

Greetings in the Name of the Resurrected King,

Things are odd these days especially for those of us at Table Life Church. We are a community very used to gathering; in fact that is one of our common practices. However, we are learning that gathering can take many forms. Many of us are becoming tech savvier these days. Zoom meetings, live streams, YouTube are all making connecting at least possible for many of us...but it is still not the same. During this pandemic I think about times in Scripture that closely parallel this time. I am drawn these days to the story of God's exiled children in the Old Testament. In 587 B.C., the Babylonians swept across Judah and laid bare all the land. They destroyed homes, marketplaces, and the Temple. Prophets like Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Haggai gave voice to a displaced people and encouraged them to see God anew in a changed world. They encouraged them to allow God to re-envision their faith and find new ways to demonstrate their faithfulness in God.

I have been thinking though that one of the ways prophets spoke into this new situation was to call them to remember God's faithfulness of the past. However, it was not just God's faithfulness to them individually but recalling how God had demonstrated faithfulness to their ancestors. They remember the way God had been faithful to them at the Red Sea, and at Sinai, and when they had been attacked by the Hittites and Amorites. They remembered God's provisions when they were hungry and thirsty in the wilderness. They even recalled the times in the past when they had been unfaithful and God remained steadfast. One of the calls of the exiled prophets was to remember.

As pastor of Christian Formation here at Table Life one of my concerns is that growing in the way of Jesus does not stop during quarantine. We have been searching for ways to keep this growth happening. We have been doing Zoom Table Groups every Wednesday night at 7 PM. On Thursday evening The Guide to Prayer Group has been having a Zoom meeting. The children's program has a YouTube Channel that has new videos for kids and families twice a week and the FUSE youth have Google Classroom set up to connect and encourage through. Then there is of course Sunday worship LiveStreamed every Lord's Day at 11 AM. The question on my mind is, "Is this enough?" and "how is each individual doing personally in learning the way of Jesus?" It makes me think, could this be a time to try some old things in new ways? Could this be a time to start a reading regiment of classic Christian books or read the story of saints of the past who have faced challenging times? Could it be a time to try ancient Christian practices in a new way? Could this be a time to revive past practices that have fallen away and listen to the new thing that God is saying in this time?

Each week that we remain in the quarantine I and members of the Christian formation team are going to offer some tools and tips, and may even some challenges, for you to try during this season to encourage your growth in the way of Jesus.

I have heard several people, and even I have myself, wondered what will we learn from this that may change the way life has been for us. The answer is I do not know, and I don't think anyone can know for sure, but I don't think the Prophets of the exile knew either. We may emerge from this pandemic seeing the world differently. Values and priorities maybe be reorganized. We may even behave differently, but one thing that will not change is that God will be faithful to his beloved children. One thing that I know the exiles learned is that God is not contained by things that we humans think are important. God is adaptable. The challenge for God's people is to also be adaptable in these times.

Blessings to you in the pandemic
All shall be well,
Pastor Jeff

