

Sermon: Though I Walk Through Darkness

Psalm 23

I think that I have a reputation as being a little different, sometimes I am a bit eccentric, you might even want to say that I am weird. I have a perspective on the world that keeps me questioning and believing in better ways. Even though this can be annoying, I know it can also create new things that are exciting and joyful to my life. Those differences are not what I want to talk about today. I want to talk about how incredibly similar I am to each and every one of you.

Some people think of clergy as having a separate set of values, that we are called so that we do not have the same cares as others, we have somehow exempt ourselves from the aggregate of the human existence. It is true we are leaders, and that we have different spiritual roles than others in our faith communities, but to believe that clergy are to be different than everyone else is laughable and unbiblical.

Moses cannot speak, Elijah hides in a cave, Gideon must have the sign of a fleece, Peter denies Christ, Martha complains, and your pastor is afraid. It is normal to be

afraid in the midst of such a crisis. I am very worried about those who are diminishing, downplaying and mischaracterizing this health crisis by minimization because, fear is natural.

. I will name some of my fears so that you know they are normal.

-I am afraid for my daughter and wife. That I will not be able to see them for months in the midst of crises. Afraid for my father, mother and mother-in-law.

-I am afraid for my finances. afraid the economy's crashing will make one of us lose our paycheck, that we will not be able to sell our house, that we will not be able to pay for our daughter's college.

-I am afraid for the church. I am afraid some members are incredibly vulnerable to this virus, I am afraid that as a vector for the infection I might have unconsciously transmitted the virus, I am afraid of members who listen to political pundits or politicians more than doctors or scientists.

-I am afraid that our world will be a much different place when this is over. I am afraid of uncertainty, I am afraid...

Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I fear no evil; for you are with me; your rod and your staff-- they comfort me.

It is not feeling fear that is wrong, it is what we do in the midst of our fears that can cause us problems. We must realize that our fears are not reality. Panic should never reign. There is something greater than each of us, something that forces us to care for one another.

Our fears do not suspend our responsibilities into some sort of moral martial law. Our faith is not only for the times when we are in comfort, it is liberation for us when we are in trouble. The words, "Love your neighbor as you would love yourself" and "do unto others as you would have them do unto you" have not changed because of a pandemic.

Stay home! Love your neighbor as yourself.

Wash your hands! Love your neighbor as yourself.

Cover your mouth when coughing! Love your neighbor as yourself.

Listen to scientists and doctors over quacks! Love your neighbor as yourself.

Keep sensitive for how you can help others in suffering!
Love your neighbor as yourself.
Prayer for each other! Love your neighbor as yourself.
Do not let fear be your guide, let it be your faith! Love
your neighbor as yourself.

So, like many of you I too am afraid. Yet, strangely
enough my faith has not abandoned me. I have seen
Christ's love through many people during this time. Care,
compassion, worry, reaching out, and mercy. Our faith
will be tested, yet our God is faithful. How can we not be
faithful in return?