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PASTORAL LETTER – AUGUST 2021

Dear friend,

July has rolled into August.

August reminds us that we are beyond the halfway mark of our calendar year and that we are entering into a month that presents us with “the last flicker of fun and heat before everything fades and dies,” as one writer poetically said.

Having fun has been built into our creative design, and it is part of Jesus' redemptive work for our lives. Christ once said in John 10:10 that ***“I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly.”*** This quote was plucked from the King James Version. Another biblical version known as the Amplified Bible offers a richer English translation from the Greek. It says, ***“I came that they may have and enjoy life, and have it in abundance [to the full, till it overflows].”***

This biblical verse from John establishes that Jesus wants us to factor fun into our life process. If we don't, we become static. We are not growing into our fullness. Jesus not only spoke of the importance of making fun part of our lives, but he also modeled this behavior. He attended weddings, went fishing with the apostles, and spent time visiting with friends, including Martha, Mary, and Lazarus.

What we do for fun is not as important as giving ourselves permission to embrace life and *have* fun. C.S. Lewis is credited with saying, *“Have fun, even if it's not the same kind of fun everyone else is having.”* Perhaps Lewis was influenced by Jesus' words in the Gospel of John.

There is an interesting article titled *10 Simple Benefits of Having Fun* in which the author discusses the physiological value of having fun, such as helping to *“balance out our stress and feel-good hormones, preventing diseases long-term.”*

In another article, *Why You Need More Fun in Your Life*, the author states that having fun keeps us inwardly rejuvenated and young:

“Having fun and playing have traditionally been connected with children and the early years of our development. However, many philosophers and psychologists emphasize the importance of play as we get older. Plato professed that life must be lived as play, and George Bernard Shaw famously said: ‘We don’t stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing.’”

Whether it is engaging in a hobby, a pastime, or basking in the Hudson Valley’s natural sceneries, may we make fun a priority. Also, I pray that we continue to give ourselves permission to do fun things in August (and beyond). Boredom is not healthy and Gospel-living.

I end my pastoral letter with a poem written by Mary Oliver titled “August”:

*When the blackberries hang
swollen in the woods, in the brambles
nobody owns, I spend
all day among the high
branches, reaching
my ripped arms, thinking
of nothing, cramming
the black honey of summer
into my mouth; all day my body
accepts what it is. In the dark
creeks that run by there is
this thick paw of my life darting among
the black bells, the leaves; there is
this happy tongue.*

May you have a fun-filled August!

Pastor Luis
