

## BLESSINGS IN DISGUISE

We are going through difficult times. The Pandemic is consuming our thoughts and our lives. We are isolated, wondering about the holidays, wondering when normal will return. If that is not bad enough, we have gone through a dividing tumultuous election, the likes of which we have not seen before. We are upset, divided, and many are filled with anger. We have gone through bad times before, but this seems different, perhaps because those bad times drew us together and these bad times seem to be driving us apart. We need to remember who we are and who we belong to. There can be found blessings in bad times even if it is only an appreciation for the good times. Going through cancer was a bad time for me. I had done everything right, followed the right things, was tested often, followed Doctors orders, and yet there it was, Cancer. But from that time, I gained a greater appreciation for each day, for the life I had and for the love of the people around me. God had been good to me, he brought me out of a life of want and poverty to a life filled with blessings. I had to be grateful for that. He gave me more years than I ever thought possible but with it came challenges. With each challenge came gratitude that I could with God's help meet those challenges. Blessings received amid trials. We will see the blessings in this time of our lives, the blessing of each day, the trials that strengthen us, the sorrows that draw us closer to the Holy one. We will never again take the stocked shelves of a grocery store for granted, or the welcoming of our church building, or the teachers and schools, or the simple act of going out to eat. My parents had gone through the Great Depression, and I remember making fun of my Mother for putting a tiny portion of leftover food in the freezer, for canning when food was readily available in the market, for saving any and everything from paper bags to plastic containers. One time she ran over to the waste basket and took out a Cool Whip container that I had discarded and gave me a lecture on waste. She had lived through a time when there was no money to buy food, when a garden was a necessity, when clothes were worn until they could be mended no more and then served another purpose as rags for cleaning or material for something else. But despite the saving there was always enough to share with those who had nothing. She was a generous woman and never turned anyone away that was in need. Despite the hardship of a Depression there had been blessings in learning to do with less, in appreciation for what they had, for neighbor helping neighbor. Maybe our blessings will be not taking for granted what we have in this country, for being able to forgive and accept those who think and feel differently about an election, for remembering that all God's children are worthy of love and opportunity.

James 1:2-5 Consider it pure joy, my friends, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him.

Lord be with us during this time of discord and upheaval. May we be strengthened by our times and brought closer to you and to each other. Give us strength for the day and hope for tomorrow. Be with those who grieve the loss of a loved one or the grief of loss of job and income and hope and home. Be with our Pastor, bless his ministry as he leads us through this difficult time, bless his word and guide him in his decisions. Be with our staff and leaders, strengthen them as we find ways to do church and to be the hands and feet of Christ. We thank you for each day you give us, may we use them wisely. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

Grace Epperson