

## Promoting & Cultivating Hope in a Challenging Time

### Remember the Sabbath & Keep it Holy



In many faith traditions the words: “This is the day the Lord has made, Let us rejoice & be glad in it”, are frequently used as a call to worship at the start of the day. The God we worship, created the universe, all people & every living thing in it & proclaimed it “good.” Throughout the Bible & through our own experiences with God we know that God is an all knowing, all powerful, steadfast, loving presence

that guides us & loves us all unconditionally. Through His Grace, God created all human beings in His image. As those created in His image, we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to be God’s instruments of His peace, love, justice, & healing in this world, through our very being. The power to be peacemakers for God, is found in God & not in us. It is God who does the healing & brings peace. God uses us & empowers us to be vessels to bring others healing & peace. Without His strength & power, our deeds would be in vain. This blessing & this calling to witness for God & to live as vessels for His glory, is both a blessing & a challenge for us, for we live in a very challenging time in this world. Though we know God’s nature in our hearts, there are days when we just don’t feel like rejoicing aren’t there? At times the world God created appears to be seriously broken doesn’t it? Sometimes rejoicing is the last thing we are thinking about. However, since each day was created & given by God, each day - whether broken or whole, is the Lord’s day, containing the hope & potential to reflect the image of our Creator. So, we as His vessels are able to rejoice because of our faith in our living God - which is the bedrock of our hope & thus the fuel for our healing. Thankfully, we do not walk alone through our days, God is always there with us. God knows that on our own, without Him, we are but empty vessels & so He graciously calls us to pause in Sabbath time with Him, to remember to take time throughout each day to come to Him, to be Holy with Him, to speak with Him, to listen to Him, to feed on His Word & to abide in His love.

As we go forward in faith as vessels for God, bringing love, hope & peace for these days, we are all invited to: “Take time to be Holy, Speak oft with thy Lord; Abide in Him always, And feed on His Word. Make friends of God’s children, Help those who are weak; Forgetting in nothing His blessing to seek. Take time to be Holy, The world rushes on. Much time spend in secret With God alone; By looking to God, Like Him thou shalt be; Thy friends in thy conduct His likeness shall see. Take time to be Holy, Let Him be thy guide, And run not before Him Whatever betide. In joy or in sorrow Still follow thy Lord, And, looking to God, still trust in His Word.”

## Current Challenges



At the time of this writing, there is no doubt at all, that all of God's creation is currently living in a time of extraordinary challenge. It has been said by many that the very soul of the nation, or the very soul of the world for that matter, is in danger. For over 4 months, all of God's creation has been challenged to live through a global pandemic caused by the Covid-19 virus. In addition to the over 110,000 deaths in the

United States alone & the physical pain & suffering caused by this virus, & the attempts to manage this virus through necessary mandated quarantines have caused many public businesses to close & consequently many to lose their jobs creating situations of poverty. Since this virus is a rapidly spreading disease with no current cure, its existence has caused tremendous stress, fear, grief, loneliness, sacrifice, poverty, & feelings of hopelessness about the future. Though there is some indication that the virus is decreasing, there continues to be threats of a resurgence.

In addition to the pandemic caused by the Covid-19 virus, during this challenging time there has been a dramatic increase in hostile actions fueled by racial prejudice. Some would say that the increase of racial prejudice at this time is another type of a pandemic that is sweeping across the world & that it has existed in one form or another for many years. This increased racial prejudice at this time is resulting in: increased acts of violence, brutality, injustice, & the misuse of power both in word & deed, all in the name of keeping the peace. However, peace does not appear to be forthcoming any time soon, though there does seem to be some indication that change is in the wind.

## Cultivating Hope & Love

The two current pandemics, the virus & the increase of racial prejudice & unrest occurring at the same time, have challenged us to search for ways to live with any sense of hope for the future & in some cases, with any sense of equanimity & love for one another. With no cure & increased violence & despair, it is easy to allow ourselves to become overwhelmed & to feel hopeless & powerless to change the course at this time. As children of God, called to be stewards of all of creation & vessels to reflect God's love & hope & healing to creation, the question for us in these challenging days is: "What is God calling us to do at this time?" The fact is, there is no clear or easy answer to that question for it is not a question of "doing", rather it is a question of "being". How are we to "be", as God's children at this time? In answer to that question, God is inviting us to abide with Him & in Him. We are called to keep our focus on Him & to come to Him daily to be fed & led by Him. God is the vine & we are the branches, cut off from Him we can do nothing. We are all invited to trust & live into the fact that God will lead the way for us, guiding us by faith, into the new day where we all are able to live into His image, in which we were all created.

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