



First Presbyterian Church of Ocala
November 1, 2018, 2018

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Comparisons

When I first arrived here a year ago, and for much of that year, I had something in the office that was akin to a "swear jar." It was not for swearing, but rather it was a place for me to put a dollar every time I said, "In my last church, we did it this way..." I took an oath to the people in the office that when I reached a hundred such comparisons or a year was complete, I would donate \$100 dollars to one of our church causes or benevolences. The year is complete right at a hundred. The donation is made. All is well, with exception.

I thought that would end the process. I owe \$3 more for the last two weeks, and I am frustrated by this. Why can't I stop comparing what I used to have with what I have now? Is it merely human nature and nothing more, to take something that used to work and apply it to the current situation? Perhaps it is. Perhaps we can only compare what we have now with what we used to have, a point of reference our brains require.

Take a steakhouse chain that is locally represented here that shall remain nameless. I have ordered two dishes that I like from them over the years. When I order the particular steak or chicken dishes, I will always compare the current quality to the meals I have eaten previously. They know this. They give in to my human instinct to make sure it is the same. They do not IMPROVE it. And quite frankly, the steak dish could use a bit of improvement, but they would prefer I order a different dish rather than improve the other. I don't. I am a creature of habit. I will continue to like the chicken, be slightly disappointed in the steak, and continue to alternate ordering both.

I have a friend who thinks the church would be perfect if it looked like it did in 1965. The church school was full on Sundays then as were the sanctuaries of the many mainline denominations. My friend thinks if we emulate that year, everything will be back to perfection. I have a different opinion. Note what happened in 1965 over just a 10 day period I somewhat randomly selected from Wikipedia:

March 7 – Bloody Sunday: Some 200 Alabama State Troopers attack 525 civil rights demonstrators in Selma, Alabama, as they attempt to march to the state capitol of Montgomery.

March 8 – Vietnam War: Some 3,500 United States Marines arrive in Da Nang, South Vietnam, becoming the first American ground combat troops in Vietnam.

March 9 – The second attempt to march from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, under the leadership of Martin Luther King, Jr., stops at the bridge that was the site of Bloody Sunday, to hold a prayer service and return to Selma, in obedience to a court restraining order. White supremacists beat up white Unitarian Universalist minister James J. Reeb later that day in Selma.

March 11 – White Unitarian Universalist minister James J. Reeb, beaten by White supremacists in Selma, Alabama, on March 9 following the second march from Selma, dies in a hospital in Birmingham, Alabama.

March 15 – President Lyndon B. Johnson makes his "We Shall Overcome" speech.

March 16 – Police clash with 600 SNCC marchers in Montgomery, Alabama.

March 17 - In Montgomery, Alabama, 1,600 civil rights marchers demonstrate at the Courthouse.

1965 is over. So many in our country had no civil rights then. We were involved in a war that killed my cousin and over 58,000 other Americans, and don't forget, 3.5 million Vietnamese people, combatants and civilians. We have had much progress since 1965 and at a great cost.

We are serving God in 2018 just as we did in 1965, but many things are different. Many of these differences are good; others are challenges for the faithful.

I would love a full church like in 1965, and it is difficult to pretend otherwise. But I am certain that God wants a faithful church first.

May God continue to make us faithful.

In Christ's Love,
Ron

*Don't Forget! Daylight Savings Time
Fall Back One Hour
Saturday night, November. 3rd*

This Week's Daily Bible Readings

<i>Growing with God's Word in Thanksgiving and Praise</i>					
			Wednesday	November 7	Deuteronomy 31:30-
Sunday	November 4	Deuteronomy 16:1-17	Thursday	November 8	Deuteronomy 32:28-44
Monday	November 5	Deuteronomy 30:1-20	Friday	November 9	Deuteronomy 33:1-17
Tuesday	November 6	Deuteronomy 31:9-29	Saturday	November	Deuteronomy 33:18-29