

November 4<sup>th</sup>, 2020- What can we do?

As I write this devotion, the election in the United States is well underway, but they have not yet declared victory to either Donald Trump or Joe Biden. The truth is we may not know for at least couple more days or longer depending on court cases; regardless of what each party says about who will be president for the next four years, the truth remains uncertain. Some might find it odd to comment on the US election in a devotion for a church newsletter in Holden and Tofield, Alberta, but realistically the election in the United States, in one way or another, effects the rest of the world and so even though there is nothing that most of us can do, we are still interested in the end results because in the bigger picture of life it does effect us; there is nothing we can do, but it effects us.

As I write this devotion our Chief medical officer, Dr. Hinshaw, has just produced the most recent numbers of Covid19 cases in our province and the news is not good. Our daily cases are increasing, our hospital and health care facilities are filling, and our sense of communal dread is growing. Currently we have more active cases then we did during the first few days of this virus back in March and April when we entered a full lockdown. As Dr. Hinshaw mentioned yesterday in her report and elsewhere during the last few months, there are things that we can all do to help stop the spread of this pandemic, but the pandemic is not any less real, if we choose to care about it or not. In some conversations I have had over the last couple of weeks, people are feeling like they have done everything they can and that there is nothing more than can do; they have worn their masks, kept their distance, and stayed home rather then gather with family and friends and yet the ends results don't seem to show that. The truth is other than those steps there is not much more any of us can do and yet even still what happens greatly affects us all.

As I write this devotion there is a bird sitting in the tree that I can see through the church window. It is picking at something on the branch, maybe a bug or a left behind berry. It seems quite content and happy and the reason I say that is that the bird has been there for almost ten minutes and may stay there longer. At any moment though, it could fly away and never return to that exact spot and there is nothing that I can personally do to keep that bird on that branch any longer then it wishes to be there and yet its presence means something to me; it brings me joy watching it, it reminds me of the small joys of life.

There is so much in our everyday lives that is out of our control and yet the results effects us greatly. I think that's why we so often try to control every aspect that we can; we want to believe, whether its true or not, that we made a difference, that we at least did everything we could. At the same time we know, like the effecting how long the bird remains in the tree, just because I want to do something, doesn't mean that I can.

So, what do we do in these moments? What do we do when we have done everything we can in any given situation and just have to wait and see how the cards are played? I will admit I am certainly one of those people that likes to have my finger on the pulse of everything. If I can do something to prevent pain for someone later I want to do it, but the last months have taught me a lot about needing to let go. Not letting go of caring, I still care deeply and can and will do what I can to help othesr, but letting go of

that little voice in my head and heart that tells me that I should be doing more, when in fact it is humanely impossible to do so. In those times I am finally learning, and believe me this is still a work in process, but I am finally learning to let go and give it to God.

Giving it to God does not mean we have no role to play, it just means its beyond what we can possibly do. For example, I love the joy that the bird offers me as it sits and eats whatever it is eating. I want that bird to stay there longer on that branch so I can continue to feel that joy, but I cannot control it and so instead I give to God with a word of thanks and then I pay closer attention in the other areas of my life for that same joy. Or take for example the pandemic, sure there are things that we can all do to help limit the spread and we are doing those things, but me wearing my mask and keeping my distance does not stop the spread completely and so when I feel that I should do more to control every little situation I have to give it God and let God show me where my energy and gifts are needed. Maybe my place is to always be at the other end of the phone to talk with those that need to talk and pray with those that need to pray? That doesn't feel like its making a huge difference in the bigger picture of the pandemic, but for some it might make all the difference in the world.

My point friends is this, we can consume ourselves for all our days with a whole host of concerns, worries and wants, but sometimes there is very little that we can do to help change an outcome. Rather what we can do is give it up to God and let God guide us into the places we can make a difference. In the early days of the pandemic I found myself listing to some traditional hymns sung by choirs and barbershop quartets; there is something about those older hymns that speaks to letting go and letting God take what God can take and guiding us in the rest. One of those hymns is the well known, "It is well with my soul."

I have attached a link to a powerful version of this hymn in the devotion. I hope as you listen to it, that you can start to let go of some of those things that are burdening you and let God hold them and influence them and then importantly open yourself to what God offers you in return. For indeed the ways we can make a difference in some of the biggest situations in our lives are not easily seen, until we take a step back and breathe a word of prayer into them. May you find a way to do just that in whatever it is that you are carrying today, and may your soul be well knowing that God is holding you in it.

<https://youtu.be/plAyz00jtmA>

Blessings to you all.

Sincerely,

Rev. Adam Hall