

Daily Bread – Nourishment and Info from Your Pastors
24 March 2020

Devotion:

15 Always be ready to make your defense to anyone who demands from you an accounting for the hope that is in you. (1 Peter 3:15 NRSV)

When Peter wrote these words to the early Christians, the church was under attack from several sides. The Romans who occupied Israel wanted to shut down the Christian movement and the Jews were also threatened. Christians were being insulted, discriminated against and sometimes martyred. They were being falsely accused of being traitors (refusing to acknowledge Caesar as a god), cannibals (misunderstanding of communion) and many other charges. Yet, into this context, in 1 Peter 3:8-4:11, he gives this three-fold teaching:

1. Do not live in fear, for Christ is in your hearts;
2. Always do good, for doing good never offends;
3. If someone demands of you why, despite all this suffering, you still believe, always be ready to tell them why you still have hope.

I think this advice is timely for us as well as we deal with the realities of the pandemic. God is with us! That is literally the meaning of one of the names we use for Jesus: Emmanuel. If Christ is in our hearts and shaping our words, thoughts and actions, we neither are alone nor have anything to fear.

Second, we, the church, have a marvelous opportunity now to give witness to our faith by turning our words about loving and serving neighbor into reality. In Adam Hamilton's book, *The Walk*, he quotes research that shows how serving others actually helps the mental and physical health of the one serving as much, if not more, than the one receiving the service. For those who have the ability to make a difference in our community, now is the time to turn words of faith into action...and in doing so, help ourselves. Peter is correct – doing good never offends.

Finally, do you have hope? Could you tell a hopeless person why you still have hope? Peter teaches we should always be ready to defend why we're hopeful when so many are not. But he doesn't stop there. He adds: "Yet do this with respectful humility, maintaining a good conscience" (1 Peter 3:16 CEB). This is not a time for Christians to be "testing" those whom they presume to have less faith or none at all (actually, there's *never* a time for that). This is a time to give witness to *your* source of grace, hope, love and peace through actions and words.

Below is a prayer created by the folks at YouVersion Bible. They have given permission to share this around the world. Though we are apart physically, may our hearts be united in this prayer:

Dear God, we're grateful that You never leave or forsake us. And, we're grateful for the technology that helps us stay in touch with each other. Give us the strength to endure this difficult season, and deepen our connection with You and Your people. Today, help us remember

that this time of social distancing and isolation will not last forever. Empower us with an extra dose of Your love, peace, hope and joy. Remind us of Your promises, and please heal our world. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Prayers: Please pray for your Pastors and the handful of singers and technicians who will be recording a worship service this Thursday evening. Please pray for Lloyd McBurney who is now in Hospice care; and, for Carol, his wife, who is unable to visit him at this time. Please pray for those who are or soon will be unemployed due to this crisis. Please continue to pray for the persons we've listed in previous *Daily Bread* editions. If you have any prayer requests, please email them to the Pastors.

Info:

- Bishop Laurie Haller has a weekly message that is usually released on Wednesday afternoons. Check the Conference website for links (iaumc.org). There are also United Methodist news items from around the state and nation on this site.
- Tomorrow's *Daily Bread* will have a pdf attachment for a children's worksheet that will be aligned with this week's message.
- Sending friends and church members handwritten cards is a great way to stay connected personally despite our distance.
- We've had some requests for playing videos of contemporary Christian music during our pre-recorded services. We are checking into the issues of licensing for such videos. Our services are recorded for broadcast on KHBT as well as streaming online. With thousands of churches now streaming their services, we've been notified that the "copyright police" are out. We will let you know what we find out.