

I have been pondering some this week about comfort. We are in a time now of high anxiety with many people worried about becoming a victim of a silent disease that knows no barriers and does not care about anything that we use to divide ourselves. One would expect that this fact alone would be enough to unify us all, but that does not seem to be the case at the present moment.

Many people are also anxious over how they will live and eat as savings run out and they may lose their job or may already have lost their employment. This thinking about comfort in the midst of our present high anxiety is fraught with many landmines that can sound just like platitudinous gibberish when people are suffering from the many catch 22 situations that this corona virus has exposed.

Michael J. Chan in his own ponderings on the texts assigned for this week lifts up the terms, “refuge” and “shelter” from the texts instead of comfort but I believe the sentiment is the same. Especially as we are now very familiar with the phrase, “Shelter in Place.” Here, is his initial take;

This week’s readings also deal with the topic of refuge. For the psalmist, God is a “refuge” (*ma’oz*) from danger (Psalm 31:2, 4), and John’s Jesus offers heavenly shelter for his disciples troubled hearts, promising to prepare for them a heavenly home (John 14:1). In Acts 7:55-60, the martyr Stephen takes refuge in a glorious vision of the heavens, even while he is being stoned to death. And in 1 Peter 2:11, the reader is urged to seek shelter in restraint ... from the “desires of the flesh that wage war against the soul” (1 Peter 2:11).

So, a cursory reading probably should send us down the path of wondering about where we actually get our “refuge, shelter, comfort” from in times of crisis. Once again, I am leaning in a slightly different direction for my sermon this Sunday but this has certainly caught my attention.

Martin Luther was certainly no stranger to plagues of all sorts both physical and metaphorical in his time. I will leave you with his explanation to the 5th commandment from the small catechism – We are to fear and love God, so that we neither endanger nor harm our neighbors, but instead help and support them in all of life’s needs.

An important reminder to us from Luther of why we “shelter” in place for the sake of our neighbor, and also along with this “sheltering” an important call to help those who are in need because of this sheltering. Then, I believe we will be truly sheltering in God!

There is plenty of food for thought here – Happy ponderings my friends

Peace,
Pastor Jeff