

We can redeem Halloween

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In the early 1500's, many churches sold indulgences, which could be purchased to cancel out sins. If you did something that was wrong, you could give the church some money, and the money was supposed to buy your forgiveness from God.

Martin Luther thought this was wrong. He thought that forgiveness came through repentance, not purchases. Rather than just letting things happen, Luther decided to do something.

On October 31, 1517, Martin Luther wrote down 95 theses, 95 things he believed about the church, 95 things which would help people more fully realize who they were and could be in our Lord. Luther took his list and nailed it to the door of the church for everyone to see and read. This began a movement to improve the workings of the church, and the church was reformed based on many of Luther's ideas. Luther's faithfulness to following God's call made a difference.

God also calls us to be faithful and to make a difference. We don't have to do great things. Little things we do can make a big impact. There are times in our lives when we have opportunities to reach out and touch people in a special way. Halloween can be one such opportunity.

There was a man in the neighborhood where I grew up who made snow cones every Halloween for all of us trick-or-treaters. I remember him. More than that, I remember how special he made each of us feel. It inspired within me a desire to one day, if at all possible, to do what he did – to make and hand out snow cones on Halloween -- to make good memories by touching the hearts of children and youth in special ways.

A number of years ago that was made possible with the gift of a snow cone machine, and I have been making snow cones and friends each Halloween since. I make no secret that I'm claiming the night for Christ, and share blessings with all who come to my door.

I invite you to join me this year in redeeming Halloween. Let us not turn away from Halloween, but become a beacon for our Lord in the midst of it. Someone shared that being a Christian is like being a pumpkin. "God picks you from the patch, brings you in, and washes all the dirt off of you. Then He cuts off the top and scoops out all the yucky stuff. He removes the seeds of doubt, hate, greed, etc., and then He carves you a new smiling face and puts His light inside of you to shine for the entire world to see."

As kids come to your door, let them see His light in you. Don't give in to the world, but be in the world with your light shining. Don't hide it under a bushel, but hold it up to the world as a living witness for our living God. It is the combined wattage of many lights, each shining in its own place but for a common purpose, that illuminates a city in the midst of the darkness of night.

Some churches and communities have fall festivals and Halloween alternatives where children and youth can go celebrate in a fun and safe environment. These are a great way to join others in lighting the night. This year I will be at my church on Halloween and at Woodworks Park in Clewiston for the Fall Festival on November 1. Come visit me! You will find pumpkins carved in special ways, bowls of the best candy, -- and yes, a snow cone machine running and the light of Christ shining.