



***Raquette Lake Chapel Sunday Blast!
April 5, 2020, Palm-Passion Sunday***

This Sunday's Readings from the Revised Common Lectionary

- **Isaiah 50:4-9a**: This passage is one of four servant songs found in Isaiah. The first begins “Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen ...”. In late Judaism, the servant was seen as the perfect Israelite, one of supreme holiness, a messiah. In the gospels, Jesus identifies himself as the servant (or slave), the one who frees all people.
- **Psalms 31:9-16**: A cry to God for help. (“Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am in distress...My times are in your hand...Let your face shine upon your servant”)
- **Philippians 2:5-11**: Paul has just urged the Christians at Philippi, through “encouragement in Christ”, and moved by God’s love for them, to “be of the same mind[set], having the same love, being in full accord ...” They are to “regard others as better than ... [themselves]”, freely adopting a lowly, unassertive stance before others, replacing self-interest with concern for others.
- **Matthew 26:14- 27:66**: It is two days before the combined festivals of Passover and Unleavened Bread. In this particular year, Passover begins on a Thursday evening. Many pilgrims have come to Jerusalem for the celebrations. A woman has anointed Jesus for burial – a rite usually performed after death – but there will be no time then.

Not a Sermon . . .

The picture below shows the “now” Times Square on the left and the “before COVID-19” Times Square on the right. We can almost hear the people on the left saying things similar to what we read in the psalm for today, Psalm 31: “In you, O Lord, I seek refuge...incline your ear to me...You are indeed my rock and my fortress...into Your hand I commit my spirit (vs. 1,2,3,5).”



The 20th century Old Testament scholar Walter Brueggemann has written extensively that the Psalms provide us with a roadmap for the human condition. Since time immemorial people have experienced recurring cycles of what he termed orientation (secure times), disorientation (times of disruption and chaos), and reorientation (times of readjustment to a changed world).

While psalms of orientation reflect the ordinariness of life, life rarely stays orderly and coherent; at times it can be brutal and irrational. We can watch our world collapse without warning, and we are pulled down into what seems a dark pit. In this space of disorientation hangs a great sense of abandonment. The psalmist moans, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Ps 22:1). Our usual response to this rupture of our equilibrium is denial. We want to believe that things are really OK, but even if we know they are not, we certainly do not want anyone else to know. Our denial forces us to cover up. We put on a happy face, and our isolation grows more intense.



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And in case you didn't know it: we are in "disorientation" and things are not all right.

I'll use the analogy of driving down the highway. For us in the North Country, let's say we're heading south on the I87 Northway towards Albany. It's a long stretch of road, usually not heavily travelled. Even in winter, it's usually clear of snow and ice. But today is a nice, sunny spring day, and we're moving along smoothly. Getting to Albany at this point takes less than two hours ("orientation"). Then, we start to see those dreaded square orange signs telling us to slow down, and the road narrows to one lane. And then, the big arrow pointing right labelled "DETOUR." We entering uncharted territory ("disorientation").

We turn off the highway onto a side road we have never been on and proceed at half the speed we were driving on the interstate. How far does the detour go? Where will it take us? How long will it take us to get to Albany now? We have no idea. What choices do we have? None. Can we turn around and go another way? No. We're stuck in unknown territory.

I feel like that these days. Some days I'm relaxed and content on this unknown route. Other days...not so much. When I listen to the news or read the papers, I see people just as confused and uneasy as I am. Yet, as people of faith, we have support to go to. Brueggemann reminds us we are not alone: God is with us and all those who have gone before us are with us...and, thankfully, they recorded their journeys in the Psalms.

There are many psalms to turn to, but I'd like to recommend a few:

- [Psalms of Orientation](#), a confident belief that the world (ultimately) is well: Psalms 1, 8, 24
- [Psalms of Disorientation](#), the brokenness of life, but bold acts of faith: Psalms 22, 23, 143
- [Psalms of Reorientation](#), new possibilities out of the darkness: Psalms 27, 100, 124

No, we are not alone. God is with us and we are in community. All around us are signs of neighbor helping neighbor. Scripture and conversations can help in times where we may seem alone. Be well and stay in touch with your neighbors! May it be so. Amen.

This Week Prayers for . . .

- We pray specifically for Kevin's continued health, Debbie and John.
- all who are suffering from illness or fear of illness and uncertainty.
- all healthcare workers.
- all who are in danger of losing their livelihoods.

New YouTube Videos . . .

I'll continue to put a short Sunday evening prayer service on YouTube. Tonight, we'll have a short Compline service from the Celtic Daily Prayer Book. This link will take you to the Evening Prayer videos:

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCbEMZwngMxckndnW_cRFCaA