

WORSHIP IN THE GAP - A COMMUNIQUE

Are you scared? Are you worried? Do you wonder where this Corona-crisis is going? Are you concerned about the impact it will have on our church community? These are all the kinds of questions and concerns that are to be expected at this time of uncertainty. Rumors, innuendo and misinformation abound and give rise to heightened anxiety. That's why it is so critical to find your grounding and fill your mind with thoughts of your better angels. Trusting God at a time like this is more than just a retreat into the realm of religion. It is an engagement of our finest selves and the investing of our spirits in the things that will endure. But what does it mean to "trust God" in a time of crisis? And is it any different than trusting God during a period of peace and well-being?

The experience of trusting has little to do with an intellectual enterprise. It's really not about believing in some theological concept of faith. It's not so much about declaring God as the omnipotent power in the universe or the watchful eye of a mother eagle. It's not about saying "I believe this or I believe that." Rather, I think it's more about growing in (or as they say "leaning into") a relationship with God. Maybe the best way I can describe this would be to tell you what I've been doing this week. And then you can decide what might work for you. I, like everyone else, have been attending to the news on TV and trying to stay updated on where we are in the midst of this worldwide pandemic. I want to be informed. And being informed gives me a sense of control (however thin) during of time of some powerlessness. But there's a limit for how much news is really helpful for me. I've started limiting how much of a constant onslaught I can take. I've been "sheltering in place," "socially distancing," shopping early in the morning, working by social media and other forms of technology, cancelling a scheduled surgery (my dog-gone foot), and trying to stay strong health-wise. But more than that, I've wanted to be grounded in my faith. And so, for me, I've been renewing my commitment to read through the bible in a year, spending dedicated time in silence and prayer for all of you and my loved ones, reaching out to communicate with others and looking for ways to share a little light in the darkness. Not that it was any big deal yesterday, but I did bake some warm cookies for the roofing crew next door. I think they liked the surprise. And I know that it reminded me that in a time like this, there are always opportunities to look beyond ourselves. And when that happens, it not only helps with the anxiety of the crisis, but something deep within me grows just a little more wonderful.

This is what it means for me to "trust God" – that I see a bigger picture, that I am reminded that life is more than just the physical and emotional, and that I begin to live more with a spirit of love and compassion. I don't want to be taken up in the crisis to the point where all I think about is the darkness of worry. It doesn't serve me well. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus implores us, "Do not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing. Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow and neither toil nor spin. But seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 7).

Let's be wise and do what's necessary to get through this time - which will pass. Stay informed. Practice safe measures. Utilize the technologies we have to stay in touch. And use this time as an opportunity to grow in God, to remember who you are and the purpose for which you were born. You are a child of God, created in God's image, to love as you have first been loved, and to celebrate this wondrous gift of life with as many people as you can.

Peace,
Jim