

CHRIST THE LORD CHURCH. PINOLE CA, MAY 17, 2020

Becoming Disciples of Gentleness and Reverence

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Good Day. I hope all of you are doing well. I have to say that I usually don't get political and I try to stay on the positive side, but let's look at the Gospel in the light of today's current situation.

I have limited my own access to the news as I try to keep my attitude focused on what the Spirit might actually be trying to say to us during these times, however Wednesday I saw people who were taking governors to court, storming areas with signs about opening up the economy, and people who refuse to wear masks in public.

Later that evening, I sat down to study today's readings and the epistle reads, "Now who will harm you if you are eager to do what is good? But even if you do suffer for doing what is right you are blessed." And it continues on with acting with gentleness and reverence, with a clear conscience even when confronted with evil.

We are living in trying times, and I too would like everything to resemble some kind of normal. But I am going to tell you, from the medical circle that I work with, and maybe what no one is actually saying on the air waves because of fear for

their safety, but my medical colleagues figure we are going to be dealing with this virus and ever changing models of it for at least another year.

Our Diocese may begin the process of opening church, but in the letters received by the Bishop, he too is being very cautious. So what does all that have to do with today's scripture, which I find so compelling for this time?

You are going to do what is right for you in these times. I know you are, I hope you will. I know us as a church and we are responsible, we love our neighbors, we love and respect ourselves. That being said, our epistle is warning us that when we do right, there may be good or bad consequences. But when you are part of God's kingdom, and consider yourself within the family of God, you do what is right with gentleness and reverence. Why? because this is what Jesus has asked us to do.

Our Gospel moves into Jesus explaining that if we love him we will keep his commandments. We know them all from the Old Testament, but if the reciting of them becomes redundant or loses its effectiveness, Jesus has broken it down into love God, love neighbor, love yourself.

Jesus has shown and promised us eternal life, we should not live in fear. And yes, no matter if you take all the precautions, you still may become ill. And, if you take none of the precautions, maybe, just maybe you won't get sick either. But we have been told it is wrong to test God. If he has given us resources to preserve our lives, we should, and we should also honor the lives of others.

We want to follow Jesus and his commandments and honor the dignity of every life. Please, know if you stay at home longer, wear a face mask when you go outside, when you help those that need help – no matter who or where they are from, in person, or from the comfort of your laptop at home, you are doing God's work. Please know that.

That is the proof that the Holy Spirit really is working within you. And yes, you may get mocked, or ridiculed, but you know what is right. Please do not feel you have to rush back out in public, or church for that matter. You are loved, we want you safe.

So, this may be a cheesy way of ending today's reflection but I have to tell you, these words I will share with you really moved me. For those of you who are frustrated and questioning where God is in all of this, maybe this will bring you comfort. It did for me.

Our Gospel tells us that God is in Jesus and God is also in us. The struggle of our lives is real. It was real for those who came before – there have been other plagues, and it will be true for those in the future, God is working on us always.

There are times of darkness which then allow us to appreciate the light, but the journey God has put before us is tough. Yet, it is also a win/win situation through Christ. There is something to be said about the life of reduction. Many desert fathers and mothers became spiritual elders after spending long lengths of time in a cave, or in the wilderness, alone. Their wisdom is still able to astound us centuries later.

While the world fights the war of science, medicine and disease, now maybe your time to work on the spiritual wars you have within yourself. "The spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees God nor knows Him. You know him, because he abides with you, and will be in you."

If you have read this poem before, I still think it bears repeating. I present to you a conversation to God by John Roedel that kind of says it all, no matter where the current situation has led you.

I ask you to close your eyes and listen not only with your ears, but with your heart.

Me: Hey God.

God: Hello.....

Me: I'm falling apart. Can you put me back together?

God: I would rather not.

Me: Why?

God: Because you aren't a puzzle.

Me: What about all of the pieces of my life that are falling down onto the ground?

God: Let them stay there for a while. They fell off for a reason. Take some time and decide if you need any of those pieces back.

Me: You don't understand! I'm breaking down!

God: No - you don't understand. You are breaking through. What you are feeling are just growing pains. You are shedding the things and the people in your life that are holding you back. You aren't falling apart. You are falling into place. Relax. Take some deep breaths and allow those things you don't

need anymore to fall off of you. Quit holding onto the pieces that don't fit you anymore. Let them fall off. Let them go.

Me: Once I start doing that, what will be left of me?

God: Only the very best pieces of you.

Me: I'm scared of changing.

God: I keep telling you - YOU AREN'T CHANGING!! YOU ARE BECOMING!

Me: Becoming who?

God: Becoming who I created you to be! A person of light and love and charity and hope and courage and joy and mercy and grace and compassion. I made you for more than the shallow pieces you have decided to adorn yourself with that you cling to with such greed and fear.

Let those things fall off of you. I love you! Don't change! ... Become!

Become! Become who I made you to be. I'm going to keep telling you this until you remember it.

Me: There goes another piece.

God: Yep. Let it be.

Me: So ... I'm not broken?

God: Of course Not! - but you are breaking like the dawn. It's a new day.

Become!!!

~Author John Roedel

And that is today's Gospel. Amen.