

Pastor Brian's
Mid Week Message
October 28, 2020

"BOO...BOO HOO?"

For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.

2 Thessalonians 3:10

Halloween comes up again in just a few days. It's on a Saturday this year. A few years back when we lived in Spokane, WA we had scads of costumed characters ringing our doorbell, begging for a handout, free food. Most years they numbered 80 to 100. Once we moved to Venice, FL...nary a one. Our neighborhood was unofficially 55+, and most of the residents had about 30 years to spare on that. Now that we've moved to Gulf Cove we posed the question to our new neighbors. Will we have trick or treaters? The answer here is also no, although most of our new neighbors only have 10 to 15 years to spare on the 55+ idea. Of course, with covid-19 still rearing its ugly head, trick or treating activities may in general be curtailed. Ever wonder how all this got started? Especially the idea of going door to door expecting to collect a sack full of candy. You'd think that this was a recent development, in the last 100 years or so. You'd be partially correct. No one is certain where modern day trick or treating first began, but most put the date in the late 19th to early 20th century. The concept though goes way back beyond that, over a thousand years before to 9th century Celtic Britain and Ireland. It seems there was a pagan festival named "Samhain" on the night of October 31st. At Samhain, our pagan ancestors believed that the souls of the dead came into the world and were to be appeased by offerings of food and drink. The early roots of trick or treating came about as people dressed as ghosts and demons and danced around a bonfire in order to receive treats that would quiet the "evil spirits". The name that was first applied to this practice was "mumming". As Christianity spread over Britain the practice morphed into "souling", with people visiting the homes of the wealthy to receive pastries called "soul cakes" in exchange for the promise to pray for the homeowner's dead relatives. Britain was mainly Catholic at the time so those dead relatives may well have been stuck in purgatory. Up in Scotland and in Ireland young folks would visit their neighbors houses to sing a song, recite a poem, or perform some other sort of "trick" in order to be rewarded with a treat of nuts, fruit or a coin. (Give a kid some fruit on Halloween now and see how that goes!) The widespread use of the phrase "trick or treat" didn't come about until the 1920s, and it began here in the United States. From the beginning people weren't all that thrilled about handing out goodies to roving miniature marauders but gave in seeing it as an offer they best not refuse. Over time the threat of having a trick played on you has diminished and we now arm ourselves with huge bowls of candy in order to appease these little spirits. You should have seen the look on the little kids faces as they came to my door and yelled "TRICK OR TREAT!" (actually, most weakly mumbled it, and some said nothing at all, just held out a pillow case or plastic pumpkin as the door began to open) I'd usually have to say it for them, and then say, "okay...I'll opt for the trick." Maybe that's why they no longer show up at my door, word gets around. As the verse above says, if you're not willing to work then you shouldn't expect to eat, not at my door. But before tears began to be shed, I always gave in and richly reward the little nipper's resolve. Now comes the time I am to tie in some deep spiritual truth to all of this. I'm not having too much success come up with one that fits well. The Apostle Paul uttered the above words to the Church in Thessaloniki, that's in the area of Macedonia in northern Greece. The context is that this verse is in a section titled "Warning Against Idleness". The idleness that Paul is referring to is that of able-bodied individuals who refuse to be busy at work, and provide for themselves, but rather behave as "busybodies which leads to gossip. I guess in looking at trick or treating, it can be pretty difficult work, especially in Spokane, Washington where Halloween night temperatures often plunge into the 20s and teens. (yuck!!!) So, for one night we'll indulge the little devils, but the next day it's back to work for all of them!