

Saturday, June 27, 2020
Morning Devotions
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*How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?
How long must I plan what to do in my soul, and have sorrow in my heart all the day? How long will those who
hate me rise above me?
Look on me and answer, O Lord, my God. Give light to my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death. Or the one
who hates me will say, "I have power over him."
And those who hate me will be happy when I am shaken.
But I have trusted in Your loving-kindness. My heart will be full of joy because You will save me.
I will sing to the Lord, because He has been good to me.
Psalm 13*

Okay... a little truth telling moment here....

How often are you staying up too late watching the news or surfing the web, scrolling through social media...? Are you finding it difficult to focus during the day and feel yourself regularly pulled to scan the latest news outlets for updates and snippets of what's happening or has happened in the last few moments?

Dear ones.... I know I'm not alone. I know in some ways we're all effected and influenced by the world in which we live. I even sense sometimes how the air seems to have shifted. Do you feel it too? That unease and unsettledness that's reverberating through the air? The strain on us emotionally and physically during this current time is real.

Constant exposure to traumatic events in media has been shown to cause anxiety, difficulties in coping, immense fear and feelings of hopelessness. It's especially true for those of us who have a history of trauma or those of us who happen to be particularly sensitive.

Martin Luther King Jr. encouraged us "be the peace you wish to see in the world." In other words, one of the very best gifts we can offer a world that is troubled is remembering to take time ourselves to rest in God's presence so that we can fully engage when called upon and do so out of a place of depth of peace and joy in Christ.

Possibly you noticed powerful psalm appointed for the day and your heart went where mine did... I recognize Psalm 13 as the cry of black and brown Americans.... And then, I immediately went into the mode of, "Okay, Angela... this is the psalm appointed for today and that means you have a responsibility to work through a response to racism and find a way to inspire those who read this to act and respond; you need to be profound and prophetic and find something new, etc. etc. etc...." Yea, no internal pressure there...

Indeed, Psalm 13 and this powerful lament is the cry of so many of our siblings of color seeking equality, justice, and true freedom. This psalmist is angry, questioning why God has not acted. The reactions this psalm provokes is impossible to avoid.

I will honestly share, as a white woman with a public platform though yes, even small platform as a Lutheran preacher, it is a platform none-the-less. I feel that internal pressure to be profound! I find myself often clamming up and uncertain of how to speak and respond.

And then it dawns on me yet again... I'm so grateful for this quote I heard recently in one of my go-to weekly podcasts, "We may be clueless and awkward about the demands and complications around Race in our Country, but we know what the Gospel demands: that we continue to be better neighbors."^a

Mine isn't to be the forerunner. My voice and my life in this and every season are to be given for the sake of others. It's not about me being profound or having it all worked out clearly and perfectly... Mine is to lift up the other. I fundamentally believe that this is Christianity. Sharing in the experience of others, bearing one another's burdens, accompanying one another in all things is what it is to be one body in Christ. Pope Francis recently said, Christianity "has a body that moves that grows, it has a soft flesh; it is called Jesus Christ."

It is also called George Floyd, Trayvon Martin, Tamir Rice... It is also called - all those who suffer the inequities of injustice and oppression. "Psalm 13 is the cry of black Americans for so many centuries. They cannot cry it alone any longer. It is the burden for all of us to bear."^b

But I need to back up a little in this reflection.... We cannot effectively accompany another unless we can first "be peace" within ourselves. Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers," and as a child of God, that is our calling. Being a peacemaker, which is so needed now and always, begins with being at peace ourselves.

If you feel yourself caught up in a cycle of fear, anger, and despair, as you digest all the latest news of a world and people in crisis, you owe it to yourself and the world to be kind to yourself, and to take a break. Even Jesus needed to be alone every once in a while!

Few little reminders for all of us:

- ~ Find a way to set limits on your screen time and consumption of news and media...
- ~ Notice patterns of thought and feelings and work to take a break before you reach a saturation point.
- ~ Intentionally take time to deep breathe, lower your shoulders, lessen the tension in your face and neck
- ~ Schedule something life-giving and joyful for yourself at least once a week!
- ~ And by all means, if you feel called to do something, then do something! Even the smallest things can turn hopelessness and fear into action.

Remain up-to-date in the daily news in moderation, be kind to yourself, speak up and out from a place of peace and centered-ness in Christ's love – and always seek the balance of engagement in the world with a place of inner peace. Care for yourselves so that you can care for others, for together, we are called to be peace and joy in the world that so desperately needs it.

Yours along the way,

Pastor Angela

^a "On Being" with Krista Tippet. Podcast called, "Talking about Whiteness" Interview with Eula Biss, January 2017 Interview with Eula Biss

^b Mario Powell, S.J article in American Magazine, "How long, O Lord?" Psalm 13 is the cry of the black Americans" June 2020