

Weekly Lenten Devotional - *Week 2: How might God conceal you and your neighbor today?*

Dear Church Family,

I pray the peace of our Savior Jesus Christ finds you well this morning. I greet you today as we enter into our second week of Lenten Devotionals. I hope you find these devotionals to enrich your walk with Jesus over the next few weeks of Lent.

Yesterday we read Psalm 27 and Luke 13:31-35 in worship. My sermon discussed the fears many of us carry daily and how we can “seek God’s face” (Psalm 27:8) and enter into Christ’s “perfect love which casts out fear” (1 John 4:18). My prayer for you was that “when you are faced with fear and threats: you stay the course” as David and Jesus did. I hoped you would “Refuse to be swallowed up and swayed by fear” (Rev. Dr. Weber). And instead, place your trust in God, whose steadfast love will “shelter” and “conceal” you (Psalm 27:5).

This morning, as I re-read this Psalm 27, I am taken in by David’s response in this prayer to the “shelter” and “conceal[ment]” the Holy One has gifted him “under the cover of his tent” (Psalm 27:5). In verse 6, David says, “Now my head is lifted up above my enemies all around me, and I will offer in his tent sacrifices with shouts of joy; I will sing and make melody to the Lord” (Psalm 27:6). It seems in response to this received shelter from God, David now offers sacrifices back to God. Perhaps, our challenge this week of Lent could be to think about how we receive shelter from God and then what we could do to offer shelter back. How can we make “sacrifices” of shelter for another as a way of giving back what we’ve been given by the Holy One who takes us “under the cover of his tent” (Psalm 27:5)? Could these offerings and sacrifice of shelter overflow out of the steadfast love God has given us? What new way may the Spirit be calling you to offer shelter to another as a way of living out your discipleship?

Perhaps, the Lenten question this most resonates with this week is: Am I moving forward on my discipleship journey learning and becoming more like Jesus? If not, what is stopping me from moving forward in my relationship with Christ? Phrased in a different way, how could our “sacrifice” of shelter potentially help us move forward on our discipleship journey? What prevents us in our lives from offering shelter to another?

This week I had the opportunity to offer shelter to another and was unable to do so because I felt it would not be safe for that individual or the best option for shelter. Many times, I have been asked for shelter in one way or another and it often challenges my own idea of safety and security. Recently, I heard an interesting interpretation of the Good Samaritan’s story on this same topic of shelter.

Jesus tells of a Samaritan who offers shelter for a man who had been robbed, beaten, and left for dead. Rev. Marilyn Jones (First UMC Stephenville) of this story said, so often we act as the first two people did in this story by asking the question what happens to me if I help or offer shelter for this person? Humans are often concerned with our own wellbeing, like the first two men in this story were, and pass by the person in need of shelter rather than helping.

The interpreter said the Good Samaritan in this story, however asked a different question. A question I think Jesus may have been pointing us towards. The Good Samaritan asked, what would happen to the man if he didn't offer shelter and help?

I don't think this means Christ wants us to disregard our own wellbeing. However, in today's world when many are only worried about their own shelter, I believe the gospel points us in a different direction. Perhaps we should ask more often the second question: What might happen to this person if I don't offer shelter or help?

May we be a people who move forward on our discipleship journeys learning and becoming more like Jesus offering sacrifices which model His steadfast love for us and our neighbors.

Still growing in grace,

Rev. Kristen Perkins Glover