



March 12, 2020

Word – Humility – Worship... Remember?

It was only two weeks ago that we began Lent with the reminder – *“Remember you are dust and to dust you shall return.”*

It was one week ago that Jesus received my brother Jay to his presence as Jay’s mortal body died – *“Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”*

Yesterday, we closed the church building to all activities and joined county and state officials in strongly urging anyone with symptoms and those vulnerable to the COVID-19 virus to please, please stay at home – *“Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return.”*

I have observed Lenten practices for decades, but I have never been so immersed in the reminders of the frailty and hope of our mortal bodies. I miss my brother. I missed you in worship last Sunday. I will miss the comings and goings in our church building, the smaller gatherings for prayer, the sound of Scouts on Tuesday nights or MOPS on Fridays.

This is a trying time, and so it is especially important to follow Jesus’ time of testing in the wilderness and remember: Word – Humility – Worship.

Abide in God’s Word

We are not immersed in the story of this Coronavirus, even though it feels like it just now. We are immersed in the story of God’s redemption. It is the story of a good and glorious creation twisted into corruptions that lead to death – and the story of Jesus living through every weakness and danger, dying on our behalf and promising new life to all who believe. This is the story Scripture tells.

So I urge you to join me in the Lenten practice of **beginning every day in the Word of God**. I start with 5 Psalms and 1 Proverb, based on the date. (Today is the 12th, so that is Psalms 56-60 and Proverbs 12). Then I’m reading my way through the gospel of John and a letter of Paul. I’ve added this to my Lenten devotional because right now I am often sad and scared, so I need to be immersed in God’s word of authority over creation, Jesus’ authority over all life, and the hope of the Holy Spirit.

Practice Humility

None of us like to be limited or restrained. I’m approaching the requests and restrictions as an opportunity to humbly obey. Then I pray: “Lord, what are you testing in this time? My joy? My capacity to learn and wait? My willingness to serve a neighbor, or look after a person not in my own family circle?” God will use every circumstance as an opportunity to be tested and grow in greater faith, hope and love if I will humble myself before him in that moment.

May I make a suggestion? **Limit (humble) your search for information.** I am not saying ignore this epidemic. But at this point, we have clearly heard what we each need to do to take action (handwashing and social distancing, right?). I've put a limit on myself. After morning prayer, once at 3pm, and just before evening prayer I will check the latest from King County. That is plenty. And in conversations, I'm trying to switch from 'here is what I know' to 'here is what I am learning from God and others.'

Worship and Serve God Alone

The Lord of all creation knows... your... name. God our Father has numbered every hair on your head. I woke up at 4am this morning, all the anxieties and sadness catching up with me. There are two choices. I can ruminate on all the fears and loss, or I can repeat short prayers and songs, and intercede for others.

We have a choice about worship. Remember the command, "Fear the LORD and serve him only"? Fear is a natural and good response to danger. Fear is looking for someone or something stronger that can protect. **Direct those fears to the Lord in worship, and God will provide the grace to redirect fear into love that serves our neighbor.** We will continue to worship together via LIVESTREAM (<https://www.upc.org/media/watch-live/>) with UPC in the near future – I am preaching on March 22. And we are seeking ways to support small groups in meeting and worship together as well.

Word – Humility – Worship. Let's allow Jesus to lead and transform us in this season of Lent with all of its unusual circumstances and eternal opportunities.

With love,
Laurie