

2 Easter 2020

Amazing God, speak to us in clarity and wisdom. Clear the cloudiness of our vision and renew our strength. As we celebrate with Easter faith, keep us focused on new life and acts of courageous love. In the name of the risen One. Amen.

Bishop Perry offered the clergy of our Diocese a potential break from preaching today and to consider referring folks to listen to her sermon this morning. Now I do that anyway as well as referring folks to listen to Bishop Curry's sermon on the Episcopal Church website. I just think that they are good sermons and worth listening to. I had posted Bishop Bonnie's sermon on my Facebook page this morning. Hers is entitled 'Pragmatic Thomas'. But I will still offer a meditation this morning, called; 'Pragmatic Dan'. I thought that I should first look up, 'pragmatic' to read the definition. The first one that I found was: "dealing with things sensibly and realistically in a way that is based on practical rather than theoretical consideration". I hesitated at sensibly and realistically. The Merriam-Webster definition is as follows: "relating to matters of fact or practical affairs often to the exclusion of **intellectual or artistic matters.**" I have been told in the past that I often exclude an intellectual component to my sermons, so I will go with that.

Last week, I came across this selection from Kari Myers titled "Toughening Up".

She said the following; "When my sister and I were growing up it seemed like there was always something to cry about. There were no big reasons, mind you. We had a good life. No, the crying was mostly over two things — our feelings, which were extremely fragile back then, and change of any kind. How we hated change! Dad must have told us a hundred

times, “You need to toughen up.” Though he always said it lovingly, it seemed harsh to me. I didn’t want to toughen up. I wanted the world to treat me softly.

Now as I raise a daughter of my own, I find myself giving her the same advice because my dad was right. Life is hard. And if we’re serious about living for God, life can be particularly difficult. Jesus said, “In this world you will have trouble” (John 16:33 NIV). It should come then, as no surprise when we suffer for our faith. But too often we cry and complain instead of persevering in faith. Our feelings are too fragile and our expectations unrealistic. The goal of life is not comfort and ease and everything just the way we like it. The goal should be to follow Christ through the good and the bad. When things don’t go our way, we should learn to patiently endure and persevere, trusting that God has us right where we are for a reason. Maybe we just need to toughen up a little.”

—Kari Myers, “Toughening up,” The Link, January 2007.

I agree that this may seem a bit harsh to hear this morning; at least the toughening up part. I will say though, that this was not written in the past few days, or the past few weeks, or even the past few months. It was written 13 years ago, long before the situation we find ourselves in today.

Should we follow Christ through the good and the bad times? **You bet.** Should we trust God? **Definitely!**

So many folks are into playing the blame game. **That** country spread the virus. **So and so** didn’t heed the early warnings. **So and so** didn’t act fast enough. So and so set too many

restrictions on our personal freedom. God is punishing us because this group or that group is allowed to exist. Or our rights to live as **we want to**, outweigh any risks from the virus.

I admit that I was pretty upset this past week. More than usual for me, and a couple of days ago, I was even a little ticked off. Those that know me, know that I avoid giving my opinions on politics and ignorance. I try my best not to respond to critical comments on Facebook; sometimes to the point of not weighing in on social justice issues when I **should**. I saw this little prayer on Facebook yesterday which I should adhere to:

God, grant me the serenity, to not read the comments;

The courage to not read the comments;

And the wisdom to not read the comments. Amen.

I know that people are scared. They are scared for themselves and for their families. They are scared for their businesses and their livelihood. But some are just plain scary. I hope that many of the stories are just fake news, such as people blocking hospital entries. I did think that the folks standing on the Capital steps, holding guns was especially disturbing. The pictures of people who still congregate in larger groups, without face masks, and little to no concern about catching the virus or possibly giving it to others.

There are stories of those caring for their neighbors, taking food to those who would otherwise go hungry, opening up churches and gyms so the homeless have a place to sleep; truck drivers who are making sure that supplies get to where they are needed, front line workers and first responders who are putting their own lives at risk to take care of those

who are sick and dying: these stories are **still out there**, in the media and on the Internet if you look for them.

I have to remind myself, as things progress, that Love is still out there. Love will win out if only given the chance. As Christians, we are called upon not to spread hate, not to do harm to others, but to let as many people know, as possible, that God loves them and is in control.

We hear a lot about the “new normal’. I believe that whatever this will look like, life after COVID-19 will not be as it was even 3 months ago, no matter how much we want it to. Our reading from First Peter also talks about a new normal. “By God’s great mercy, he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead...”

By Jesus’s death, and resurrection, life can no longer be what it was before. Once you know Jesus, you can no longer live in ignorance. Because of that knowledge, we live in a new normal, and that normal is all about Love. Jesus did what he did because God asked him to and because he loved God above all else. And he loved us. It is not easy to do, but we need to try and look at everything that is happening now, especially with people’s words and actions, as Jesus would, *through eyes of Love*. If we can do that, it will be a normality in which life flourishes and grows.

Amen!