

Psalm 119: 65-72

*O Lord, you have dealt graciously with your servant,
according to your word.*

*Teach me discernment and knowledge,
for I have believed in your commandments.*

*Before I was afflicted I went astray,
but now I keep your word.*

*You are good and you bring forth good;
instruct me in your statutes.*

*The proud have smeared me with lies,
but I will keep your commandments with my
whole heart.*

*Their heart is gross and fat,
but my delight is in your law.*

*It is good for me that I have been afflicted,
that I might learn your statutes.*

*The law of your mouth is dearer to me
than thousands in gold and silver.*



The news cycle is filled with stories of businesses re-opening, and people resuming some semblance of their normal lives - in states in which we do not reside, unless you are reading this reflection from somewhere other than Oregon. Along with these stories are dire warnings of a resurgence of virus outbreaks, with experts urging people to use caution, wear masks, and keep a safe distance from one another. It is hard to know what to think, whether to be envious of the returned freedom, or to be grateful we don't yet have to make the decisions around how to return to (more) normal levels of social engagement. The time will come when we too must make those choices, and we might feel ourselves unmoored when that time does come.

We can find our footing again when we remember the words of the psalmist above. "Teach me discernment and knowledge." That's not to say that prayer is like the magic eight ball of my youth. A one-word answer is not going to appear out of the murky depths. But, the quiet restorative of prayer, we can be reminded of that we exist within a community, and that we are not in this alone. As a community we can have conversations that will help to guide each of us closer to a path that leads a way forward that is based in love of neighbor and self. And a desire for all to have the opportunity to thrive. By looking beyond our own immediate desires, and towards a loving balanced approach, we can find the balance.

*Let us Pray: O God, by whom the meek are guided, grant us in all our doubts and
uncertainties, the grace to ask seek guidance in prayer and counsel, that the Spirit of wisdom
may save us, and that in you light we may see light, and in your straight path may not stumble;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen*

the Rev. Ann Marie Hardin