

Daily Devotional, September 2, 2021 Give Thanks—Don't Give in to Despair

God set them in the vault of the sky to give light on the earth, to govern the day and the night, and to separate light from darkness. And God saw that it was good. Genesis 1:17-18 (NIV)

I had a really good Sunday last week! Back from vacation and feeling refreshed, I had a really good Sunday last week! It was so good to see each of our members face-to-face and in person—distanced and masked, of course. As human beings we are social creatures. We need to be in relationship. We need each other's care and support. Isolation is not good for us.

These past few weeks have become harder on us, because they remind us of the health risks and the economic hardship we have endured for roughly 1 ½ years already.. But in most of our lives, it is the loss of social connection which is the most difficult. More than ever, we long to gather and be with people. I have always liked being a part of a church family. It was how I was raised, and it is an important part of each year and stage of my life. We come together with all of our uniqueness and diversity. And God makes of us one people, one family, one community of care.

I was thinking about the Lord's Prayer. Did you ever realize that It's written in the plural? "Our father, give us, our daily bread, our debts" and so on. "Give thanks this day for the gift of "us." God gives us each other. Your neighbors and classmates are a gift. Your family and church family are a blessing. Your co-workers and city are strengths and helps. Today, we are fighting this virus together. We are enduring financial crisis together. We are working to overcome prejudice as one. We will overcome isolation and worry, challenge and obstacle together. Committed to one another with care, especially in crisis, we find great strength and hope. I recall the Old Testament story during a famine and many deaths when Ruth clung to Naomi promising "Where you go I will go." We are in this together! Those women made it through!

I give thanks for you—all of you and each of you. Let us keep connecting in new and creative ways. Join a zoom bible study or the Women's Bible circle, connect with our book club, Sunday school class, a virtual worship service or meet up with our choir. Pick up the phone and connect with a friend or church member. Find new ways to do an old thing—live in relationship as social beings, caring and supporting one another even and especially in the midst of a continued pandemic. As human beings we need to be in relationship. We need each other's care and support. Isolation is not good for us."

These are hard times because of the health risks and the economic hardship for sure. But in most of our lives, it is the loss of social connection which is the most difficult. More than ever, we long to gather and be with others. I have always liked being a part of a church family. It is an important part of each stage of my life. We come together with all of our uniqueness and diversity. And God makes one people, one community of care.

It occurred to me that what I like most about the Lord's Prayer is that it is written in the plural. "Our father, give us, our daily bread, our debts" and so on. Give thanks this day for the gift of "us." God gives us each other. Your neighbors and classmates are a gift. Your family and church family are a blessing. Your co-workers and city are strengths and helps. We are fighting this virus together. We are enduring financial crisis together. We are working to overcome prejudice as one. We will overcome isolation and worry, challenge and obstacles together. Committed to one another with care, especially in crisis, we find great strength and hope. I recall the Old Testament story during a famine and many deaths when Ruth clung to Naomi promising "Where you go I will go." We are in this together! Those women made it through!

I give thanks for you—all of you and each of you. Let us keep connecting in new and creative ways. Join a zoom bible study or the Women's Hannah circle, connect with our book club, a Sunday school class, a virtual worship service or choir. Pick up the phone and connect with a friend or church member. Find new ways to do an old thing—live in relationship as social beings, caring and supporting one another even and especially in the midst of a pandemic. Christians are resilient because we have a future beyond all of what this world has to offer. We have our eyes set on a much greater future! Never lose sight of that great hope!

Prayer Thank you, gracious God, for giving us your love and constant presence. Thank you for giving us one another. Bind us together with cords that cannot be broken, bind us together with love...until we meet again. Amen