

Message from the Minister: Finding Hope in the Chaos
4/13/20

On that first Easter, Mary went to the tomb to care for the body of her friend and rabbi, Jesus. He had been executed by the government because he was a threat to their way of doing business. She, and all the disciples, friends, and family of Jesus were in shock, grieving, and very afraid of what life was going to be like. How would they go on without their friend, teacher, and brother? Would the authorities come after them? What would happen to Jesus's message, ministry, and influence in the community?

Nothing would ever be the same.

At Easter, we are reminded that even out of the direst of circumstances, God works in us and through us to bring new life, hope, and salvation. Those who loved Jesus had no idea what God was up to through the crucifixion, in that tomb, or even the next day when they heard the crazy news that Jesus's body was missing---and that Mary had seen Jesus alive.

Eventually, they learned that while they were living in darkness and fear, God was already bringing new life and hope out of what seemed unimaginable. Not only would they be OK, they would never again be in such a difficult place, without hope. Even later, as some faced their own executions as martyrs for the faith, they knew that God reigns supreme over whatever life or circumstances has to deal to us. They knew about God's immeasurable love for us, and they valued their connections with each other more than ever. They shared a common faith and were united in hope.

We are living through a very difficult time. Our economy has been hit hard, many people have lost the jobs, careers, livelihoods they spent a lifetime building. Many others aren't sure their businesses will be there for them when we get back to "normal." And for too many, 20,486 (so far in the U.S.) as of Easter Sunday, they will not survive their encounter with the corona virus. Their friends and families grieve, feel confused, and wonder how life could ever return to "normal" without their loved one.

None of us will ever be the same.

But God is with us even in the midst of this terrible pandemic. Out of our grief, out of our confusion, out of our fear and isolation, God brings new life, and offers us hope. We are learning new things every day about what's important in life and what can wait. We are retooling worship, work, school and daily living in ways we never imagined. We are learning the depth of our ability to adapt, re-invent, create new mechanisms to be with each other and do what needs to be done. And the level of outreach being displayed in communities to care for those who are ill, support healthcare workers, and stay in touch with those who are isolated surprises us daily. In the midst of all this confusion, chaos and grief, there are glimmers of hope and renewal to be found and celebrated.

As you go about your life this week, include these questions in your reflections:

- What are the lessons/insights/visions I have gained in these days of quarantine, social distancing, pandemic?
- What's really matters, day to day?
- In what ways do I now have a better appreciation for how fragile life is? How resilient I am? How precious the people around me are?
- In what ways have I "re-wired" my connections to friends and family? What are the blessings in these connections?
- How important is my faith to sustain me, especially in times of difficulty, chaos and confusion?
- How have I been able to reach out and ease the suffering, trauma, difficulty of others at this time? Prayer, donations, conversations, support, errands, and more?

We do not fully know the extent of how COVID-19 will change us---as a nation, as a community, as a family, as a faith community. The profound losses will continue. But so will the awareness of hidden blessings, if we look for them. God works for good for those who love him, and brings new life and new possibilities out of what seems impossible to fathom. Easter reminds us that there is always hope.

May God bless you as you continue to struggle---and triumph---in this time of pandemic.

He is Risen!

Rev. Cindy Carr