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NOT LIKELY - The Fed Funds futures market was priced in December 2014 to reflect a greater than 50% chance of a rate hike by the Fed no later than June 2015. The Fed Funds futures market was priced on 4/20/15 (i.e., 1 week ago) to reflect a 2% chance of a rate hike by the Fed no later than June 2015 (source: Federal Reserve).

PLAYING GAMES - The US debt ceiling was suspended for 13 months by Congress on 2/10/14 until 3/15/15. The total of our nation's outstanding debt as of 3/15/15 (i.e., \$18.152 trillion) became the new debt ceiling limit. In the 6 weeks since 3/15/15, the Treasury Department has initiated accounting maneuvers to delay (by 4-6 months) an actual default by the US government (source: Treasury Department).

IT'S IN THE NUMBERS - 4 of the top 6 jobs in the USA in 2015 are math-oriented. The # 1 ranked-job is an actuary, # 3 is a mathematician, # 4 is a statistician and # 6 is a data scientist (source: CareerCast).

These are the views of James Steen & Jason Pearson. No independent analysis has been performed and the material should not be construed as investment advice.

Investment decisions should not be based on this material since the information contained here is a singular update, and prudent investment decisions require the analysis of a much broader collection of facts and context. All information is believed to be from reliable sources; however, we make no representation as to its completeness or accuracy.

The first quarter of 2015 has come to a close and we recently ushered in the beginning of spring. There are many events to look forward to this time of year -- new blossoms on flowers, seasonal cookouts, warm weather, and the official beginning of the baseball season. Now that college basketball's March Madness has concluded, it is time to pull out the baseball mitt and turn more attention to America's favorite pastime. Much has transpired in the off season as some wily veterans have decided to hang up their cleats for the next phase of life and others are starting careers with a new team. It would not be the beginning of baseball season (or any sport for that matter) without the baseball "experts" pontificating about which team will prevail at the end of the season. This is the part that always makes me smile. How in the world can anybody know at the beginning of April who is going to win the World Series in October?

The baseball season is a marathon, as teams play 162 games during the course of the regular season. With so many variables in play, there is absolutely no way that any expert, let alone an ordinary baseball fan can determine with any degree of certainty which team will be crowned the World Series champion. While it might make for good television ratings or great water cooler conversation, would you want to attempt to pick a winner at the beginning of the season and be tied to that selection at the end of the season? I would surmise the answer to the question would be, absolutely not. What if the star player gets hurt? What if the brilliant rookie prospect turns out to be a bust? You are stuck riding that selection into the sunset. Why then, would it make sense to invest your money that way?

At any time you can find financial experts on television talking about why this stock or that stock is going to be the best performing over the next five or ten years, or even over just the next year. Think about how much can change in just a year's time, let alone an entire decade. I have not found it useful to try and predict what the market is going to do, rather I watch and identify market trends. In other words, I prefer to listen to what the market is telling me, rather than try and tell the market what I think it should do. With that said, here are some things that the market is telling us today.

- The US Equity market continues to present opportunities. More than half of US stocks continue to trade in an overall positive trend as do the major stock indices. So, while the risk in the market is a bit higher than it was at the beginning of the year, we will continue to, on a judicious basis, focus on US stocks as an area of opportunity in this market.
- International stocks have been the most improved asset class so far in 2015, which also comes as the European markets are embarking on their own Quantitative Easing (QE) strategy. In addition to the largest western European markets, the Asia/Pacific region continues to be sit in a leadership position.
- Lastly, one of the big stories of the past year has been declining Crude Oil prices. While the Commodity asset class remains weak relative to other asset classes like the Global Equity market, Crude Oil has begun to show some signs of bottoming.

If you would like to become more familiar with my investment process and the tools I use to identify market leadership across major asset classes and within asset classes, please contact me at your convenience. Otherwise, enjoy your spring, whether it is on the links or in the yard.

P.S. If you think this type of information would be of benefit to anyone you know, please share this communication with them.

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