

“What Now – Living With Pain”

The Reverend Dr. Jack M. Horner, Jr.

Don't just listen to the Sermon...Ponder how you can live it!

Use these questions as a starting point to dive deeper into the sermon each week. Can be used individually, with family and friends, or with your Life-group!

1. Share a favorite memory of a mother or grandmother.
2. What are you doing through the Covid 19 shutdown? Any new habits, activities, hobbies?
3. How do you deal with feelings of inadequacy or loss of control?
4. What part of the activities of the Acts 2 church gets you most excited?
5. How can suffering be redemptive? (2 Peter 2.19-25)
6. Psalm 23 is the most well-known psalm. Why do you think that is?

How does knowing Jesus as your Good Shepherd help you through difficult times?

Grace and peace be to you from our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

This morning I wished my wife Happy Mother's Day. Yes, I am off by a week. Twice before during this shutdown I didn't know what day it was, now I don't know what week it is! Such is life these days. But it fits our worship theme for today, “What Now – Living With Pain.”

So, what have you been doing through this Covid 19 shutdown? More time with the kids? Crafts or home improvement projects? Zoom meetings? New habits or hobbies? I don't know about you, but I haven't play this much Yahtzee since the early 80's.

Ministry is different, that is for sure. Within a week Trinity saw a major shift in ministry from direct, face to face, person to person, to digital and virtual. And the convenience of

Zoom meetings has increased our participation in our ministry in some areas. For me, that digital world has taken the form of watching Covid 19 updates with medical professionals from a variety of sites. I probably know more about Covid than I do the common cold.

I've been taking online blues guitar classes from the guitar maker Fender who offered three months of free lessons at the beginning of this crisis. It has been both fun and challenging.

I also find myself watching YouTube clips and shows around survival themes. I can pack a “get home bag” with the best of them, build a shelter in the woods made out of sticks and leaves, and I can help you select the best multitool, and if you need a paracord survival bracelet, I'm your man!

My wife thinks I'm crazy. But it got me thinking, these are such different shutdown shelter in place activities, Covid updates, guitar lessons, and survival preparation.

As I thought about it though, I began to see the link and the link is my inadequacy, my pain. I want to learn and understand Covid 19 because it is touching the world and the people that I love. I want to play the guitar better because I've just been okay at it. I don't know how to do the things that I admire in better guitar players and wish that I could do.

And the survival videos, well yeah maybe I'm a little crazy! But behind it is a desire to get some measure of control in a world situation that scares me. To become a little more prepared, a little stronger, a little more capable.

So, this has become a part of me and where I am at this point emotionally, psychologically, and even spiritually as I find myself asking for God's help in prayer more often.

And there is another link that occurred to me. In all of those three areas I am seeking out guides, people who can teach me, mentor me, help me. I need someone to show me the way. A doctor, or a teacher, or a guide.

Our scripture verses for today are all linked very much with this same theme. In Acts one of my favorite passages of the Bible we see the perfect description of the first century church. Notice the verbs that are a part of that chapter. Those action words. It's what the church, how this fledging Christian community behaved. They were devoted, they worshiped, they were fellowshiping, believing, sharing, giving, praising, saving. It is the work of the church, our work! And they were bound together in these holy actions as we are as well.

And friends in Christ are never alone! Through the tough time, the natural disasters, disease, even persecution, the church cares for one another and the world. They learned and guided each other into this new life that was offered by Jesus Christ. And it is a good life, a rich life, a full life!

1 Peter teaches us that as followers of Jesus, in our pain and our suffering those experiences are linked with Jesus's pain and suffering.

Now we may suffer for a variety of reasons. Some suffering comes as a direct result of our own sin; some happens because of our foolishness; and some is the result of living in a fallen world, "it is just how the world is."

But Peter writes about suffering that comes as a result of doing good. Jesus never sinned, and yet he suffered so that we could be set free from our sin.

And so, we as Jesus followers follow in his steps. When we follow Jesus' example and live for others, we too may suffer. And we see that in the lives in the doctors and nurses and other health care professionals and so many others who are helping to care for our basic need during this pandemic.

Our goal should be to face suffering as he did, with patience, calmness, and confidence, knowing that God controls the future. Knowing that God never abandons us in the midst of our pain.

In Psalm 23 and John's gospel we meet a God who is a shepherd to his people. It is a beautiful image, a great image. A shepherd leads their sheep to green pastures, provides for their needs, even protects them from danger. Sometimes that danger comes from themselves. Sheep often get themselves into trouble and sometimes it is because of unseen threats in the dark. At night shepherds would build simple corrals with three sides with branches and rocks and lie over the open side at night. Their bodies became the gate keeping the flock safe from harm and threat.

We all need those guides, mentors, shepherds and protectors in our life. Sometimes life has pain or suffering or challenges or inadequacies that we think that we cannot overcome. The shadows encircle us, and hope seems a distant memory.

But then, but then we hear the voice of Jesus, our good shepherd and guardian, calling us. He calls us to a place of comfort and blessed assurance so that we can have life and have it abundantly.

I may not know what day it is or what week it is, but I know this, He calls you, He calls each one of us to devote ourselves to **his** teaching and fellowship with each other in whatever form that may take, be it face to face, or virtually, so that we can live lives of gratitude and generosity and praise.

Oh, and don't forget Happy Mother's Day Week! Amen.

In the name of the Father, and of the + Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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