

Wednesday April 1, 2020

Happy April's Fool Day/Blessed Hump Day

As we're going into the third week of social/physical distancing and self-isolation, health experts are saying it's going to get worse before it gets better. This is not an April Fool's joke. I wish it was.

The last time we worshipped together was Sunday March 15 (Lent 3A). It seems so long ago. That Sunday there were 24 people at St. James, a far cry from the usual numbers of around 50. The Sunday previous on March 8 Lent 2A, I read the bishop's first pastoral letter in response to covid-19. Maybe that's why the low numbers on March 15. That letter, though wise, scared some people off. On March 8, the parishioner was given a choice whether he or she would drink from the common cup. On March 15 Lent 3A, the bishop instructed only the priest to drink from the common cup. The next day, on March 16, Bp Rob Hardwick suspended all Anglican services out of an "abundance of caution." The novel coronavirus was moving fast throughout the world.

It seems like it's been forever since we've worshipped together. I miss it and I miss you all. It's hard to stay in touch but we're trying. I hope you have been enjoying the 521 Regina Anglican on-line services. We've posted Lent 4A on March 22 and Lent 5A on March 29. This coming Sunday is Palm Sunday. Look for a video to celebrate our Lord's triumphant entrance into Jerusalem.

I know we're all experiencing things we've never experienced before. It's tough, not just for us, but for the whole of humanity. In these times, I'm reminded of my favourite Hebrew scholar, Dr. Walter Bruggemann. He wrote a book a few years ago on the spirituality of the psalms.

I've heard people say they don't understand the Psalter. I think it's because they try to understand the words and their meaning from an intellectual perspective. But, to analyze the psalms do them, and God, a disservice. If read from the head, the essence of the psalms, and God's heart, never reaches our hearts. The psalms are not meant to be read and analyzed. They're meant to be sung from the heart and from deep within our souls.

Dr. Bruggemann says the psalms are divided into three types that reflect the human condition and experience – **Orientation, Disorientation, Reorientation**. These three experiences express the rhythm of our lives.

Brueggemann suggests that human beings regularly find themselves in *one of three places*:

1. a place of *orientation*, in which everything makes sense in our lives;
2. a place of *disorientation*, in which we feel we have sunk into the pit; and
3. a place of *new orientation*, in which we realize that God has lifted us out of the pit and we are in a new place full of gratitude and awareness about our lives and our God.

Before the emergence of COVID-19 into the world, we were in a place of orientation (the known). Our lives made sense, more or less. Our lives weren't perfect. But, they made sense. We had a routine, whatever it was and however we made it. And that routine gave our lives meaning. The routines included flying on airplanes, going on cruises, hanging out in pubs, hugging family and friends and being annoyed at the lines in Costco on a busy weekend. We thought nothing of our daily routines of life.

Now with the pandemic, our lives have been disrupted. According to Dr. Bruggemann, we are in a place of disorientation (the unknown). And we can be here for quite awhile. I know I feel disoriented. I confess my soul is going through the wringer. I'm physically fine, but mentally, emotionally and even spiritually, it's been taxing all around. There are so many questions and so many changes.

The good news is that with our God, as the psalmist writes, there will come a time of reorientation (the new learning). This will be a time of gratitude. A sense of renewal will return. I was talking to a friend two days ago and he said what this time has taught him is that he is a hugger. He misses hugging his colleagues at work. He's looking forward to going back to work so he can hug his colleagues. I think we've all been thinking of the things we've taken for granted and what simple things we miss from our days of orientation when everything made sense. I think we'll enjoy the more simple things of life, like seeing the shelves full of Lysol disinfectant and paper towels again, or just window shopping at the mall or going to buy soap at our favourite store or getting our haircut or having the family over for Sunday dinner.

Our days of reorientation are coming. We just have to wait a little longer. In the meantime, we live in disorientation, with the psalms of disorientation close to our heart.

How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?

How long will you hide your face from me? (Ps. 13)

I hope you enjoyed this reflection. I would appreciate hearing from you. Send me a message about your thoughts on this time. If I get enough, I'll compile them and send them out next week. Maybe you have some words to share to your fellow congregants.

Please contact me Monday-Friday, 9 am – 5 pm.

My email: yeen@sasktel.net

Cell #: 306-261-4059

Home #: 306-249-3217

Until next week, may the Lord bless you and keep you. May he make his face to shine upon you and be gracious to you. May he look upon you with favour and grant you peace. In the name of the +Father, Son and Holy Spirit ...

+ In Christ,
The Rev. Nancy Yee

Here are some additional resources on today's reflection.

1. Someone categorized the psalms according to Dr. Bruggemann's three (3) descriptors. I've attached that document to this email. I hope that in the middle of this crisis, you will let the Holy Spirit guide and teach you into a new way of appreciating the psalms. They are worth a deeper study.

2. This video is a sermon from a charismatic Pentecostal church. Don't let that stop you from watching it. It's called Selah Psalm Orientation Disorientation Reorientation
<https://youtu.be/QGFzTGWKNZs>

3. Sometimes, when we're in a period of disorientation, our souls either grumble or lament. Grumbling is a sin and there are many bible verses that speak against grumbling. However, lament honours God and ourselves when our souls are troubled. This short video explains the difference between grumbling and lament.
<https://youtu.be/Glzyt6teHwI>

4. This a beautiful song. It's a psalm medley for the cries of our hearts! I love the image.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8U0nvUZDq4>

5. Here's a lovely worship song calling on God's mercy.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FpsQ-LZoell>

6. And for those of us who see God in the movies, here's an article entitled "5 perfect movies for addressing big moods people are feeling during the outbreak"
<https://www.upworthy.com/5-movies-for-different-coronavirus-moods>
