

Daily Devotional, March 30, 2021 Beyond Our Denial—Resurrection!

While they were reclining at the table eating, he said, “Truly I tell you, one of you will betray me—one who is eating with me.” They were saddened, and one by one they said to him, “Surely you don’t mean me?” “It is one of the Twelve,” he replied, “one who dips bread into the bowl with me. Mark 14:18-20 (NIV)

Now, these don’t feel like very encouraging verses, do they? You’re right, they don’t seem very encouraging. Yet, here Jesus was at the table with his closest disciples, calling out the imminent denial and betrayal of one of these same twelve disciples. As *discouraging* as it might have felt to them and may appear to us, it is still an important part of this story. Without this betrayal, Jesus’ impending sacrifice could not happen. It was all a part of the plan.

Jesus was rejected, denied, and betrayed. All of these diseased human traits would lead to his eventual death on the cross, but from that cross, we learn that it is not only Jesus’ human body that dies, but also does our human sin. What dies is our betrayal, our denial, and every other transgression we have committed in this life. Through Christ’s death on the cross, every single one of our faults is forgiven. Through the love of Jesus shown on the cross, we are cleansed and made new.

I have to confess, when all this chaos of coronavirus and quarantine started, I was somewhat in denial. At first, I thought this certainly won’t come here, that it wouldn’t disrupt life all that much, and that if anything, we would be back together in church in short order. In the back of my mind, I kept thinking and planning for Holy Week and Easter as if it were going to happen, as if we were going to all be worshiping together. Even after the official mandate of “close until further notice,” I still didn’t believe it would somehow interfere with our Easter celebration. As serious as the spread of the virus began to appear, I was certain that a remedy would suddenly appear. Surely it wouldn’t get in the way of our most holy day!

Obviously, I was in denial. But today I am witnessing a glimmer of light at the end of the proverbial tunnel. We are able at this time to spend this holy week, and the coming Easter together again! It will be different. It will feel a bit strange to those who are hesitant after not attending in a very long time. But we are allowed up to 50 people at each service and I am highly optimistic that we will see many people returning,

The church still believes in resurrection! On the other side of this pandemic, the church will again experience and celebrate resurrection. We will gather to confess how we have failed, to sing and pray and to know that we are forgiven and freed for joyful obedience through Jesus Christ our Lord. Even now, we are experiencing a new kind of freedom, the freedom to really experience the solemnness of this week, and the expectation of the future beyond. I’m embracing this time, finding new ways to share the gospel. By the end of this I might be a professional virtual worship leader! However, the most important thing I will know is that life, though disrupted, continues.

God is continuing to create something new in all of us, even if we are in denial, even while we are unaware. God will continue to create and recreate something new in us until beyond our denial and resistance, we will be formed into what we were meant to be all along. And the only one who will be betrayed is the old person we have left behind. It is time for a new resurrection!

Prayer: Lord Jesus, my Savior, forgive my sins, just as You forgave Judas’ betrayal and Peter’s denial and those who crucified You. Don’t count my transgressions, but, rather, my cries of repentance. Please accept my sorrow for the offenses I have committed against You. I long to be true to Your Word, and I pray that You will love me and to make Your dwelling place inside of me. I bring You my praise and glorify Your name in true love and service every day going forward. Amen.