Reflection for May 2

By Dan Dick

“For it is to your credit if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, where is the credit in that? But if you endure when you do right and suffer for it, you have God’s approval. For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you should follow in his steps. (1 Peter 2:19-21)

I receive a dozen phone calls and twenty emails a day asking me all kinds of questions for which I have the same answer: “I don’t know.” This unsatisfactory answer is the most honest and accurate response I can give to questions about how long Wisconsin Conference will be impacted by the corona virus, when things will be rescheduled, when will we know about our next bishop or if Bishop Jung will return. All of these questions require answers that I simply don’t have.

But one regular question (concerning COVID-19), for which I DO have an answer is: “Why is God doing this to us?” My answer, consistently, is, “God isn’t doing this to us; but God is in this with us.” Terrible and terrifying things happen on this earth all the time simply because this is the natural order of things. But in natural disaster or human-made atrocity, in death, plague, pestilence, and war, God laments, but God abides. And not only is God with us, but God gives us an example in Jesus Christ how we can navigate and survive in times of trial.

Jesus endured terrible persecution, violence, injustice, and abuse, yet there has never been a person on this earth less deserving of such treatment. Suffering, in and of itself, is not a bad thing. In fact, Paul says to the church at Rome “that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us,” (Romans 3:3b-5a). Suffering is like fallow ground requiring plowing and hoeing and planting in order to produce fruit.

God doesn’t want us to suffer unnecessarily, but when we do suffer, God offers us grace in Jesus Christ that allows us not just to endure, but to grow and to adapt and to succeed and to thrive.

Prayer: Gracious God, it is painful to watch the suffering and the pain and the grief and the fear caused by this terrible virus. It is easy to lose hope. Loving Lord, work within us that beyond our suffering we might endure, strengthen in our character, and live in hope for the future yet to come. And by our hope O Lord, help us become a source of hope and strength for others. Amen.
With all the turmoil whirling around us in response to the COVID-19 virus pandemic, many of us are caught up in anxiety and worry. Plus, in the church, we are working full time to make plans to care for others who are struggling, to change how we worship and offer connection virtually or through phone calls and emails, and we are caring for people we love in our own families and connections. We are inundated with emails and posts and calls and news giving us latest reports and ideas for ways to respond and mis-information and latest information about healthy protections. We wonder what will happen to our churches and finances. Many of us are overloaded and overwhelmed.

In the midst of all of this, there are people reaching out to make a difference, offering generous care to neighbors and community, posting positive life-giving reflections and being the best of who we can be as individuals and as communities of faith. Thank you for all you are doing. We are collecting your stories and ideas and posting them on our conference website. Send them in and also, let us know how we best can support you.

Each day through this time, we as your Wisconsin Cabinet, will be sending you an email with a brief devotion or prayer to provide you with a small bit of care. You each are held in and surrounded by our prayers in the spirit of Christ. Keep breathing. Keep safe. Know that we all rest in the grace and Spirit of God.

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