



THE PASTOR'S PEN

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Lent: A Time for Reflection and Service

The forty days of Lent are a reminder to us of Jesus' forty days in the wilderness after His baptism. It was during that time that He was preparing for His earthly ministry. Likewise, Lent is also a time for us to be thinking about the personal service and ministry that we can perform for Christ and His Church today.

Now, I know that some of our members think that they are getting too far along on their earthly pilgrimage to be of much service; but let me tell you very quickly, that nothing could be farther from the truth! God calls and God equips all of us for service in His kingdom. The key is to just find what we are gifted to do and then do it. Sometimes, these gifts only come with age and experience; much like the old German parable of dog lost in the woods. Now if you have never heard that story, let me share it with you right now.

The story begins with an old German Shepherd that was chasing rabbits and before long, discovered that he's lost. Wandering about, he notices a panther heading rapidly in his direction with the intention of having lunch. The old German Shepherd thinks, "Oh, oh! I'm in big trouble now!"

Noticing some bones on the ground close by, he immediately settles down to chew on the bones with his back to the approaching cat. Just as the panther is about to leap, the old German Shepherd exclaims loudly, "Boy, that was one delicious panther! I wonder if there are any more around here?"

Hearing this, the young panther halts his attack in mid-strike, a look of terror comes over him and he slinks away into the trees.

"Whew!" says the panther, "That was close! That old German Shepherd nearly had me!"

Meanwhile, a squirrel who had been watching the whole scene from a nearby tree, figures he can put this knowledge to good use and trade it for protection from the panther. So, off he goes.

The squirrel soon catches up with the panther, tells the panther what really happened and strikes a deal for himself with the panther. The young panther is furious at being made a fool of and says, "Here, squirrel, hop on my back and see what's going to happen to that conniving canine!"

Now, the old German Shepherd sees the panther coming with the squirrel on his back and thinks, "What am I going to do now?," but instead of running, the dog sits down with his back to his attackers, pretending he hasn't seen them yet, and just when they get close enough to hear, the old German Shepherd says, "Where's that squirrel? I sent him off an hour ago to bring me another panther!"

Moral of this story:

Don't mess with the old dogs. Age and skill will always overcome youth and treachery! Wisdom and brilliance only come with age and experience.

So, it may well be that you have been gifted with the wisdom and brilliance of a lifetime of experience. That experience and wisdom is needed by the leadership of the congregation and by the youth of the church. You may be the only person present right now that has the experience and the knowledge that is needed for the congregation to go forward. Do not hide your gifts, but use them. That is, after all, why God gave them to you. Think about it.

Trying to learn a few new tricks,

James