

Message for Sunday April 12, 2020

The Covid Crucible

Again I greet you my brothers and sisters at Union or wherever you may be. The message of the cross is especially wondrous to the redeemed, yet vital, even more so to those whose hope lies in the froth of stormy seas.

Since we are now in the Easter season, the memory of being far away from truth and redemption gives me pause to reflect that, yes, many out there and around me are living separate from the life that is Christ.

In Stephen King's, *The Green Mile* ... "dead man walking", I think to myself, metaphorically, it's... "dead folks walking"

I read in ***Ephesians 2:12-14*** ***"Remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus you who were once far away have been brought near through the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility."***

The words from an old praise song sing through me on my morning walks as I burst into this, my lifesong.

"I marvel at the wisdom of our God when I see the little lily bursting through the mighty sod. I marvel at the wisdom of our God! "

I pray, let my lifesong sing to you, Jesus, my audience of one. May this song show those from afar into redemption and life. Now, especially now, during this dark time when many, even among the redeemed, feel as though they are being pressured all around, akin to

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those horror stories where walls start pressing in with the purpose of crushing the life out of them.

We can read what we are intended to be, in ***II Corinthians 4:8*** ***“We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.”***

This is indeed a time to ask God to refine us in this refiner's fire. To make us pure. To burn out the chaff, the dross, and break the chains that bind us to the way of the world which we cling.

The spiritual fruit of patience is especially vital for the world around us to see. Let us pray for this fruit to flow outwards and help dispel fear as we encounter the people around us. Galatians 5:22-26 speaks concerning what others need to see in us in our concourse with one another. Then, we become the light we are intended to be. Then, we become as Jesus spoke in ***John 7:37,38*** ***“If anyone is thirsty, let them come to me, as the scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within.”***

When we don't feel thirsty, ask the Lord to make us so. Ask the Holy Spirit to manifest to make alive the Fruit of the Spirit in your life. Ask Him to heighten your awareness to ***what fruit*** is actually pouring from your life. We CAN stop putting our trust, our faith, our emotional attachments in the things of this earth. Our security is NOT possessions, or feelings, or the manner in which we express them, protect them. My brother, Tom, and I often ask one another, “Now, which of the fruit is that?”

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The King of Kings, the Lord of Lords hung on that cross at Golgatha for me, for you. He had to endure the horrible crucifixion because of me. He who endured the cross has empowered each of us, by His Spirit, to life in and by this same Spirit.

We are not intended to keep it to ourselves and operate by offering the fruit of our self-nature which so easily flows out from us. The fruit of the offendedness, the fruit of the self-righteous anger, the fruit of cutting correction and judgement as we vociferously defend "ours" in self-righteous indignation.

Let God's word come alive in you as you read Hebrews 12 where we are exhorted to throw off everything that hinders us and the sin that so easily besets us. Let us run with perseverance, the race marked out for us. The song by Twila Paris, "Runner", reminds me of this scripture and as I sing it, it helps me in the weakness we all share.

In this Easter Season, may we make it our duty, our joy to declare the words from **Galatians 2:20** *"I am crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God who loves me and gave Himself for me."*

He to whom we must give our account tells us in **Matthew 5:45** that He causes the sun to rise on the evil and the good and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. This trial this crucible for refining, this threshing floor of our lives is shared by all our neighbors, both the redeemed and the redeemed to be.

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It is a comfort to reflect on that hill far away where stood an old rugged cross, where the dearest and best for a world of lost sinners was slain. So I cherish the old rugged cross till my trophies at last I lay down. I will cling to the old rugged cross and exchange it someday for a crown.

And as I consider that lily bursting through the mighty sod, the joy wells up within me, breaking forth that: **He arose! He arose!**
Hallelujah! Christ arose!