

**MT. OLIVET BAPTIST CHURCH, 3500 Edwards Mill Road, Raleigh, NC 27612**

**NEWS & EVENTS – December 2022**

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*Is it by your understanding that the hawk soars, stretching his wings toward the south? (Job 39:26)  
My heart is in anguish within me, and the terrors of death have fallen upon me.  
Fear and trembling come upon me, and horror has overwhelmed me.  
I said, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest.  
Behold, I would wander far away, I would lodge in the wilderness. Selah.  
I would hasten to my place of refuge from the stormy wind and tempest." (Psalms 55:4-8)*

In many a morning incursion from the refuge of my home into the stark reality of the world, my senses begin to inform me about what I'm leaving behind and what I'm headed toward. As I lock the door to deter potential intruders, I am thinking about what I know about the day that unfolds before me. I can only speculate about what the future will reveal. Most of that speculation is about what might happen and never does. Some of the speculation is reactive in relation to what I didn't know was coming upon me. In those moments I frequently hear the sound of two distinctive types of birds that are making their presence known. One is the cry of the hawk and the other is the call of the dove.

My generation grew up in anxious times of living through the Vietnam War. Some politicians and generals were known as *hawks* if they advocated the necessities of war. Protesters in the culture became a thorn in the side of the military/industrial complex and were pleading to give peace a chance. They were called *doves*, often in derision. The hawks and doves became entrenched in their warfare about the warfare. The generation ahead of mine worried about people dying in some faraway place and was unclear about its purpose. The generation that grew up after me may have not thought much about the war at all, unless they were personally connected to those who were sacrificed on its altar. But our generation lived in dread of the draft and being called to something we didn't understand. We were in the middle of a mess. And we grew to mistrust our messengers. Some doves became hawks from necessity. They had to fight to live. And some hawks became doves when they learned the truth about the tragedy. Some still speculate.

In some ways Job was a speculator. He was trying to make some meaning of the mess he was in. Suffering makes us think that way. His complaint to God sought the answer as to the why of it all. Maybe he was right to ask God why this suffering existed. Certainly, he was wrong in the way he went about it. He came to know that God is sovereign, and we are seldom privy to what God knows. We can surely understand that God is not accountable to His creatures...creation is accountable to Him. Asking God questions is what it means to be human. Hearing Him ask is a supernatural experience. When I hear the hawk cry in the morning, I am reminded by faith that the Most High God is at war with evil spiritual beings and sin at work in this world. When I hear the call of the dove on other mornings, I am reminded of the peace that prevails after this War God wins this ultimate war. I never hear the two birds crying and calling at the same time. Some mornings, I don't hear either. Just the stillness of knowing God. These mornings I remember that Jesus has come to do battle with sin...and He won!

The Word was made flesh so we can hear the sound of God. Hear the Psalmist plead our case...

*Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest.* I am reminded this morning of the old hymn that says, *Some glad morning...when this life is over...I'll fly away...to a home on God's celestial shore...I'll fly away.* I'm just speculating, but I seriously believe that some of you are singing along as you are reading this song! Here's the message from God's messenger that gives us all hope today.

*He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end, (Luke 1:32-33)*

That declaration is becoming our destiny...King Jesus is coming to reign in His kingdom forever. His Presence is our present.

Merry Christmas to all,  
Pastor Sam