

HOMILY EASTER- April 12, 2020

When I am down and, oh my soul so weary;
When troubles come and my heart burdened be;
Then, I am still and wait here in the silence,
Until you come and sit a while with me.

You raise me up, so I can stand on mountains
You raise me up, to walk on stormy seas
I am strong when I am on your shoulders
You raise me up...to more than I can be

Our hearts are really burdened this Easter. Today spend some time being still and spend some time just sitting with Jesus. He will help you. He will calm you. And he will raise you up to be more than you can be on your own. Jesus will see us through this.

In the Gospel reading, we hear an account of that first Easter morning. We hear the reading, we hear about the empty tomb, and we know about the Resurrection. But that is not how the disciples experienced things that first Easter. Three people were at the tomb in this Gospel account. First there was Mary Magdalene. She saw that the stone was removed and thought that someone had taken Jesus from the tomb. She ran to get Peter and John. Peter arrived at the tomb first and found the tomb empty. He did not know what to think. But when John saw the empty tomb he believed. He knew that Jesus had been raised from the dead, but he was the only one who understood at this time. There is no description of the Resurrection in Scripture. No one observed it. It took the disciples a while to figure that out. It took faith in Jesus.

Easter unfolded for them over a period of time. At first, they all locked themselves in the upper room out of fear. Just like us this Easter, they stayed at home, or at least in the upper room for a period of time. I imagine they sent someone out for food and necessities from time to time, just like us, but for the most part they stayed at home. And they were afraid, just like we have a lot of fears and anxieties at this time. They faced the fears and anxieties together and figured things out together with God's help and we need to do the same.

We are all feeling some fear and anxiety. We cannot avoid the fear. We must name it and own it, but we cannot be defined by our fear. There are other feelings underlying the fear and anxiety. Maybe anger, confusion, sadness or grief. We need to name these feelings as well and then bring them to Jesus. We need to let Jesus help us cope with the fear and anxiety. One of the things that we tend to do is copy the behavior of

others around us. Sometimes that is unhealthy. That is what gets us to start hoarding things like toilet paper, water, cleaning products or masks. People did not start hoarding things in isolation. They were copying the behavior of others. I have to admit, I have never thought too much about toilet paper and I have never bought Clorox wipes, but when people started hoarding them I thought a lot about them. But when you bring that to Jesus you realize that hoarding toilet paper and Clorox wipes are not going to relieve you of your fear and anxiety. Get what you need and let it go. People are starting to realize that. The teachers at our school had a lot of Clorox wipes and hand sanitizer that they no longer needed. They donated it to a hospital where people really need it. People are donating masks to our medical health professionals, who really need them now. We need to bring all of these feelings to Jesus and allow him to clarify our values with us. Donating these items to health care providers is consistent with our values, not hoarding them.

We need to allow Jesus to clarify our values with us. If you are afraid that people you love may die, you feel this because you love them and care for them. Maybe staying away from grandparents now is the loving thing to do even if you want to be with them. Reach out to them in healthy ways. Maybe there is someone you need to apologize to or try and reconcile with or just reconnect with. Maybe you are afraid of getting sick yourself. Take care of yourself by eating healthy, getting some exercise and getting enough sleep. Let our Christian values drive our decisions. Who is the person you want to be in the midst of this pandemic. How are you going to live through these days? What direction will your life take? Jesus will help us figure that out.

On that first Easter morning, God rolled the stone away. That began a whole process of discovery for the disciples. Today, the coronavirus may seem to be too massive to be rolled away, but nothing is impossible with God. The stone will be rolled away little by little. God will give us new courage and strength to work through this. The disciples eventually figured it out with the help of God. The disciples eventually left the upper room and continued with their ministry. We will be able to leave our homes and continue our ministry as well. We need to remember that love is greater than hate, hope is greater than despair, life is stronger than death. Some will die, but they have the promise of eternal life. Jesus has saved us. This Easter promises new life for all of us. This is only temporary. Sit a while with Jesus. He will help you.