

Sunday, October 4, 2020

Exodus 20 & Deuteronomy 5 Psalm 19 Philippians 3:4-14

Sharing Together as One

Where are you feeling right now? I did ask WHERE are you feeling right now- not how! The reason for this question is simply this: feelings and thoughts are abounding for each and every one of us in this moment- so where are you right now with them? I know that if I asked the other question, "how are you feeling right now?" You would answer, "I'm fine" and the conversation would stop. But I didn't! Where are you feeling – thinking about right now?

Are you thinking about the pandemic now into its 7th month knowing that Ontario is experiencing many cases each day in certain areas of the province? Are you feeling a little homebound and wanting to just go for a ride somewhere and see the colours of fall? Or maybe you are thinking about how you are going to endure another lecture or zoom meeting on the laptop? Just where are you in all of these things that are happening?

Sometimes I have been thinking and feeling that what we are experiencing is a lot like that of the Israelites wandering around the desert not sure of the way forward or even the way back. To back to Egypt would mean a return to slavery. To go forward means to endure however long God leads them through the desert land towards something he has promised would be better and where they would live in freedom. From what are we walking away and where are we heading?

What was normal is no longer so and probably a new normal will be what we will experience within the year. This is known because of the way technology has influenced and changed the way people have grasped the use of computers and the internet. One report I read today is that within 6 months the world advanced technology by 5 years. Just reflect on this a moment. People advanced technology 5 years in 6 months. What does this say for the future advancement of technology—what will come? When this part of human history is studied by future generations there will be anomalies shared as to what caused the slow down in the economy, why were so many people on EI, what stopped people from worshipping in churches and possibly leading several to close.. All of this information will lead future generations to think that the covid19 pandemic changed the world in 2020. But what does this mean for us as we continue to endure this challenge in real time? How might the story of the wilderness journey led by Moses help us?

We must remember that those who left Egypt are not the ones who would take up leadership in the new land. The leaders would be their descendants. What was key for the people of that time was to enable their future generations to be free from slavery and to live according to the teachings of God. But there was a problem- the generations moving slowly through the desert did not know God and lived how they wanted.

Many of the Israelites lived carefree because they did not know how to live the way God intended. Through the time in the desert traditions and teachings were lost and people turned from God. God saw this and told Moses to ascend the mountain in order to receive the laws by which they were to live. We know that the first set that God wrote were broken in frustration by Moses because the people did not want to hear them. But the second stone carving of the laws was what was carried in the Ark of the Covenant into the Promised Land. These laws which we read and know as the 10 Commandments are how God wanted people to live. They reflect on the relationship His people are to have with Him and how they are to relate to each other.

While in the desert there were problems amongst the people just as there are problems amongst the people in our world right now. Where are we right now with our thoughts and feelings? Some of us might think we need to get back to normal. Yet everything has changed. Some of us might feel afraid of the what ifs- getting the covid19 virus, of experiencing the death of loved ones, or the loss of jobs, employment. Still others are wondering what will the new world be like and will we each be ready for it? Will we prefer the practises we had to endure when shopping or will we need to connect to people in different ways?

Some of the American news stories state that many of the people are in states of trauma because of the lockdowns, the Black Lives Matter racial justice movement, the spread of covid19, and the division of the country due to the pending election. Trauma in the sense that there is a change from something that was to something which was perceived as the worst and it might include fear, anger and shame. What did the people in the desert experience? The lack of the basic necessities of life- water food, protein. What are we enduring and needing that seems traumatic for us- the lack of free choices, wondering what to do, and if we are working it seems to never end. For many people it is the ramifications of trauma which discounts our need to trust others. And it is real and long lasting. We need to acknowledge this trauma and talk about it. This is completed only if we are willing to acknowledge the problem and are willing to help others cope.

Just think for a moment- how many phone calls have you made this week which did not involve your work? How many people did you speak to that you are not related to nor are they connected to your doctor or dentist or service provider? Now think about the people you used to call what has changed? Why?

Psalms 19 states “God’s law is perfect, refreshing the soul; God’s instruction is sure, giving wisdom to the simple; God’s precepts are right, rejoicing the heart, God’s commandment is pure giving light to the eyes;..” Through these words about God’s teachings we are able to live rightly- that is the way God intended. But Paul writing to the Philippians tells us that to truly be righteous before God is not just in living by these laws, but by having faith, a deep committed faith to Jesus Christ. To truly trust Jesus and become like him as Paul set his life’s goal. This goal should also be ours. We are to press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ. Press on toward the goal.

As we continue to live through this pandemic our goal is to live on- to realize what we have lost and move towards what is ahead. Yes there will be losses, trauma, challenges and change but what can lead us further towards our goal is knowing that Jesus is waiting for us; that God’s love will embrace us and one day we will reach heaven our promised home for all of eternity.

In the meantime, while we take each day as it comes we need to restore relationships, to build each other up and to know that we can do this with Christ’s help. Today is worldwide Communion and even though we are here together there are many churches unable to gather to share this sacred meal. Christ Jesus said “Remember me and do this—eat bread and drink from the cup” This sacred meal was given to us to honour Christ and to celebrate his resurrection from death. It is not a sad moment together- as we celebrate this sacrament, it is a day to give thanks. We are the body of Christ and however we eat and drink in His name, Christ is present and reminding us that we are not alone. God is with us as we walk through this wilderness time, as we search for meaning and restored relationships and as we seek God’s strength and support for those things which we do not know or understand. We need to be encouraged to carry on and to trust that God will clear the path to this new normal life whenever it emerges. But we must hold steadfast to His promise. I am with you always.

Even though we will not be sharing in the traditional way of Glenwood Church—where we come forward and receive the elements and you return to your seats- we are still remembering Jesus by eating the bread and drinking from the cup. We are remembering that he

died on the cross for our sakes. It is up to us to press on toward what lies ahead, strengthened for the journey that is unknown in these days and months ahead. And what is known because of our faith in God and his Son Jesus Christ our Saviour. Let us remember this as we 'Share together as One" For we are one with Christ and one with each other in Jesus' name. Amen

PRAYER

Holy God we believe that you are with us always. Strengthen us for the journey ahead. Guide us when we need your love and when we feel uncertain about our goal. Enable us to press on toward your receiving embrace now and always. Amen