

The message for July 5 2020

Over the past several weeks, the messages have been focused on our outreach to others in need. How we can follow the ways of Jesus and give hope to others, to be a listening ear and to give comfort especially in these very strange times. For some of us the messages have challenged us and not just because of social distancing. Even if we could be close or in groups, reaching out to others and sharing God's love is not a simple task and it is not simple for us for a variety of reasons.

Some of us have felt fear as a reason for not wanting to reach out to others. Fear of how others will respond to us. Fear that we could lose friendships. Fear of rejections. The list of fears can go on and on. Fear can keep us locked up in our own personal prisons where our only companion is fear itself.

Some may find it hard to reach out to care for others because of anger. Yes, anger. Anger because we cannot always help others due to the new norms of keeping our distance in these strange times. Anger, because we have already done so much to reach out to others in the name of God and we have not seen any tangible results. The world has not changed and we are frustrated and angry that the work we have done means nothing. Sadly, the anger and frustration has left some of us feeling miserable, in turmoil, stuck in a place where we re-live the frustration over and over again.

Pride is another reason some of us are held back from helping others in the name of God. It is because we may be a perfectionist when it comes to anything we do. We don't just want to "keep up with the Joneses"; we have a driving need to be "better than" the Joneses because of a nagging insecurity that when sharing God's love and the Word of God we are not good enough or kind enough or knowledgeable enough to

make a difference in the world. So, we again keep ourselves in a self-imposed prison.

I am sure there are other feelings that we may experience that weigh down upon us and hold us back from answering the call to spread God's love and bring hope to those who feel they have no hope.

These feelings are real, but they can weigh you down and I don't want you to feel this way. I know Jesus does not want you to have these feelings. The feeling that you cannot make a difference in someone's life. That you cannot bring hope for a better future. That you cannot be a part of changing our world. That you feel the weight of the world is on your shoulders.

To help you move beyond these feelings, that you cannot answer the call to help others the way Jesus would like you to do, let us look to scripture. Today's scripture reading comes from Matthew 11; ²⁵ At that time Jesus said, "I thank" you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and the intelligent and have revealed them to infants; ²⁶ yes, Father, for such was your gracious will." ²⁷ All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him.

²⁸ "Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. ²⁹ Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰ For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light."

Jesus is telling us the burdens, the weights, the fears, anger, pride or whatever feeling we may have that holds us back from God and God's love, he will take it on. Jesus wants us to live in peace. The big question

for all of us is how do we release the feelings that hold us back from sharing kindness, comfort and hope for a better future. This is not an easy question to answer, as many of us deal with situations in very different ways. We are all different and what works for one may not work for someone else.

However, there is one thing that I have found that has helped many people lighten the load of their challenges and that is prayer, by handing over to God the pieces of our lives that are weighing us down. I believe this, because of my experiences as a minister and after-hours chaplain at London hospitals and also from some my own personal challenges and hardships. I do a lot of praying. I have prayed for myself and the many members of all of the churches I have served. I have prayed in the hospitals at people's bedsides. I have prayed for long periods of time in times of need. In fact, I have prayed for up to 8 hours in one sitting when the need was presented. I have prayed with and have requested prayers from Prayer Groups and other minister from all denominations. I have seen and felt how the prayers may not have taken away all of the pain, but have lifted or lightened the weight felt during the times of challenge. I have seen how prayers have given strength and comfort to those in need. I have seen the power of prayer. Yes, I believe prayer works. Maybe not always the way I want it to, but how it has given people comfort.

So, as you finish reading today's message, go to God in prayer, let Jesus take on those feelings and burdens that hold you back from being all that you can be. Let Jesus give you comfort and lighten your load.

God Bless

Pastor Paul