

Covid-19 Good Friday Sermon by Pastor Jon Strasman based on the Passion from John's Gospel.

Friday, April 10, 2020

Need I even say that this is a very different Good Friday and Easter this year. My kids are lamenting the fact that it won't be the same. And they are right. In the midst of everything going on, some of them wonder if the Easter Bunny will still come and deliver Easter Baskets... or if we will have an Easter ham.

In a time of year when we all love to gather in community for Easter Worship and to eat Easter Dinner with extended family, we are grieving the loss of these traditions and more. And yet, people are being creative, gathering online, playing games online, cooking with each other online.

I was thinking about a good friend of mine this week who is single. I wonder how he is navigating social distancing? He is a relational savant, gifted in hospitality. Being with others is his gift. In contrast, our household is filled with people, active, and definitely not quiet. But what about those who are alone or who have lost loved ones? How are they feeling?

This is the window in which I am reading the Passion Gospel from John this year. Many of us feel alone, isolated, or in grief over things we are missing this year. Some are grieving the loss of jobs, or the economy hitting small businesses. Some are losing loved ones. We wonder 'how long, oh Lord'. Much of our grief comes from the fear of the unknown timetable.

We are not alone, however. One by one, Jesus experienced loss after loss, hurt after hurt in the week of his Passion. First, Judas betrayed him by bringing the Roman soldiers to arrest Jesus. Then Peter denied knowing Jesus three times, as Jesus predicted, and the cock crowed. The Jewish faith leaders wanted Jesus dead and handed him over to Pilate. The faith of Jesus' childhood abandoned him. Pilate didn't find a case against Jesus at first, but out of fear of riots and losing control of his territory. Pilate gave in to the charges of Jesus as King or Son of God. The charge was treason against the emperor.

The soldiers mocked and beat Jesus while he was in custody. Then they took Jesus out to crucify him. While Jesus was on the cross, Jesus had to say goodbye to his mother. At least he got to do it in person. Many people can't even go into hospitals or nursing homes to say proper goodbyes right now. Jesus asked another disciple to take care of his mother after he was gone.

Whatever you are feeling right now, know that God in human flesh, Jesus, felt the same things. He was fully human and knows all of our emotions. And yet he knew where he was going. He knew that his time had come to enter into his glory, which went through the cross. The promise of scripture for us is we too know where we are going. Whether we live or whether we die, we are still the Lord's.

In a few days we will celebrate Easter. In fact, every Sunday we celebrate Easter, the Lord's Day. The day Jesus rose from the dead. I can't wait to gather with all of you and proclaim this every Sunday. It will even have more meaning to me when we get back together.

And interestingly enough, when Jesus returned, he appeared with his wounds. He didn't have the perfect body, but one that had scars from his life and death. Many of us are experiencing wounds right now. We will forever be marked by this experience.

So, if you are feeling loss or grief right now, don't give up. God is deeply present with us now. The cross of Jesus tells us so.