

## Vicar's Reflection Sunday, April 26, 2020

### Finding our Way Home while Sheltering in Place

How could I have gotten lost during these days sheltering in place? Lost in my safe house, with plenty of provisions, how is this possible? What a privilege it is even to have the time to ponder? Yet like the sheep in the parable who lost its way from the sheepfold, I find myself distancing from the shepherd, distancing from that place that feels most like home. I am lost without the rod and staff of the good shepherd, who comforts and guides. Sheltering in place is a paradox of restraint and freedom. It holds in-check both pleasure and pain. Familiar places and people are off limits, and so go the comfort and challenges that these close companions bring. Virtual connections try, but they are not the same. I recently read that for some, worshipping online can feel like trying to eat at an online restaurant. We see and salivate, but it does not fully satisfy. Consumerism rarely does.

For those doing essential work, thank you for your commitment and courage to keep us going, to keep us well, fed, and cared for. You are the hands and feet of the good shepherd. Among the rest of us, I am beginning to question what is essential? With some exceptions, which can feel like intrusions on what we claim as our time, we decide when to start work, when to teach our children, when to do those projects in and around the house that have been resting on the shelves. We are both slaves to and masters of our own little universes. And now, without gathering for Sunday morning church, we are free to decide when, or not, to turn our intentions and attention toward God.

We have always had this freedom, and with the church doors closed, it is up to each of us to look at how we are spending time with God. From the beginning, starting at Genesis, God has always been out and about seeking ways to connect with us. Gathering together in church is a traditional and orthodox way some of us see and come to know the One who has been with us all along.

How do we seek the One who is seeking us when we are moving away, like on the road to Emmaus, or when we are behind lock doors? How do we continue to follow the way of love, that way we endeavor to describe with words of “turn, pray, worship, learn, go, bless and rest”? How do we continue “carrying on” when the moral response to stay-at-home is wearing; when going to the grocery store puts us into fight or flight mode; when the honeymoon stage of solitude is losing its spark; when grief over what we have lost and will lose is settling in; when our patience and trust in leadership is dwindling; when we feel like screaming if we see another news or sports broadcast from a hazy home video? And, as we look towards reentry, uncertainty is revealing a peculiar disease. How do we return to normal, when it will not be what was normal? And then there is an odd sense of regret. Did I miss out on something that I was supposed to do or learn during this Covid-19 time? The room unpainted, the novels unread, the taxes unfinished, the calls and care undone — where did the time go?

I embrace what some might see as cliché, that good — moments of joy, beauty, creativity, laughter, and new life — have come from this time of sorrow and loss. It is here. Lament and Halleluiahs live together. Spend time in the psalms. Death and resurrection, together, is at the center of the Christian life.

It helps me to remember that, unlike the first disciples who were feeling lost, abandoned and alone, we have the Church, the life and history of the faithful. We have been given the Word, in scripture and life. Sometimes just imagining how calm Jesus is in the midst of a storm and accusing voices, lowers my blood pressure and slows my heart rate. He is gentle, sure, and with us. Fear not.

In this next phase of sheltering in place time, I am focusing on five minutes. Five minutes to pray; five minutes to follow the daily office; five minutes to listen to a sermon; five minutes to read the gospel of John in devotion and bible study; and five minutes outside in those places and spaces where I sense the nearness of God. Some days five minutes has a way of inviting us into thirty minutes, an hour, or an afternoon. And other times, a five-minute segment is enough. Five minutes in God's time may be an eternity, who are we to say. Those five minutes do not bring certainty; it is not about certainty; it is about faith. And in the words of Anne Lamont, "[c]ertainty misses the point entirely. Faith includes noticing the mess, the emptiness and discomfort, and letting it be there until some light returns." May we come to rest in the blessing of faith in this time of uncertainty.

Peace and Blessings,

The Rev Emily Krudys