

Weekly Devotions
South Holburn Church
17th November 2020

READINGS

In difficult circumstances you might hear someone say, "It is going to take a miracle for that to change". In the midst of this challenging time right now, many of us feel like it would be a miracle if we are able to celebrate Christmas with our families or be able to have a bit more normal of a life later this winter. Covid-19 has impacted all of our daily lives, and it does not seem like a vaccine and better treatments are right around the corner. So, we might be wondering where God is in all of this struggle.

- ¹⁰ God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.
- ¹⁰ Be still, and know that I am God!
I am exalted among the nations,
I am exalted in the earth.
- ¹¹ The LORD of hosts is with us;
the God of Jacob is our refuge. *Selah*

Psalm 46:1, 10-11 (NRSV)

This scripture is one that speaks volumes to me in this challenging time. I do not know what is ahead, but God does, and God is my protector and fortress. No, I am not promised an easy road, but I do know that the God of Jacob goes with me. I may be looking for a miracle to come and 'save us', but the greatest miracle on earth has already happened. Jesus has come to us in human form; lived, died and rose again, so that we might have a loving relationship with the living God! In a few short weeks, believe it or not, the season of Advent will be upon us. We will be preparing our hearts to worship the King of Kings who will one day come again and who we celebrate has come as a babe to our world! Before that lovely time begins, I wonder if we might not find some other miracles along the way?

Maybe there will not be a quick cure for Covid (who knows, it could happen?), but perhaps there will be other small miracles we find around us every day but so often miss. In Psalm 46, as seen above, there is a little musical term, 'selah', that means to pause. I am not musical at all, but I love this wee word! What a miracle it might be to me and perhaps you...if we were to take some time to 'pause' from our worries and fears; to 'pause' from our stress and take a deep breath. Breathing deeply can be a miracle. We all need air, and the ability to breathe unassisted is a beautiful part of the human body that we need to live. Breathing deeply is also good for the soul. 'Ruach' or the Hebrew word for Spirit means 'breath'. The Holy Spirit is seen as the breath of God, literally and figuratively.

When I breathe deeply, I feel my body relax and my mind slows down. When I breathe deeply, I can put life in perspective, and I can invite God's Holy Spirit to fill me and give me strength and wisdom for the road ahead. Try it. Breathing deeply can be a blessing.

- ²⁶ Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but that very Spirit intercedes with sighs too deep for words. ²⁷ And God, who searches the heart, knows

what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.

Romans 8:26-27 (NRSV)

REFLECTION

The months of November and December can often be the busiest of the year. We prepare for Christmas and gatherings with family and friends. Presents are bought and wrapped, cards are sent, and our favorite Christmas foods are made. I often feel that even the church gets too busy. We have carol sings and decorating, Christmas pageants and parties; but perhaps too often we fail to sit and breathe in deeply the scent of Christmas.

This year we are going to miss all of those cherished traditions (I know I will miss them!) and we might feel a little out of sorts.

Jason Leitch, the Scottish government's national clinical director, told BBC Radio Scotland '...people should get their digital Christmas ready.'

That does not sound very exciting to me. But wait, here is the miracle, perhaps. With more time at home, with a slower pace and with less of the 'to do' lists of Christmas perhaps we might find ourselves slowing down and breathing in the miracle of the season. Perhaps we might discover afresh more time to reflect, prepare and ready ourselves spiritually for the new year to come. Perhaps we might develop new traditions and maybe even as a church we might find some ways to celebrate together with one another even over Zoom!

The Holy Spirit loves to surprise us and bring us new and wondrous blessings from our God! Perhaps we will find more miracles than we can count this Christmas season.

'There comes a moment when people who have been dabbling in religion ('man's search for God'!) suddenly draw back. Supposing we really found Him? We never meant it to come to that! Worse still, supposing He had found us?' — **C.S. Lewis, Miracles**

What a lovely miracle it would be to find more of the presence of God all around us in the next few months. Yes, it promises to be a long, dark winter but what about the works of God? Will we yet see miracles, in the sunset, in the cloudy day, in the bow in the sky after the rain, in a friend's smile, in a rose that insists in blooming in November, in the many ways that we form a family as God's children?

I hope that in breathing deep and allowing God to calm our busy, troubled hearts, that we might find deep and satisfying Holy Spirit 'selahs' where we will pause and see God at work in miraculous ways around us!

Let's share our God moments with each other when we next meet! I would love to hear what God is showing you in your life, and how he is turning these next few months into an adventure full of miracles!

With Love, *Julia*

PRAYER

Loving and grace-filled Lord,
We need your Holy Spirit to breathe new life
Into our cracked and dry spaces,
We need to breathe deeply and soak in your care,
We long to see you at work in the world,
So please give us eyes to see your loving care and
Ears to hear your beautiful melody as you move in our midst,
Help us not become too busy for you or too wrapped up in traditions
That we miss the one that we seek to honor.
Thank you, Lord, that we will see your miracles around us
And we will find new opportunities to be with one another
As we trust you as our God and fortress who continues to create and recreate. We know
you will never leave our side.

Remind us to keep praying for the unwell
and those who do need physical miracles this side of heaven.
We do sincerely pray that there would be miraculous treatments found to help us end this
scourge of illness that has surrounded us.

In Jesus name we pray,
Amen.

