



On a calm but overcast pre-hurricane Matthew autumn morning of 8 October 2016, eight hale and hearty gents joined by our own Pastor Darcy gathered together for our monthly Men's Prayer Breakfast. We were treated to two sumptuous ham and egg casseroles, fresh fruit, and devilishly delicious mini-cinnamon and blueberry muffins. Splashed those down with OJ and piping hot coffee and what a great start to the day! Our tables were adorned with colors of the season and included cute ceramic pumpkins and crafty little scarecrows. Even a discussion on the proper preparation of

lutefisk (more on that later) and the effects of the hurricane couldn't put a damper on our dining pleasures.

Lots of small talk dominated the morning's festivities, but way too much on genuine topics to grab onto and report about for this month. One gent discussed articles he discovered while unpacking one of those boxes that has just been sitting around forever that we finally find an opportunity to open (recall our saga of the garage door opener last month!). In it he found an autographed picture of the baseball Hall of Fame pitcher Bob Feller! Probably pretty valuable. Didn't really catch the part about how he came upon the picture to begin with, but I'm sure it will also be Hall of Fame noteworthy. So we stuck with the baseball theme and some of the gents were lamenting about the National's loss to the Dodgers in Game 1 of the National League playoffs. Quite a few Nats fans in the gang, they were not very happy, so hopefully by the time you read this article, the fortunes will have turned for the better.

Speaking of whining about things (OK, so I am not a Nats fan – sorry) one gent was discussing a strange whining sound emanating from his surge protector in the house. Now generally anything electrical making unearthly or strange sounds is not a good thing. Seems the consensus of the electrical experts in the room (and EVERYONE is an expert about things in someone else's house aren't they) is there must be a dead battery in the surge protector that needs replacing. Just like that incredibly annoying chirp from the smoke detector when that battery needs to be replaced. So we'll have to wait and hear how this all turned out next month – I'm sure it will be an electrifying tale. This led to another saga of tales about fixing various items at LCOC by our crack Property Committee team. Shaky ladders, shaky knees on ladders, falling ladders (you sense a theme here), turning on the light switch before the halogen bulb is screwed all the way in resulting in one gent sensing what it must be like to touch the sun, hammers and nail guns falling from rooftops, yep, there are times when our crew is just an accident looking for a place to happen. Fortunately, none of us knows how to record a You Tube video, so you'll just have to read about it.

Speaking of ill fortune, how about having to eat *lutefisk*! For those of you who enjoy *lutefisk*, I salute you and apologize in advance. There is actually a Lutfisk Club in Minnesota (*where else could it possibly be*) that meets twice a year to chow down on this traditional Nordic dish. Just so you know *lutefisk* is dried whitefish (normally cod, but ling and turbot are also used) treated with lye (*yes that stuff used to make soap!*). The first step is soaking the stockfish in cold water for five to six days with the water changed daily (*thank goodness for that*). The saturated stockfish is then soaked in an unchanged solution of cold water and lye for an additional two days (*just when you thought it couldn't get worse*). The fish swells during this soaking (*imagine that*), and its protein content decreases by more than 50 percent, producing a jelly-like consistency. When this treatment is finished, the fish (saturated with lye) is caustic (*oh really!*), with a pH of 11–12. To make the fish edible (*thank heaven for small favors*), a final treatment of another four to six days of soaking in cold water (also changed daily) is needed. Eventually, the lutefisk is ready to be cooked and consumed. Then again, I enjoy eating scrapple (check out those ingredients at Safeway or Shoppers), so I have no room to talk I suppose.

Pastor Darcy had the lesson for the day, and our discussions focused on three versions of **1 Timothy 6: 17-21**. We started with the **New Revised Standard Version** (NSRV) passage "*As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life. Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the profane chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge; by professing it some have missed the mark as regards the faith. Grace be with you*". We took turns reading this passage and mentioned one word or phrase that held special meaning for each of us. As a group, we pretty much dissected the entire passage with various words or phrases touching many of us in similar manner. Things like the meaning of riches; what does God provide that are considered riches; the need to do good and be rich in good works in

our community; what was entrusted to Timothy; what is true knowledge and how is that different from having true faith; and how do our works in this life serve us in the future and beyond. Lots of great discussion and introspect.

We then read a translation of Timothy from the book ***The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language*** by Eugene Peterson: *"Tell those rich in this world's wealth to quit being so full of themselves and so obsessed with money, which is here today and gone tomorrow. Tell them to go after God, who piles on all the riches we could ever manage – to do good, to be rich in helping others, to be extravagantly generous. If they do that, they'll build a treasury that will last, gaining life that is truly life. And oh, my dear Timothy, guard the treasure you were given! Guard it with your life. Avoid the talk-show religion, and the practiced confusion of so-called experts. People caught up in a lot of talk can miss the whole point of faith. Overwhelming grace keep you!"* We were asked to choose a word or passage that touches our life and explain its meaning. We talked about the perishable nature of wealth and money (the "you can't take it with you" syndrome); that when you seek out God, we are seeking non-materialistic wealth and treasures; that our treasures comprise family, friends, our faith and not necessarily money, though we need money to take care of ourselves and family to an extent; the shallow and self-serving nature of protests by rich athletes using TV as their stage; lots of talk on TV evangelists; and how way too many people or institutions feel a need for scientific proof to justify the basis for our faith – can you believe if there's no proven fact to base that faith on? One gent said it best: "Faith is holding onto the mystery of believing and having faith to know why". Well said.

Lastly, the same passage from the **English Standard Version (ESV)**: *"As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life. O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called "knowledge," for by professing it some have swerved from the faith. Grace be with you".* We had similar discussions about this translation as discussed above; the uncertainty of lasting materialistic riches; what is the real treasure we are storing up for our future; the comparison and contradictions of knowledge versus faith.

We then took a few minutes to talk about a question Pastor Darcy posed to us, that being "What would you say to a person about life who doesn't know about God"? That was a bit of a tough one for the group as it really takes some reflection and thinking. Can someone live a truly Godly life, yet never realize or understand (or even accept) that there is a God and why it is important to know that. It tied in with our next question of "What is a life that is truly life"? One suggestion was that true life is casting off those things that are not from God and accepting those things that are.

Pastor also took time relating some of the online responses she received from the online Live Free questionnaire. Some of you may have actually responded to this online survey on our Facebook page. The three questions asked were:

- What does it mean to you to "Live Free"?
- What does it mean to you to "Take hold of the Life that is really Life"? and
- What blocks or limits you from taking hold of the life that is really life?

We all shared some of our thoughts, ideas and hopes regarding these questions after hearing some of the responses Pastor shared with us. Seems when many of us think of what it is to Live Free, freedom to choose, freedom to trust in our God, and removing fear from our life and decisions were mentioned.

This was a great devotion for the gents, and certainly stirred up lots of emotions, memories of things we recalled from prior experiences either with family, friends, co-workers or even strangers in our lives. Being able to keep our faith in times when that faith is shaken by world events or when something seemingly unfair occurs to us is very personal, and being able to share our views and experiences with others at our MPB certainly brings its own rewards.

Our next Men's Prayer Breakfast is Saturday, 12 November 2016. Please consider joining us for great food, fun and fellowship. Who knows, we might just find a nice recipe for scrapple stuffed lutefisk to share! I'm betting that it would almost "taste just like chicken" to some. I'd bet even "Mikey" would pass on Life cereal to chow down on this delicacy.