

## MARK'S REMARKS

A few weeks ago I watched from the safety of the office as the heavens unleashed a late summer downpour. For nearly 30 minutes the dusty soil around the church building and the parsonage found itself under the freshness of a harmonious waterfall. As I quickly thought through the endless cycle of evaporation and subsequent rain, I also found myself singing, albeit extremely quietly, some of the lyrics found in the Joni Mitchell song, Big Yellow Taxi. Being more familiar with Amy Grant's version, the words "*They paved paradise and put up a parking lot*" repeatedly washed through my mind. Little wonder as gallons of water ran east down the parking lot, some finding the parsonage lawn while most simply had no choice but to continue the journey to the street and into the storm drains.

As I continued to watch the oversaturated heavens let loose, the drops of rain began to reflect God's grace, love, wisdom, and all things good and the parking lot cement began to reflect sin, a fusion of pride, selfishness, and conceit.

My thoughts continued. Every child born of man and woman is born underneath a cement parking lot. Having lost the knowledge and the capability to remove the obstruction, we are burdened under its immense weight. Unless it is removed by God there we remain, left in darkness and devoid of His forgiving, cleansing rain that cascades from heaven.

For many, they never see the Light, remaining under the stone, never knowing the cleansing forgiveness of the One for whom the stone was rolled away. Others, having once been washed in the rich waters of His love, began repaving paradise and in the name of worldly progress, self-constructed and reconstructed a hard surface over their hearts. Grace, love, wisdom, and all things good left to run off toward the storm drain, longing to penetrate the soil underneath.

However, there are those I saw reflected in the parsonage lawn. The evidence of any former barrier and its burden, completely removed. With no signs of reconstructing a self-made barrier, they remain humbly exposed. Knowing a life exposed to the heavens includes suffering and sorrow, a heart unpaved also involves the opportunity to receive God's raining down of abundant, timeless grace.

A late summer rainstorm reminds me how a heart of stone replaced with a heart of flesh is designed to be constantly nourished from heaven. The evidence of this nourishment becoming increasingly clearer as it humbly remains penetrable to the Water of Life.

*"Let my teaching fall like rain and my words descend like dew, like showers on new grass, like abundant rain on tender plants"* (Deuteronomy 32:2)

*"Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts"* (Hebrews 4:7b)

Absorbing,

Pastor Mark