

Though the fig tree does not bud
and there are no grapes on the vines,
though the olive crop fails
and the fields produce no food,
though there are no sheep in the pen
and no cattle in the stalls,
yet I will rejoice in the Lord,
I will be joyful in God my Savior. (Habakkuk 3:17-18)

Though the shop doors are locked and there are no workers at the plant, though the streets are empty and the store is closed, though there are no public church services, and no restaurants are open, yet will I rejoice in the Lord. I will be joyful in God my Savior

Though I'm now without work and there seems to be no end to this Pandemic, though the unemployment line is so long I can't get through and the bottom of my money is in site, though I fear to go out of my house, and the numbers contaminated continue to rise, yet will I rejoice in the Lord. I will be joyful in God my Savior

Though I can't gather with friends and there are no coffee shops open, though the internet is slow and these four walls are closing in on me, though I fear the news I hear and there seems to be no end to the fear I feel, yet will I rejoice in the Lord. I will be joyful in God my Savior

Fear Not. God is with. Words of encouragement, which at times sound as if by rote. They have no depth. They bounce right off my ears. Words which sound good, but don't take away my reality.

These are trying times. This is a disease we've never seen. The numbers are daunting, they're horrifying. They are scary and the reality is closing in on us. I'm out of milk, but scared to go to the store. My finances are dwindling. I'm thankful for the stimulus check, but I'd rather go back to work tomorrow. I want to know my place of work will be able to reopen with this is over. I, I, I, I... there is nothing you can say to make me feel better. I'm scared.

The prophet, Habakkuk, wrote during the end of the Assyrian captivity, soon Egypt and Babylon would fight over Judah. The present and the future were bleak. There was no way this would turn out well. Judah's economy was failing – the figs, the grapes, the olives, the sheep, the cattle, all gone. There was nothing left. The economic pins had been kicked out from underneath the kingdom.

What to do? What to think, to believe? How to react, how to go forward? Be bitter? Angry? Turn to God? To self? Blame God? Switch parties? Hide? Go plant a new crop? Fold? Get on the band wagon?

The business is going under – we can lock the doors, lay off the employees or repurposed the workforce and the factories. Instead of making seatbelts make face masks and other protective gear. Switch from building V-8's to ventilators. The restaurant can't open to serve the public. Instead of laying off all of their employees, continue to cook and feed the homeless. These days bring out the worst and the best of humanity. Care for others, work together to do what needs to be done here, now.

Be a good neighbors – stay at home. Do not become infected and do not infect others. If you have to go out maintain physical distance, wash your hands, don't touch your face, be smart. Respect the disease. Respect the medical authorities. Respect those working to protect us.

Use this time to accomplish something. Clean a room – or two. Paint a picture. Knit a sweater. Call an acquaintance. Write a letter. Write a book. Sort a drawer. Empty a closet. Be productive. Spend intentional time with God. Read scripture, be in prayer.

No, everything isn't rosy, but the sky is not falling. Be still and know God is still God. God will never leave us. Habakkuk knew God was still God and, even though he realized the situation was bleak, declared he would rejoice in the Lord and be joyful in God his savior.

Lent tends to be the dark before dawn. It gets as dark as it can. Christ is about His Father's business, yet is denied, betrayed, abandoned, crucified. Because He loved. He hangs on a cross and cries out, "My God, my God, why did You forsake me?" He endured it all to save us from the worse which can come our way. He endured it all for love. Soon, we will see the resurrected Christ.

Though I am scared and cannot leave my home. Though Coronavirus threatens to destroy our economy and people act like it doesn't affect them, though I fear for the future, myself, and loved ones, yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God my Savior.

Easter Blessings

Pastor Tonia