

Ransom Notes



Preaching from a Pumpkin Patch

October brings smiles, grins, and sharp knives into focus. Yes, it is time for creative carving, resulting in smiling or frowning jack-o-lanterns. When is the last time you let the 'child' in you sit down and slice away?

Trick-or-treating was not a part of our family history, but carving pumpkins provided delightful moments in the kitchen, as we applied our varying artistic skills. Candles were eventually placed inside and lighted on Halloween, welcoming the children (and adults) who came with 'hunger' in their eyes, wanting a candy hand-out.

Even as an adult, I continued to love the crazy faces one could create in this orangish sphere. One time we invited adults to our home during Halloween season. Following a hot dog roast, guests were invited to select a pumpkin from the collection we had purchased. Each person or team could then carve away and ultimately the group decided who became the 'creative genius' for the evening. Great fun was had by these temporary, artistic carvers.

No pumpkin had a twin, but each reflected charm and happiness, even if slightly disfigured when the carving knife slipped or the skin refused to yield to the blade appropriately. The Lord chatted with Moses, directing him to tell Aaron and his sons about the priestly blessing they were to use with the Israelites. Guess what the blessing included. It made me think of pumpkins.

The priests were to say, "The Lord bless you and keep you; and the Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you; the Lord turn his face toward you and give you peace" (Numbers 6:24-26). The Lord was going to light up His face. Maybe it even included a smile. This action would help calm the Israelites. Maybe our little pumpkins with their lighted smiles brought peace to some of the trick-or-treaters those Halloween evenings. Or, believe it or not, your smile can cheer others any day of the year.

Psalm 67:1 finds a request to God, made by the director of music, that again reminds me of our pumpkins. "May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face shine on us." Perhaps we today need to also smile on others, thus making their day a bit brighter.

Humans really have some characteristics of Mr. Pumpkin. The two pumpkins in the picture have no serious flaws, but there are wrinkles and lines on their surface. The stem of the yellowish one is certainly wrinkled and not standing up straight. We, too, have wrinkles and lines and often find our bodies bent or withered.

Should we throw out those gourds? (Pumpkins are from the gourd family.) Of course not. Just because they have imperfections, those two orange pumpkins are still useful for either decorations or hopefully, for a pumpkin pie. Likewise, with men and women, no excuse accepted. My dear reader, when you try to back out of serving, helping, calling, holding, or caring for others, you still are able to do something for the Kingdom. God really does not have a retirement plan for us.

I am also reminded that God cares for the least of us. Regardless of the size of our bank account, array of skills and abilities, or years on the calendar, He will love you and also have opportunities for service tailored just for you. He has 'picked' you for duty and service to others.

Recently a new world record was set for the heaviest pumpkin at the Pumpkin Weigh-Off in Half Moon Bay, California. Travis Gienger, of Anoka, Minnesota, was awarded that record with his pumpkin (gourd) weighing 2,749 pounds. Overweight, but, yes, useful. Chefs say this enormous, lumpy, orange pumpkin could produce at least 687 pies. We just need to find the recipes for service that fits our unique talent bank.

Please join me. Put on a Happy Face and go to work for God.