



“Stop and smell the roses.” This familiar quote is an amended form of the original attributed to golfer Walter Hagen, who opined, “You’re only here for a short visit. Don’t hurry, don’t worry. And be sure to smell the flowers along the way.” This sentiment, expressed by Mr. Hagen in 1956, still rings true today- especially today. For many years Jamie has wanted to grow Jasmine, but for various reasons has never been able to make it happen. This year she has grown a beautiful, healthy Jasmine plant, and this morning, with its flowers fully blooming, I took the time to “smell the flowers.” Extraordinary. Beautiful. Aromatic. Perfumed. The Jasmine flowers filled my olfactory senses with a powerful yet delicate scent which was more than pleasant. It is downright spectacular. Now, in general, I am not a sniffer of flowers. I can enjoy their scents if I get close enough to a flower garden or when I buy flowers for Jamie or for our dining room table, but in general I don’t go out of the way to “stop and smell the flowers.” How unfortunate for me. In the scent of a flower we have the best of nature, a flower blooming and offering its aromas to the bees and butterflies and other insects or birds which find nourishment from its nectar and assist the flower to reproduce. In this very scent is the age-old song of nature striving to ensure the survival of its kind. God’s wonderful hand has created a world filled with this amazing beauty, the tapestry of plants and animals resplendent with color and texture and aroma all coming together to aid the flora and the fauna to thrive.

As we enter the month of August, I encourage you to “Stop and smell the roses (flowers). This month provides us with the lush results of nature which has moved through the growing season into the time of harvest. Tomatoes begin to ripen and come off the vine. Sweet corn signs appear along the road. Garlic and onions and peppers and squash and beets and beans and potatoes and all manner of fruit and vegetable has reached maturity, developing sugars which provide flavor and secure us with the delicious bounty of the season. Because of the very warm, sunny summer we’ve had, with periods of rain, the

landscape is lush in deep green, with full, leafy trees rising up to catch the light of the sun. Rabbits, lots and lots of rabbits, scurry and hop across the yards throughout the neighborhood and soft, gentle breezes softly pass by. Whether in the coolness of the evening or early morning or in the forcefulness of a thunderstorm we find ourselves in the midst of a truly special time of the year. Nature is fully alive.

Stop and smell the roses (flowers). Please do take the time to find pleasure in what God has provided. Especially this year, with all its turmoil and confusion and frustration, please find time to notice the blessings God has placed around us. These are trying times. Nothing seems to be going right this year. Mental health experts worry about our emotional life as we are asked to physically distance, even from family and friends, and warn of the possibilities of emotional fatigue leading to things like depression, anger, frustration, loneliness, despair and hopelessness. In the midst of these unique days, facing a pandemic none of us has encountered before, we need to take time to “smell the roses (flowers). It is so important to spend some moments intentionally focusing on God’s blessings and the constancy of God’s love. Even within this messed up year God’s age-old song of nature continues apace. The flowers bloom and their extraordinary aromas fill the air. The tomatoes and corn ripen and burst with flavor as we bite into them. The sun shines and the trees give shade. The birds sing and the rabbits hop along and our dogs bark at everything that moves, and God is fully at work in this world, doing what God always has done- providing for our every need. Through God the Father we exist, as does all around us. Through God the Son we have redemption and promise and abundant life. Through God the Spirit we can note the blessings all around us. Please take the time to do so this month. Please stop and smell the roses (flowers). Then, with a grateful heart, give thanks to God who is constant, and who blesses our lives fully.

In Christ’s Love,
Pastor Jay