

COLLOQUIES with Pastor Brian

Dear Family of Northwood,

Most years, preachers have a big decision to make. Do I preach the Palms... or do I preach the Passion? Unless a congregation has a long history of doing worship each day of Holy Week (and some do), the Passion might be missed in favor of waving Palm branches one week and celebrating The Resurrection the next. In my opinion, this is also why some congregations miss the emotional depths available for Easter Sunday. If you shout Hosannah one week and Hallelujah the next, where do you put the tears that fall in between?

Yet this year might be the one I am tempted to preach the Palm branches, because we've seen plenty of tears. Tears over the massive changes in our lives, in our work, in the world and even in our worship. Tears of concern over what might still be ahead for people we love. Tears of longing for the people we've seen so easily and now must shelter them with distance. I'm not judging either. Right now, there is plenty to cry about.

Yet maybe it is a blessing we will preach the Passion yet again this week as we have all the Sundays of Lent. Because we set out on a journey together for this season of studying "Entering the Passion of Jesus" by Amy-Jill Levine, we have had a personal guide to focus upon so much of what is often overlooked or covered over with palms. This week especially, as we go to Gethsemane where Jesus is tempted, maybe we, too, will be reminded of some of the things we have left behind that were often taken for granted. Maybe as we go through this week, we can feel grateful that the tears and challenges we face in this brave new world were echoed by our Lord and savior so very long ago. Maybe we can take comfort that while our world has changed overnight, we are neither alone nor are our experiences unique to us. Jesus has walked some of these paths as well.

And, I am also reminded that while we face challenges unprecedented in modern times, we have some gifts to share and draw upon for days such as this. We still meet regularly for worship, albeit online. We still gather each other's prayers. Our mission and outreach is changing, yet continuing. We still are planning for an August day/childcare program and future events. We still check in with each other formally and informally with text and calls and drive-by waves of warm hearts.

This is okay, too. While the Palms without the Passion presents a Sunny Side up Christianity lacking roots or depth, a Passion without Resurrection is frightening and bleak. We are the survivors of the Passion and we are the children of the Resurrection.

So let's go another brave week together, shall we? Seeking ways to stay in love with God through our hearts, souls, strength and mind. Finding some new ways to reach out to our neighbor to love them as we desire to be loved. And, continuing to be the people following Jesus, bearing the banner of Northwood and serving the Esko area for the sake of Christ.

Your brother,

Brian, 828-434-6995

