

Devotions for Friday, May 15, 2020
Bread for the Journey
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Two by Two = Life

Today's text from the daily lectionary is the 7th chapter of Genesis, the story of Noah entering the ark with his family and pairs of all living things that walk on the earth, that creep on the earth and that fly above the earth. I invite you to read this text for yourself from your Bible.

This is nothing new. The threat to life that has locked down the world these last few months is neither novel nor unprecedented. The story of Noah, much beloved though often domesticated and presented in a G-rated form, suitable for young children, is one way the early Hebrew people grappled with the devastation that can come at us from the natural world.

In our case it is a virus for which humanity has no defense. This pathogen is just the latest in a long line of diseases that have laid waste to human communities. It could also be a quaking of the earth that brings down houses and hillsides, or an eruption of molten rock that can bury entire cities. It might be the long devastation of a drought, or the instant destruction of a flood. Humans have always known that to live on a living planet carries consequences that we cannot understand and certainly don't appreciate when we are on the receiving end.

So we ask questions. Why? Why? Why? The wisest of our kind have always sought to find answers. The wise ones of the ancient Hebrews answered in stories. The story of Noah is one of those. What is critical to see in this story is the guiding hand of God.

When we face an enemy we cannot see and cannot seem to control, it is common to attribute that enemy's assault to God. Why did God do this? Why does God allow this? It should be noted that no one has yet been wise enough to adequately answer those questions. Humans always look for a cause, and in the case of disasters, for someone to blame. We fix the blame anywhere we can, often with tragic and unjustifiable results. For the voices behind Genesis, the blame was a more generic charge of gross human sinfulness. *"For the earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence."* (Gen. 6:11 TEV). This violent, corrupt pattern of human behavior is contrary to God's intentions. The future of humankind cannot be built on such a foundation, and is doomed to fall. The story of the flood is a story of that fall.

Where is the hand of God in this story? Is it in the waters bursting forth from all the springs of the earth? Is it in the torrent falling from the clouds? Is it in the rising stream beds and overflowing river banks? Is it in the costal storm surge inundating villages built along ocean beaches? Is it in the viral laden breath flowing from the COVID-19 infected individual to an innocent bystander?

No. The hand of God is in the preservation of life. The hand of God is in the promise of a future. The hand of God is in the faith of Noah in building an ark, of gathering a menagerie of living things, of following the command of God to preserve life.

We of course know more than the ancient Hebrew wise storytellers. We have seen more, principally we have seen Jesus, incarnate living presence of God walk among us, share with us our suffering, know the reality of death, and being the hand of God who will lead us from a death filled grave to resurrection life. God is about life. Always. Now. Even now, while the flood waters of this virus are everywhere, remember that we will see the rainbow again. We will hear the promise of life, again. We will know the truth, that God is life and in God your life is safely kept.