

*Behold I am with you always, to the close of the age.*

(Mt 28:20)

Beloved

Jesus appeared within the locked room, the closed mind, the frozen heart, and said, "Peace be with you." Christ's followers had self-isolated in fear of the Jews and of the Romans. They doubted. They wondered, what's happened. Everything is changing. When they leave their upper room, the world will be different.

We have been quarantined within our homes, within our fears, our doubts, our insecurities, our worries. We looked out our windows and saw unrealized dreams, uncertain futures. We are face a new normal, but we want to return to what was. We do not know who or what to trust. From the news on TV, social media, the paper, reports, stats, the conversations on Zoom we do not know truth. Even the experts keep changing their messages. Chaos, pure chaos. How will we go on?

Now as we are slowly emerging, we look at a changing world. What now? What next? When will it return to the way I like it? The way it was used to be?

The angels appeared to the shepherds and said, "Peace be with you." Jesus tells us He will always be with us. On Pentecost with a rush of wind and tongues of fire, the Holy Spirit came upon the believers. God came to remain with us. To accompany. To strengthen. To comfort. To be a helper. When we look out our window and see an uncertain future, God puts His arm around us as we face change and whispers in our ears, "Fear not."

Jesus goes before us. He journeys with us. We are not alone. Just because we don't understand or do not like what is going on around us, does not mean we are alone. Even though we know God is with us, we still have times of doubt, which is part of a growing faith. We still say, "I don't want things to change," which is normal, who likes change. But everything changes. Water freezes and changes into ice. Babies change into adults. As the world rotates and as it orbits the sun, things change, night turns to day, winter into summer.

Change isn't always easy, but it's necessary – it's life. A virus is running amok in our world. People are getting sick. Many, too many, are dying. Lives are changing. Business have closed, people are laid off. As things reopen – they've changed, fewer tables, fewer people allowed inside, fewer employees, specific traffic patterns laid out. We are told

where to stand and when to move. People wear masks. It's ruining all of my fun. Take away my individuality. And it's not comfortable.

The world is changing. Air is cleaner. Water is clearer. Animals are reemerging.

Things are changing to protect life. People wear masks and keep their distance so the virus will not spread. We have fewer opportunities to gather, to be safe, not to be mean.

Habits are changing. How we socialize is changing. How we hold meetings is changing. More people work from home – and some probably always will. There is less business traveling, there is less traveling, period. How we shop is changing. How we worship is changing. How we are Church is changing.

Things they are a changing. Can't stop it. Can't change it. Such is history. A compilation of changes. War, peace. Boom, bust. Leadership. Exploration. Discovery. Environment. Culture. Trends. Styles. Change keeps life interesting. Some changes we like, some we don't. Some are good, some aren't. Like Montana weather, if you don't like it - stick around a bit, it'll change.

So how do we go on from here, in this uncertain time, while everything is changing. It's like living in a mix-master. We can hide our heads in the sand, refusing to accept. We can anticipate, looking forward to the next adventure. We can appreciate some of the changes and learn to live with others. We can try to drag the past along with us. We can reflect on the past and hold memories in our hearts. We can move slowly or with a spring in our step. We can be depressed or we can await each new day. We can make the most of it, learn something new. We can try to compromise our past with our new normal.

We, as Christ followers, look at all of the different reactions and try to figure out how we are to minister to these extremes and to those in the middle. How is God - God in the midst of this? How will we go on?

Jesus appears within the locked room, the closed minds, the frozen hearts, and says, "Peace be with you." We recall the Easter words, Jesus spoke to the women, "Do not be afraid; I have gone ahead of you, if you follow, you will see me there."

I bid you peace

Pastor Tonia