

A Light in the Dark

If there is a word that can be defined as a mixture of pleasure and anxiety, that is what I experienced on my trip to officiate the memorial service of a friend and fellow fraternity brother, Dave, this past weekend in Cape Girardeau, Missouri. “Cape” as the locals call it is as close to a hometown as I have had as a preacher’s kid since both my parents grew up there (hence both sets of grandparents lived in town), my dad was an associate minister there when I was in middle school, I went to college there, and my father retired from the ministry and currently lives there.

It was nice to get to have a brief visit with my youngest brother on Friday night, and with my dad and stepmom after the service on Saturday. I also visited with fraternity brothers on Friday and Saturday who I had not seen in 35-40 years. Some I recognized; others I did not, and that is where the anxiety comes into the picture. I think you can imagine the strange mixture of anticipation, uncertainty, and embarrassment I felt in not recognizing folks, especially with masks on. Add to the mix all the emotions that come with the grief. Dave was the same age as me, and we started in the fraternity together. We lost a husband, father, brother, nephew, and friend who died too soon and too quickly.

Dave, and his widow Laura, were not a religious couple in the conventional sense. In other words, they didn’t attend a church and thus had no one to officiate the memorial service. So Laura asked if there was a fraternity brother who was a minister; that is why I was asked, and I’m glad she did. Laura considered herself to be spiritual, but she didn’t want a religious service. I understood what she meant for reasons I’ve shared with you in past sermons with my definition of spirituality.

The memorial service was thus going to be a bit unorthodox in that there would be some pop music from the 1970s and 80s, and it had some levity with two testimonials from a life-long friend (and fellow fraternity brother) and a co-worker of 15 years. I was to read Psalm 23 and add the spiritual meditation in between the two testimonials. I left on Friday morning for the visitation without any idea of what I would say on Saturday. I had a theme of hope in mind based on some of the liturgy from the United Methodist Hymnal that I was going to use, and after the visitation I found a couple of quotes that I liked, but I still wasn’t sure what to write, so I went to bed. I woke up on Saturday morning just after 2:00 a.m. and could not go back to sleep, so I picked up my legal pad and started writing.

I shared my early morning, hand-written scribbling with Dave’s family, friends, and co-workers at the memorial service. It was based on a quote by Desmond Tutu:

“Hope is being able to see that there is light in the midst of darkness.”

I coupled that quote with one by Martin Luther King, Jr., that made hope amid grief applicable to the situation.

“But I know, however, that only when it’s dark enough can you see the stars.”

The takeaway for us is that we will experience prolonged periods of darkness due to a serious physical illness, depression and other mental health issues, or the death of a loved one. Some of you are in those seasons right now. Others of us will be in the future. We also experience very brief moments of darkness we could call frustration, despair, or anger at current events in our life or society. In either case, it is hard to see any light—any goodness—in those situations without a faith that there IS something beyond the darkness. Martin Luther King, Jr., is suggesting that it is something beyond the darkness, whether prolonged or temporary. It is possible to see hope all around us if we look for it. Those stars that show up in the dark of night are a metaphor for those individuals around us that love us and want to support us when we need love and support the most. Put differently, they are persons who represent the love of God in Christ Jesus, sacrificing their time and resources to help. When we are truly in Christ, and live by the ethics of the Great Commandment and the Golden Rule, you and I are a small light of hope for those in some figurative darkness of one sort or another. That is our calling as disciples of Jesus Christ.

I will see you on Sunday morning as we live-stream our **Service of Prayer and Proclamation!** We are continuing our sermon series on Donald Shelby's ***Meeting the Messiah*** with his chapter "When It Is Yes or No," and the scripture reading will be Matthew 4:1-11, the temptation of Jesus.

Grace and peace,

Pastor Tom



When we pray,
God hears more
than we say,
answers more than
we ask,
gives more than
we imagine...
in HIS own time
and HIS own way.



It's that time of year when we gather together
as a church and go serve lunch to the homeless
at Lazarus Ministries.

Saturday October 10th from 9:15-1:30

Carpooling from the church is available.

Please contact Randy Robinson @ 816-525-3981 or

Email: randolphrobinson@outlook.com

to sign up or with further questions.

On Going: Les Case, Wade Davis, Roger Grable, Richard Fuerst, Winnie Fuerst, Harvey Geary, Michael Hatfield, Linda Koley, Shane Miley, Nancy Rowe

Strength and Healing: Ken McDaniel, Mike McMillin

Comfort and Peace: Lorri Ellis and family

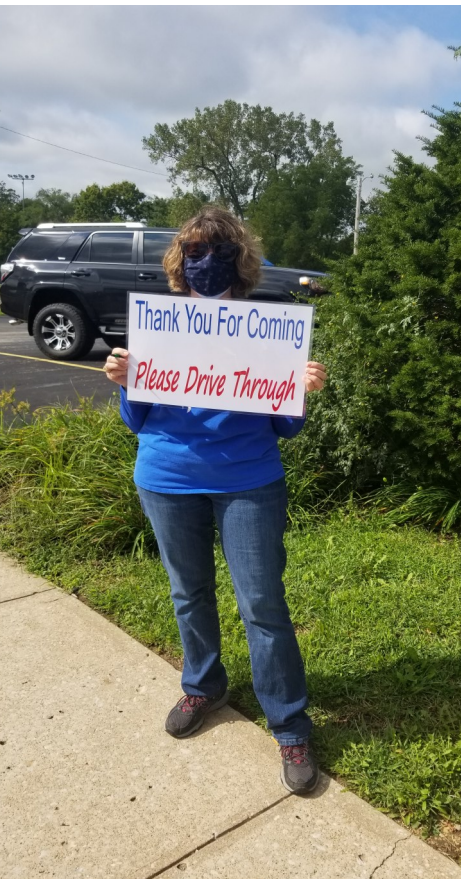
Missions: Kenyan G-Marc Project (Chics for Chicks), Hillcrest Transitional Housing, Harvester's Food Bank, Lazarus Ministries, Tarsney Lake Families, Congregation de Mellier, Heart and Soul Children's Learning Center

Please contact the office to update or add prayer requests

2020 Recycling Event

Our event was tremendously successful this past weekend. 249 vehicles came from many cities and left five 26' truckloads of electronics and metals to be recycled. This was one of our biggest years.

Thank you everyone for your support of this outreach mission.





Thanks to the generosity of our congregation \$623 was donated and paid for the 52 new blankets that LLCUMC delivered to the Festival of Sharing collection site. These blankets will be appreciated by homeless individuals, foster children, families devastated by fire, flood or tornado, and battered women and children. A "warm" blanket will be a symbol for them of our compassion, love and concern for others throughout the state of Missouri.



Thanks so much for these wonderful women at St James United Methodist Church for their hard work, and kindness thru the Festival of Sharing 2020.

September

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
6 Services Online 10:00	7	8	9	10	11	12 Recycling Event 9:00-12:00
13 Services Online 10:00	14	15	16	17	18	19
20 Services Online 10:00	21	22 Council Meeting 7:00	23	24 PPRC Meeting 7:00	25	26
27 Services Online 10:00	28	29	30			