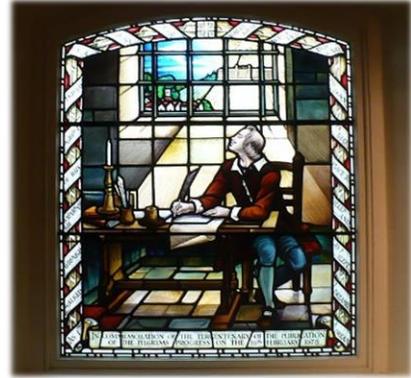


June 2, 2020

Good morning, Everybody.

The way it felt to be able to resume meeting together on the Lord's Day was a little like the way you feel after finally opening a window in a stuffy house. Everything freshened up! It was invigorating.



After the services people stood around outside and talked. There was a lot to catch up on, and it made for great fellowship. Two or three folks shared testimonies with me of how the Lord has provided work for them during this time, or of personal spiritual projects that they've worked on. I went home from both services with a really warm spirit of gratefulness to the Lord for so many answered prayers.

Of course, some folks are still needing to join us through the livestreaming. A few weeks ago Doug Becker sent this picture of his mom and Carolyn watching a



Wednesday night service. It was his mother's 89th birthday. So glad to have her with us for some of these services. A belated happy birthday, Mrs. Becker!

Firstfruits

Someone asked about our garden. Well . . . would you believe that when I went out yesterday morning, there was the exciting evidence of good things to come. Two cherry tomatoes that have been reddening up the last few days. This one was the ripest. I don't know why, but it was on the ground under one of the plants yesterday. So I brought it inside to let it ripen a little further. It's truly the **first** fruit of the tomato plants, what the Lord called the "first fruits" when it came to Israel's harvest.



Everybody who gardens knows how expectantly you await the first opportunity to bite into the season's first vegetables or fruits. You can identify a little bit with the self-denial required by dedicated Israelites when finally there were a few ripe figs or olives or dates.

You shall bring the very first of the first fruits of your soil into the house of the LORD your God (Exodus 34:26).

It was not only an act of self-denial, but also of faith; believing that there would be a lot more to come. Those two acts—denying self and believing God—were the combination that gave Him all the glory and all the credit for the harvest. It gave you the opportunity to **demonstrate** that this was your genuine conviction and your deep desire—to **glorify Him** with every new harvest.

I'm hoping, of course, that this little bowl will soon be full, because when I bought the plant it came with this little tag and a very promising picture. But I don't



expect the nursery that sold me the plant to take responsibility for whether it happens or not. The Lord gives the increase. So if in a few weeks our two cherry tomato plants begin to look pretty much like the picture, we'll know to Whom to give our praise.

Meanwhile, I know that someone is going to wonder, *O.K., so what are you going to do with that first tomato?* Well, maybe I'll let you know some time (smile).

Praying for You

Two or three of you have mentioned to me that to you the most encouraging part of these letters is the, *Praying for You Today* (or something similar). I do want to assure you that that wording isn't just a nice formality. I truly do pray for you each day. I was doing so this morning around 6:30. Linda and mom and I pray for the church folks in our every family worship time, often naming various ones with urgent needs. And we know that you pray for us as well. Our prayers for each other are a big part of the warm, affectionate bonding that grows us together as *living stones* (1 Peter 2:5). All of us at church have probably prayed for each other and for our missionaries more these last few months than we even normally do. So one of the really blessed results as we emerge from this time may prove to be that we're closer in heart to one another than we've ever been. What a blessed possibility (smile).

Praying for You Today,

Pastor Minnick