

The Reverend's Ruminations

As I write this month's installment of my "Ruminations," we are still over three weeks from what many hope will be the end of the state's extended *Stay Home MN* order, but as with all things COVID-19 related, we will have to wait and see! Restrictions on group gatherings and our use of social distancing seem to be helping stem the tide of new infections in our state, so I applaud each of you for doing your part to keep both yourselves and your neighbors healthy by staying at home as much as possible. Online worship services and Zoom council / board meetings have in some strange way become a "new normal" for all of us!?! I know that some may feel things have been overly restricted, but the truth of the matter is that IF we want any chance of enjoying our Minnesota spring/summer together, then we all need to continue to abide under these restrictions until it is safe to loosen them.

In preparation for the April Church Council meeting (held over Zoom), I opened a popular daily devotional book that I've had for quite some time entitled *Jesus Calling*, by Sarah Young. As the title implies, each day's brief meditation is written in first-person voice as if the Savior himself is writing. The entry for April 15th was so timely amid our world situation that I chuckled out loud in my office:

"TRUST ME, and don't be afraid. Many things feel out of control. Your routines are not running smoothly. You tend to feel more secure when your life is predictable. Let Me lead you to the rock that is higher than you and your circumstances. Take refuge in the shelter of My wings, where you are absolutely secure.

When you are shaken out of your comfortable routines, grip My hand tightly and look for growth opportunities. Instead of bemoaning the loss of your comfort, accept the challenge of something new. *I lead you on from glory to glory, making you fit for My kingdom. Say yes to the ways I work in your life. Trust Me, and don't be afraid."*

On Good Friday, our epistle reading from Hebrews affirmed that Jesus has "been through the wringer" too, and therefore is precisely the one we need to guide us as he is imagined to be offering in *Jesus Calling*. Hebrews 4:15-16 says, *"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."* (NRSV)

Did Jesus have to live under a "stay at home" executive order, keep his gatherings under ten, or stay six feet away from others when he went to the marketplace? Not exactly, but these are very different times—and I don't think living under Roman occupation while also challenging the deeply-entrenched religious leaders of his day was any picnic!?! We need only recall the gospel narrative from that same Good Friday service (see John's 18–19th chapters) to understand that our great high priest has been through more than we can even imagine. But the glory of Jesus' Easter resurrection reminds us that even death is not the final word. Through God all things are possible! We will get through this temporary challenge as well.

Like I did last month, I want to encourage you to keep in touch with one another. I have heard several positive reports from our volunteers as they have been checking in with the congregation, so don't be surprised to get another phone call if you haven't already. Human interaction is one of the healthiest things you can do for your mental well-being, just do so safely by employing one of the new video technologies or just a good ol' fashioned phone call. Though we haven't been able to gather in person, I continue to hold each of you in my prayers. We are working our way through this together, and I am confident that we will emerge as an even stronger congregation than when we began!

Yours in Christ,
Rev. Cory Germain