

From the Pews, Corey Sanders

I will never forget when the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center went down on September 11th, 2001. While just a kid in grade school, the memories of watching the news in my classroom, being pulled out of school early, and rushing home to seek shelter with my family will forever be engrained in my mind. Looking back on it, I think the scariest aspect of it all was the fear of the unknown. Who flew those planes into the buildings? Why did they do it? Is it going to happen again? Initially these were questions that did not have answers. The unknown instantly casted immense fear over the lives of millions of Americans.

Today, I cannot help but struggle with the same thing...the fear of the unknown. If you are anything like me, you are constantly watching the news, reading articles, and having conversations about what is happening with Covid-19. The craziness of it all is the more I try and listen and learn, the more confused and conflicted I become. Depending on the news outlet, the doctors being interviewed, or the political alignment, everyone seems to have something different to say. As our state is set to begin reopening, I am finding myself struck with this fear of the unknown. Is it too early? Is it safe? Should we ease into this slower? If only there was one universally vetted source to tell us what to do and how to respond...

Our New Testament reading today helps answer this question. I think it speaks to handling the fear of the unknown. In this passage, Jesus is about to leave his disciples. His ultimate death is approaching, and he knows he will not be with his disciples for much longer. I can only imagine his disciples shared that same fear of the unknown. Who will guide us and teach us when you are gone? The beauty of this passage is Jesus provides the solution, The Holy Spirit. More specifically, our advocate sent by God the Father to remind us, teach us, and provide us comfort and guidance.

Thinking back to September 11th, I remember seeing the Holy Spirit work in the midst of great tragedy. There was a universal reminder to love your neighbor and to help those in need. People were reminded of the principles that Jesus taught. Strange how that works, isn't it? Today is no different. I've seen countless stories of people loving their neighbors and looking out for each other. People are offering their time and resources to help those in need. I've seen churches rally around their members and communities to make sure people are fed. These are just a few examples of the Holy Spirit at work.

We might not have the exact solution to defeating this virus, but we do have a clear answer on how to respond. In the face of tragedy and uncertainty, the Holy Spirit guides us just as it was promised many years ago. I am choosing to listen to the words of Jesus in John's gospel. I will rest in the promise that the Holy Spirit is present and among us and will guide us through the unknown. Let's commit to finding where the Holy Spirit is, answering the call to serve the community around us, and finding comfort in the peace left to us by our gracious savior.

WESTMINSTER PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Sunday, May 10, 2020 | online, 11:15a | Fifth Sunday of Easter



Preparation for **Worship**

“Joy is a mystery because it can happen anywhere, anytime, even under the most unpromising circumstances, even in the midst of suffering, with tears in its eyes.”

— Frederick Buechner

Gathering and Preparing for **God's Word**

Prelude, *Prelude in Classic Style* Young
Welcome and Announcements

Sentences of Scripture, *Selections from Deuteronomy 33*
There is none like God who rides through the heavens to your help,
majestic to the skies.

Happy are you, O Israel! Who is like you, a people saved by the Lord,
the shield of your help, and the sword of your triumph!

Hymn #687 *Our God, Our Help in Ages Past* ST. ANNE
See hymn sheet.

Morning Prayers
The Lord's Prayer

**Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name,
thy kingdom come, thy will be done,
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our debts
as we forgive our debtors; and lead us not into temptation,
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory forever.**

Response *Dona Nobis Pacem*
(trans. "Give us peace")

Hearing **God's Word**

Prayer for Illumination
Gospel Lesson, *John 14:25-27*
Time for Children
Old Testament Lesson, *Psalms 31:1-5, 15-16*
Homily "What is Saving Your Life?"

Responding to **God's Word**

Affirmation of Faith, Adapted from *A Brief Statement of Faith*
In life and in death we belong to God.

Through the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God,
and the communion of the Holy Spirit,
we trust in the one true God, the Holy One of Israel,
whom alone we worship and serve.

We trust in Jesus Christ,
Fully human, fully God.
Jesus proclaimed the reign of God:
preaching good news to the poor and release to the captives,
teaching by word and deed and blessing the children,
healing the sick and binding up the brokenhearted,
eating with outcasts,
forgiving sinners,
and calling all to repent and believe the gospel.

Duet *Nothing to Fear* Asaad
Prayer of Dedication
Hymn #463 *How Firm a Foundation* FOUNDATION
Charge and Benediction
Postlude *The Heavens Declare the Glory of God* Marcello

Leading Worship **this Morning**

Ben Dorr, *preaching*
Mary Kathleen Duncan, Lauren Slingerland, Leigh Stuckey, *liturgists*
Nancy Smith, *organist*
Kelly Kemp, Mark Kemp, *vocalists*
Ellis McLarty, *cello*

687 Our God, Our Help in Ages Past

(Psalm 90)

1 Our God, our help in a - ges past, our
 2 Be - neath the shad - ow of thy throne thy
 3 Be - fore the hills in or - der stood, or
 4 A thou - sand a - ges in thy sight are

hope for years to come, our shel - ter from the
 saints have dwelt se - cure; suf - fi - cient is thine
 earth re - ceived its frame, from ev - er - last - ing
 like an eve - ning gone, short as the watch that

storm - y blast, and our e - ter - nal home:
 arm a - lone, and our de - fense is sure.
 thou art God, to end - less years the same.
 ends the night be - fore the ris - ing sun.

5 Time, like an ever rolling stream, 6 Our God, our help in ages past,
 bears all our years away; our hope for years to come,
 they fly forgotten, as a dream be thou our guard while life shall last,
 dies at the opening day. and our eternal home.

Many people sing this hymn unaware that it paraphrases Psalm 90, partly because this text speaks so immediately to the human condition. Since the middle of the 19th century, it has usually been joined to this tune named for the London parish where the composer was organist.

463 How Firm a Foundation

1 How firm a foun - da - tion, ye saints of the Lord,
 2 "Fear not, I am with thee, O be not dis - mayed,
 3 "When through the deep wa - ters I call thee to go,
 5 "The soul that on Je - sus hath leaned for re - pose,

is laid for your faith in God's ex - cel - lent Word!
 for I am thy God, and will still give thee aid;
 the riv - ers of sor - row shall not o - ver - flow;
 I will not, I will not de - sert to its foes;

What more can be said than to you God hath said,
 I'll strength - en thee, help thee, and cause thee to stand,
 for I will be near thee, thy trou - bles to bless,
 that soul, though all hell should en - deav - or to shake,

to you who for ref - uge to Je - sus have fled?
 up - held by my righ - teous, om - nip - o - tent hand.
 and sanc - ti - fy to thee thy deep - est dis - tress.
 I'll nev - er, no, nev - er, no, nev - er for - sake."

It seems odd now to think of singing this text to ADESTE FIDELES, but mainline churches did so well into the 20th century because of a cultural bias against shape note music. The vigor of the present tune seems especially right for the final line's reference to Hebrews 13:5.