

## Collateral Damage

Have you ever been alone, I mean totally alone? This can happen even in a crowd, where we feel isolated and forsaken. It can be when we are fighting a cancer or drug addiction or anything that makes us feel we are lost and there is no one who can help us. Imagine now you are elderly, you or your loved ones have put you into a home, assisted living, memory care, or Nursing home, it does not matter. They come frequently to see you but then suddenly the visits stop, they are nowhere to be seen. You do not hear from them; they call on the phone, but you do not hear well, and conversations are difficult. Time passes you wonder why you have been abandoned, where are they, you do not know these people who pop in to bring your meals. There is no one to talk to, to keep you grounded, to help you remember who you are, Mother, Father, Wife, Husband, Aunt, Friend. There is no one who knows you and you start to wonder who you are; do you have a wife or husband; do you have a son or daughter? The days blend, and you forget more and more. Your appetite fades, the food all tastes the same, you have no energy, and it does not take much anyway to wander this one room prison. You sleep more and more and do less and less. Soon you are bedridden, unable to take care of yourself, you fade off into oblivion. This is called Failure to Thrive. The death Certificate reads Failure to Thrive but is that what it is or is it the rules brought about by a Pandemic to help people survive. But the disease kills them one way or another. My husband was only hospitalized for 4 days and 3 nights, yet he came home unable to recognize me or his surroundings. His Alzheimer's had advanced in just that short a time. How much harder is it for the elderly that are denied the care and connection of a family member for a long period of time. Some people have qualified as "Essential Care Givers" so they can come into the homes and take care of loved ones to help them remember who they are and who they belong to. I applaud those that can do this. There is a reason that solitary confinement was used in prisons for years, it is the harshest of punishments. Jesus was in the desert for 40 days. Paul and Silas were alone in prison. Through it all, God is there, he is in the Nursing Homes, The Assisted Living, The Prisons, and in the Desert. We all need and crave human contact. We have started Church inside now for a few weeks. I like being back in the Sanctuary, seeing people, connecting, and talking with those who have gone through a hard time during these periods of isolation. I miss the hugging, the shaking of hands, even the fist bumps but I know that will come back eventually but it might be a period of time. There are those I know are hurting and I yearn to hug or to stand at the Altar and pray with them, but I will try to be patient. This pandemic has taken much from us, but it has also given us much. People are more caring, more outgoing, more loving, more appreciative of what we had taken for granted. We have come to a point where we realize that gathering our family together is a gift, going to the grocery store and being able to buy groceries from fully stocked shelves is a gift. For some, paying the rent is a gift, sending the children to school is a gift, going to church and supporting each other is a gift, hearing the Chancel Choir and the Bell Choir is a gift, receiving communion is a gift, going to a movie is a gift even going for a ride to get out of the house and seeing the beautiful Fall colors is a gift and something we took for granted just 12 short months ago. Maybe when this is over, we will look at each day and not take it for granted but offer up a prayer of thanks to God.

Psalm 100 Shout for joy to the Lord, all the earth. Worship the Lord with gladness, come before him with joyful songs. Know that the Lord is God. It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. For the Lord is good and his love endures forever; his faithfulness continues through all generations.

Lord we thank you for the blessings you give us. We thank you for being with us through all our times. We ask that you be with those who suffer from this pandemic both those with the virus and those who suffer from isolation and loneliness. Be with our Pastor and his family, bless his ministry. Be with those who are ill and those who grieve. Be with those who are hungry for daily sustenance and those that hunger for your word. May we be the hands and feet of Christ to those around us and those far away. Be with our Staff and leaders, guide them and may they feel your presence and encouragement. In Jesus name we pray. Amen

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