

Palm Harbor United Methodist Church
March 15, 2020
A TIME TO REGROUP AND PREPARE
ACTS 1:12-14

These are indeed times that trouble our souls. The coronavirus has disrupted the lives of us all, even those who have had no contact with anyone who has been ill. Schools have been closed, sporting events have been cancelled, and even churches, ours and others, have closed.

Right now we do not know what the future holds. We pray for our church family, our community, our state and nation, as well as all the countries around the world who have been crippled by this disease. We have faced epidemics before but this one seems a bit more frightening...especially for those of us in our senior years, since it appears to be most devastating to us.

So, what are we to do? Throw up our hands and surrender. Isolate ourselves from anyone and everyone. No, we are to follow all the guidelines we have heard again and again, and we are to pray, and we are to call upon Jesus to slay this giant called coronavirus.

In our scripture lesson, Jesus' disciples were also going through a difficult time. There was much uncertainty. They had been witnesses to Jesus crucifixion, death and resurrection. They had seen him taken up to heaven. Yet, he appeared to them and spoke to them about the kingdom of God and he gave them instructions on what they were to do.

How could Jesus expect them to continue their ministry without him there to guide and teach them? What would they do without his physical presence among them to give them strength? Not only was their future uncertain, it was obvious that the road ahead would not be easy.

There used to be an ad on television for Staples that was a red button that was the "easy" button. Someone gave me one but it never really worked. I hit it again and again and things never got easier. Wouldn't it be nice if we had an easy button that worked?

An easy button to find a cure for this virus. An easy button to discover a vaccine that would prevent the spread of this virus. An easy button for parents to find childcare during these days when our schools and childcare programs are closed. An easy button that would reassure us and calm our fears. How about an easy button that would help our health care system find the necessary resources to treat and heal the sick.

When God called me to ministry, he did not promise that it would be easy or that my ministry would be successful. Mother Teresa said, “God doesn’t require us to succeed, he only requires that you try.”

Jesus did not tell the disciples the task ahead of them would be easy and he did not promise that they would succeed. He only asked them to be faithful and he promised to give them the power of the Holy Spirit to help them do what he was instructing them to do.

The same remains true today. Jesus does not tell us life will be easy and he does not ask nor promise success. He only asks us to be faithful and to rely on the Holy Spirit to enable us to do the job that is before us.

In order for the disciples to accept their new mission, they had to change their way of thinking. They had been waiting for their dream of a restored Israel to be fulfilled. They expected Jesus to restore Israel and establish his kingdom here on earth. They had to rethink what it meant to follow Jesus. Jesus was giving them a job to do and a mission to accomplish. They were to go to the very ends of the earth to share the gospel story.

It’s never easy to change our way of thinking. It’s never easy to change our way of doing things. However, this morning we have been forced to do things differently. Yet, our message is the same. Jesus loves you and he wants to be in a personal relationship with you. Our mission is the same...go into all the world to share the love of Jesus. Our church is the same. You are the church. It is not the buildings, it is the people and as we gather in various places around our computers to worship, we are still Palm Harbor United Methodist Church. No virus, no turmoil, no uncertainty can destroy us. We are the church and we will continue the work Jesus has called us to do. We will pull together and we will be even more committed to fulfilling our vision: All ages, all in, loving God, loving all.

Just as the disciples were united in prayer, let us unite our hearts in prayer for our church family, for our schools, and for all those infected and impacted by this virus.
Prayer

You may continue your time of worship by clicking on one of the links which will provide inspiring Christian music.