

5 Lent 2020

If you participate in services of Morning Prayer often enough, and we will all be doing this for weeks to come, you will notice that a sermon/meditation does not have to be a part of the service. However, my friends, in these days of physical isolation and great sacrifice, you will not be spared the trials of listening to one of my meditations. I have kept it short so you will not grow weary. I do encourage all of you to watch Bishop Perry's sermon, today, on the Episcopal Diocese of Michigan website.

It is very difficult these days, to look at the readings on a particular Sunday and not think of everything that is going on all around us. At least it is that way for me. Some of those thoughts may seem a little morbid. But for those of us in the senior category, COVID 19 **can** feel a little morbid. One of my daughters called this week concerned that if I got sick and needed a ventilator, I would not be given one due to my age. Something I honestly hadn't thought of so far.

In Italy, where more than 9,000 people have been diagnosed with COVID-19, doctors are prioritizing the young and otherwise healthy patients over the older people who are less likely to recover. A New York City medical ethicist told 'Insider', that the medical community in the US would also have to make decisions about who to prioritize if hospitals become overwhelmed. Choosing patients simply based on their age, however, "would not fly," he said. **Good to know.**

All of this brought to my mind a movie that came out in 1973 called 'Soylent Green'. Many of you have never heard of it and I will only talk about it in general terms, in case you want to go back and watch it while sheltering in place.

It takes place in 2022, which I thought was interesting, with COVID-19. In the movie, Earth is overpopulated and totally polluted; temperatures were rapidly rising; the natural resources have been exhausted and the nourishment of the population is provided by Soylent Industries, a company that makes a food consisting of plankton from the oceans. One thing that I remember about this movie was the bleakness and darkness within New York City. People lining up to get the food squares that were offered to them. Those with money did much better than those living in poverty, as is usually the case. There was little hope and very little joy. There were other reasons that I thought of this movie, but you will have to watch it for yourself to figure that part out.

When I read Ezekiel this week, I had similar feelings. The vision that he had of the desert, filled with lifeless dry bones, must have caused him great wonder as to why God had **given** him this vision. What he saw was death. Bones that had once been the structure of a living being, full of life. It was a scene devoid of hope, without promise. This is one of the most vivid images in the entire Bible of the power of God to bring back to life something that was truly dead. This is certainly all about God's promise of the restoration of Israel, as a nation. God was offering redemption and hope to a people, who, in exile, had lost all hope of ever returning home. God says: "I will put my spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you on your own soil; then you shall know that I, the Lord, have spoken and will act, says the Lord." Hope where there was no hope, joy where there was no joy, and life where there once had been life.

We have spent so much energy over recent years worried about the death, so to speak, of our churches. Of dwindling numbers and budgets. Worried if we only had this or that, our

pews would fill again. And now because of COVID-19, those pews are all empty and will stay that way for quite a while. Many of us sit at rest, as did Ezekiel, looking at a field of dry bones. At least that is our perception. But this vision of the church is not accurate. We are looking at our buildings and not at our brothers and sisters. We may feel that we are in exile, that without our buildings we will dry up and blow away. Without weekly Eucharist, we will not survive. Yes, not being together in one place sharing the Body and Blood of Jesus feels foreign to us. We have gotten away from the richness of sharing the Word itself. That without the Eucharist, we are not really worshiping and being nourished. We have forgotten that Jesus **is** the Word and that we **now** share him with each other, on Facebook Live, or Zoom, by phone or by a written letter. If we do this well, I truly believe that in a time of feeling **disconnected**, we can become **reconnected** with God and each other in new and exciting ways. Let us pray:

Help us Lord Jesus, to hold steadfast to prayer,

Relying on you as the Word of God, in times of despair and loneliness.

May our hope in You increase while our doubts and fears decrease.

Help us Lord, to be a light for others who find themselves in darkness and in need.

To be an example of Your Love and mercy.

And to show others your Grace and glory! Amen