



JULY 2020

A SUMMER FOR FINDING COMFORT

To the Parish Members and Friends of St. Thomas,

'Comfort, Comfort O my people' says your God. (Isaiah 40:1 NASB translation)

Comfort is a strange word. The root words are from Latin words com- (meaning expressing intensive force) and fortis (meaning strong). Yet the definition is both a noun and a verb. Much like the word love. As a noun comfort means to be in a state of ease and lack of pain or restriction. As a verb it is defined as easing distress or grief. The Hebrew word Nehamu is the verb form of comfort. We also have the word and name Nehemiah which means God comforts. In this time of uncertainty and pandemic we are to do two things: Give comfort and take comfort. These words of God spoken by Isaiah is a reminder that people need comfort. No generation has been in a time of complete comfort. In fact, since the time of Adam and Eve there has been no real comfort for humanity. We each suffer in a variety of ways. In this time of pandemic people can suffer from fear and anxiety regarding their personal health or the health of loved ones. They can suffer from loneliness and lack of connection. Others may despair for their livelihood and economic well-being. Many have to grieve alone or without the huge groups of family and friends who could console them. There are many people who have come to the conclusion that God is exacting revenge or that Mother Nature is balancing the scales. In all of this we may ask "Where is the comfort?" That is precisely the question we should be asking of each other. It is an attitude of diligently searching for what gives true comfort. Things give enjoyment but cannot offer comfort. It is people and God who must do the comforting. Instead of spending time worrying about our present and future we must be people who will speak the words of Jesus to each other:

Therefore, I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothes? Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life ? (Matthew 6:25-27)

This time of pandemic is a very real lesson for humanity. Will we be self-serving or willing to be comforters of others? The order of the two great commandments is no accident. We are to love God, love others and love our self. If we really think about it, part of loving others is comforting them when they are in distress.

Giving comfort is important but we must also take comfort. We can become tempted to belittle people who say “do not be worried.” My mom would often say “This too shall pass” but I seldom took comfort from those words. I should have taken comfort because although it is a simple statement it does say something profound. As David states:

***Sing the praises of the LORD, you his faithful people;
praise his holy name.
For his anger lasts only a moment,
but his favor lasts a lifetime;
weeping may stay for the night,
but rejoicing comes in the morning.*** (Psalm 30:4-5)

Chapter I of the devotional “Clinging to Hope in the Storm” by Leslie Leyland Fields states the following:

In their confused exhaustion from battling wind and waves, the disciples failed to recognize Jesus. As he approached them, they saw only another threat to their safety.

Perhaps your circumstances have led you to a similar place; “Oh no, what’s next?” Remember, Jesus is master of the wind and the waves. He strolls through the waters that threaten to sink us. He walks through the winds that would overturn us. From your own boat, listen for the voice that is calling out “Take courage.” Jesus approaches in the darkness telling you “It is I.” Jesus walks on top of the waves comforting you, “Do not be afraid.”

Do not be afraid. (pg. 8 of Clinging to Hope in the Storm)

This summer let us as followers of Jesus give comfort and take comfort because God knows we all need comfort in these trying days.

With my wishes for a safe and comforting summer,

Pastor Jonathan

Pastor Jonathan and Deanna will be taking a much needed and well-deserved Summer vacation from July 10 – 24th. There will not be any recorded services from St. Thomas’ on July 12 & 19th. You will be sent an email with alternate services that will be available to view.