

It was during that last week
29 March 2020 – Lent V

It was during that last week – everything changed.
It's incredible how much can change in a week...

This time last week we had just learned that the doors to the Churches in B.C. were to be shuttered.

Okay...so now it's time for us to live into the adage "The Church is not the building".

Right...

So now what?

From our readings we hear of Jesus' last week...beginning on Monday.

It was on the Monday that religion got in the way...Jesus turned the tables, literally. He showed them that the temple was not meant for commerce, it was meant for taking care of those who couldn't care for themselves.

In our current context – waiting on Denominational Authorities to make decisions...working with one is a challenge. With two is...well...you can imagine...

It was on the Tuesday that he let them have it...stop with the unimportant stuff. Focus on what really matters. Give us the strength to stand up and speak the truth, even if it means we are standing and speaking alone...

In our current context – Breathe, often and deeply.
Wash your hands. Often and for a minimum of 20 seconds.
Check in on those who are alone.

It was on the Wednesday that he was called wasteful...the woman brought a jar of expensive ointment, likely with all the money she had left. She needed to anoint Jesus and he allowed her, even though it broke society's rules. He was chastized for waste and he reminded them that the poor would always be with us.

In our current context – those who are most vulnerable are also most at risk for contracting COVID-19. Not everyone who needs testing is getting tested. Our news feeds are a veritable deluge of information. Turning on the radio or television is frightening. Stick to reputable news sources...which does NOT mean Facebook, Instagram or Twitter.

It was on the Thursday that Jesus became valuable...up to that point he was only Joseph the carpenter's son. He was in the family business, but had left carpentry to become a rabbi. He wasn't considered much of anything up to that point. An itinerant preacher from nowhere. And yet, he turned the tables on those who followed him.

He washed their feet, the lowliest of jobs...and implored them to follow his way.
To be of service before being served.

In our current context – those who are considered essential: Police, EMT, Fire Services, Health officials, doctor's, nurses, pharmacists, yes, that makes sense. Grocery store employees, drive-thru workers, gas station attendants? Making minimum wage or just above? These are essential? Yes! If we're going to keep ourselves fed, medicated and safe.

It was on the Friday they ended it all. It had to be in a crowd...nobody would stand and accuse alone. Because hey, you never know. You don't really know WHO this guy is, right? Better safe than sorry...Jesus said "Father forgive them..." and began the revolution.

In our current context – we are forbidden from gathering in groups. Bylaw enforcement officers are now working to disburse groups. And yet there are still illegal gatherings, putting everyone at risk. I'm claustrophobic. I was at the Independent on Saturday to pick up medication for a friend and having panic after panic as there were too many people and some of them were not keeping the safe distance...now, more than ever we need courage to steel ourselves to speak out when we must. To stay home, even when we feel we can't stand the four walls of our homes one more minute...

It was on the Saturday that he was not there...they had no idea where he went. Those who loved him implored him to stay...and because he couldn't be found, he couldn't be remembered...had he ever really been here? Was he really who we thought and hoped for him to be?

In our current context – this formation is going to be happening for a while yet. This is not a long-term sustainable solution...and in the short-term we figure it out as best we can. When will we be able to gather again? What will that look like?
What I do know, for certain, is that our first Sunday together, in person will be our ACTUAL Easter, regardless of the date on the calendar. That Sunday will be our Parish Resurrection...

It was on the Sunday that he pulled the corn. Those who went to finish the preparation ran right past him. They couldn't see him through their tears. They ran right past the man hunched on the side of the road, seeds spilling through his fingers. He knew that the grains had to die to bear life.

In our current contest – how do we continue doing Christ's work in the world? So much of what we have done is about being together. Physical touch. A hug. Holding someone's hand. Clergy are not allowed into hospitals currently. It's not safe. Yet how do we journey with those who are leaving this life for the next?
With this new reality we continue to struggle...

On Saturday I went to Canadian Tire as I needed a loaf pan to make meatloaf and I needed some soap. I saw the most beautiful Rottweiler with his person and as I backed down an aisle to make sure there was the appropriate distance between us I said to the man, "you have a beautiful dog". He said "Thank you". I said "I wish I could say hello to him". He said "You can".

We moved to either end of an aisle and he took the lead off his dog and said "Go say hello" and this magnificent, gentle beast walked slowly to me, shaking his tail with his head down. I knelt down on the floor and the dog laid his head against my chest and let me give his ears and neck some love.

I started to cry and he raised his head, this beautiful creature, and licked my tears. I thanked the man and he said "You're most welcome", and called the dog back to him. I stood up and walked to the checkout carefully, still gently weeping at the love shared by this lovely dog.

We must die to the way things "have always been" because that world no longer exists. We must find new and better ways to connect, until we can see each other in person. Technology is a wonderful thing and can keep us connected in most ways.

Not everyone has technology. Not everyone is interested in technology.

And so we are challenged. How do we remain faithful? How do we care for our Beloved's? How do we care for ourselves?

What I do know is that there was no course at Seminary to prepare me for this. I'm making most of it up as I go.

Every day I post five things we can do.

The first one is always BREATHE.

The second one is always WASH YOUR HANDS.

The third one is always PRAY --

The fourth one is to clean something...restore some semblance of order.

The fifth one is to take care of oneself...through laughter, being outside...getting creative.

A lot happened in the last week of Jesus' life.

A lot has happened in this last week.

And a lot more will happen in this next week.

All we can do is hold on, breathe, wash our hands, pray and do our best.

Thanks be to God.

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