

22 March 2020 at Bethesda  
4th Sunday in Lent  
UMCOR Sunday (United Methodist Commission on Relief)

## "Truth"

Hardly do I write something to preach before the world changes!

Surely this is Lent in spades: "Practice what you preach!" the world tells believers studying and praying in the midst of crisis.

Once more we are asked to be still, think deeply, discipline ourselves all year 'round, even as setting aside weeks focusing on these skills annually reminds us.

Use scripture to understand history. God regretted making Saul king. A new king was anointed. "Get over it!" is one of the hardest and harshest words life tells us ... we learn and re-learn, privately and in family and nation and globally.

Psalm 23 speaks for itself. I've never asked a group to pray it and failed to get it said by heart.

Ephesians insists we're better than we used to be. Take that seriously --- nobody fails to learn, and if you practice, light grows within as well as around you.

All these texts are stimuli ---- meditate on them, as learners, as long as you live.

Then comes the blind man and all his troubles!

Getting the most important thing in the world dreadfully complicates his life, forces people to take sides, scares his family, puts Jesus at risk --- what does God have in mind?

Surely that's our daily and hourly question these days.

One scientist calculates thousands of lives saved in China alone by the reduction in air pollution from factory closures and transport stoppage. Can the earth actually protect itself like ancient cultures insist?

Are we so blind to our humanity that we only think and pray and plan for ways to protect our borders, this side of the oceans around our great continent?

What does our Constitution say about the family of humankind, much less the family of nature --- the skies and seas, the animals and rivers --- all of which operate by the same principles as we humans, dust to dust, as we say, loving one another as we love ourselves, as Jesus is quoted as insisting, basing his insights on the wisdom of his own forebears.

I want to say something calming and hopeful this Sunday ---- yet I shrink from calming impulses because they don't explain, and we all want transparency, and if possible up-to-date information.

Honest exploration of what we can do better is the best praying we can pray now.

Facing up to the fact most of the world has been suffering and wrestling with at least what scares us right now is the real splash in our faces this Lent and as far as we can see ahead.

The truth is, we are not just aiming at flattening the infection curve so we can handle this virus epidemic and not devastate our emergency resources.

The truth is, we can SEE what's valuable, we can learn what sharing and equal opportunity look like more than we ever could before.

It is never what it looked like from a distance. What God makes available to us is always surprising, scary, complicated .... and facing it is never done alone.

Lord, there's much to be done!

We're afraid!

Come and help us....

through Jesus Christ.

Amen.