



The Bell Ringer

Blue Mound UMC, April 2020



Pastor's Page

Where is God?

Big Thoughts in a COVID-19 World

Every now and again it seems our world gets turned upside down. The stock market crash of 1929 and the Great Depression that followed; December 7, 1941 – Pearl Harbor Day; September 11, 2001 – planes crashing into the Twin Towers, the Pentagon and a field in Pennsylvania. Internationally, we think of the Holocaust of WWII, the genocides in Bosnia and Rwanda, and wars around the world. We think of the refugees trying to escape life-threatening conditions, while at home there have been mass-shootings and a wide range of other public tragedies. Each day thousands face personal tragedies. How many times over all these years, and through all these tragedies, have people wondered where God might be? Wondered why God had done to them what had been done, or why God had allowed it to happen - all thoughts that may be occurring to some during this present season of COVID-19.

The answer is as simple as God is complex: God has been there through it all, standing with us, crying with us, sharing our fears and anguish, sending God's Holy Spirit to guide and comfort us. Our God is a God of love. God cares about every bit of God's creation, and every one of us. Matthew 6:26 tells us, "Look at the birds in the sky. They don't sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet our God in heaven feeds them. Aren't you more important than they?" (The Inclusive Bible). God did not create us so that God could mess with us, throwing chaos into our path for the fun of it. God does not act out of anger, dragging us into the desert so that we could die an agonizing death (see Exodus 17). Though God may be deeply disappointed with us at times, God does not punish us. We do a good job of that ourselves.

You see, God created us out of an abundance of love – love that surpasses our ability to understand it. Real, genuine love – not a passing crush, not a barroom hookup, but real, genuine love; and in creating us, God wanted us to love in return. God knew that the only way we could truly express our love was to give us the choice not to love; that decision also gave us the ability to sin – to disobey, to turn our backs on God. Guess what? We chose to do just that. The story of Adam and Eve illustrates this clearly (see Genesis 3).

In our sinfulness, we tend to blame God and others, rather than take responsibility for our own actions. We blame the government for making our lives miserable while trying to keep everyone safe when a virus takes hold and spreads. We complain rather than seek opportunities to show our love for one another, our love for God. We sin when we could shine.

Our God is a God of Love, a God who forgives, regardless of what we have done. But that does not mean that there will not be consequences – usually consequences of our own making. Nevertheless, God's Spirit will provide guidance and comfort during troubled times, if we still ourselves and listen. God will provide for our needs if we heed God's call. God will not keep us out of the "valley of the shadow of death" (Psalm 23:4, KJV) but will accompany us throughout the journey.

So where is God? God is in each one of us when we pray for each other. God is in each one who loves their neighbor and checks in on them once in a while – especially during these isolating times. God is with each person who buys only what they need, and doesn't hoard supplies out of fear. God is with those who share. God works through each person who agrees to serve as God's hands and feet, building God's Kingdom here on earth, not waiting to find it at the end. God offers peace, abundant peace. God does not give as the world gives. "Do not let your hearts be troubled, and do not let them be afraid" (John 14:27, NRSV). God is with you – call a local church if you need help finding him.

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Pastor Kevin