

“Preparing the Way”
By Chad Frost
Palm Sunday, April 5, 2020

It feels like spring has really arrived now, doesn't it? The sun is coming up earlier, and it's accompanied by the delightful sound of birds chirping. Daylight is stretching further into the evening. And probably the most welcome of signs—the weather is getting much warmer.

Under more normal circumstances, this time of year is often one where we begin looking forward. Forward to the blooming of flowers and leaves budding on the trees. Forward to the coming summer. Perhaps forward to plans for barbeques, vacations, and visiting with friends and family.

With all the uncertainty caused by our current crisis, making those kinds of plans feels nearly impossible for many of us. What will next week look like? When will life and business go back to normal? Will we have jobs to go back to? Will my friends and family be healthy and safe? Instead of plans, our minds are plagued with unanswerable questions.

Many of us are finding ourselves with more time on our hands than usual, but less to fill it with. Still others—like those who perform essential functions—are finding themselves busier than ever. The normal rhythms of our lives often provide a sense of stability and escape from uncertainty, but for nearly all of us, those rhythms have been shattered.

No matter where we might look for certainty, we just don't know the particulars of what life will be like months from now. For better or worse, we're stuck right here in this moment. And sometimes, that feels just awful.

Yet, I know that we can all endure it. The reason I know that, is because we always do and we always have. The fact that we're all here right now is proof that we can live with the trials and uncertainty that are part of our human existence. While our daily routines and usual habits often make us feel comfortable, deep down I believe we all know that these things aren't our true nature. Even when they are threatened or altered, we can still persist.

In our call to worship this morning, we heard and read: “Open your hearts this day to receive the Savior. We open wide our hearts and spirits to receive Jesus.”

When we talk of ‘opening our hearts’, what are we really saying? To me, it means to make our hearts exposed and accessible... It's an acknowledgement that our hearts are fragile things that we sometimes lock away to protect. When our hearts are open, they are also vulnerable... and vulnerability can be terrifying.

But our hearts are also most powerful when they are open. This is our true nature.

We are beings who can choose to lean into discomfort, uncertainty, pain, and even danger to unleash the power of our hearts. We do this, even when it makes the least sense for our own wellbeing, to serve and help others.

We see examples of this all of the time:

- We see it in our first responders and medical professionals on the front lines of this, and many other crises.
- We see it in our neighbors and communities when precious resources are shared freely with those who need them, even if it means having less for themselves.
- We see it in our faith communities, where people make their own hearts open and vulnerable to the pain and suffering of others in order to console and support.

Whatever the challenge. Whatever the hardship. We can rise to meet it through the power of this open and vulnerable heart.

So, let us not be too discouraged or afraid. It's certainly understandable to be both, given the circumstances—but there is hope. Perhaps in this moment we cannot see the future clearly enough to make plans, but we can always work on preparing the way. Let us start by laying a wide and open path within our hearts.

Amen.