the Holy Spirit's guiding in our life we can be re-directed in our thinking and behavior.

Let's remember that it is Jesus who changes us resulting in a life exhibiting the new "fruits" we are called to bear as His disciples, and let's submit our lives to His leading and guiding. Then we too can cease to bear the old fruit and exchange it for the new. The evidence of the Spirit is easily seen if the fruits of the Spirit are evident in our life. Jesus promised that He would not leave us orphaned when He ascended to the Father. *And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever-- ¹⁷ "the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.* (John14:16-17 NKJ) This promise is followed by the expected result of the Spirit's presence in the life of the transformed Christian. Paul reminds the Galatian Church that... *the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, ²³ gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.* (Galatians 5:22-23 NKJ) Let's allow Jesus to make us new, complete with obedience to His Word. **Pastor Doug**