

26 July 2020

The Long Haul in Our Community Lives

New information and new levels of illness have led to an evolution of attitude (mine anyway) toward our current situation. It's almost like a new level of grief, though that is too strong a word. We talked all along about a new normal but now, we have to really start trying find that path. I confess I hadn't taken a "new normal" too much to heart. It was more like a temporary, conditional new normal till things get back to real.

Being isolated is a sneaky thing. I am losing touch with how friends really are. It is amazing how hard it is not to eat with others, to share a meal and thereby share our lives. How hard it is not to share a meal at the altar. I don't think the need for shared meals will really ever go away. Other things are pretty worrying right now too and the TV is not a good partner for processing. Hugs and handshakes matter. If we find God in our neighbors, and I believe wholeheartedly that we do, we may feeling the lack very acutely. This last Sunday's readings struck a chord which responded to these feelings.

The July 26 lectionary readings included Romans 8:26-39 and the parable of the mustard seed from Matthew 13. St. Paul's list of challenges from his letter to the Romans rang a bell as a description for this time in our lives. In some ways the list almost doesn't make sense, it expresses feelings of confusion (why would angels want to separate us?), a good description for things of now, which challenges our sense of the world. I know now is when faith is most important, hope most needed. So, now it is good to be reminded:

Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?...For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God. (NRSV)

We can depend on the faith of the ages. And so how do we believe his statement, that we are not separate from God when we may be wondering where God is in all this illness and unrest? How do find our faith in God? That's where the mustard seed comes in.

If we have the tiniest smidgen of faith, God will grow it. It can be as big as an oak and as pervasive as hushache. In this time of all the things we can't do, we

can give God the opening in our hearts; give Him some time to make something in us that we can hold onto; and to pray for and do for others.