

“For the Journey”

- Rev. Dave Crawford, July 23/20



An interesting image was shared on social media this week from Niagara Falls. Two tourist vessels, from two nations, passing by one another, transporting visitors into the mists of the glorious shared waterfalls. One vessel is packed to the gills - the American ship. The other appears to have a marketing problem! Yet of course that ‘empty’ Ontario based Niagara Falls ferry is under far different government restrictions (maximum 6 passengers?) than its American counterpart. The photo is certainly symbolic, in a number of ways. It may be helpful to remember that yesterday the United States registered 72,000 new Covid cases, Canada 550.

Last week I discussed an old, antiquated term, “long-suffering”, but I’ll confess I did so with a quiet optimism about Alberta’s steady, deliberate, disciplined transition from lockdown to greater freedom and societal recovery. I haven’t abandoned the optimism but it’s tempered this week, for obvious reasons.

How are we to manage the road ahead, at this stage? May I suggest firstly daily reflection on The Serenity Prayer (see below), as a quick, easy means of spiritual and mental focus amid the stresses and pressures of the current situation. Beyond that, and building upon the Prayer's intent, may I suggest concrete, active expressions of ministry? "God, ... grant me ... the courage to change the things I can..." Certainly there are areas of daily life where we can make a difference, where we can influence others for the better, even in seemingly minor ways, for the sake of the kingdom Jesus preached. Whether through social media, emails, texts, or masked encounters at the grocery store we have the capacity to speak and live an alternative reality based in God's love, based in the discipleship we've embraced.

Friends, in these times there are a lot of negative messages, a lot of unhelpful declarations being made, harmful actions taken, in our own nation and abroad. Such negativity needs to be countered, perhaps countered by us, each of us, moment to moment, day by day, little by little. Paul advised early Christians: "... do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God— what is good and acceptable and perfect." - Romans 12. There is abundant pressure now to conform to ideas, ideologies and perspectives which we may find disturbing. Perhaps our calling currently is not only to find serenity spiritually in troubling times, but also transformation of intellect and spirit, based in our knowledge of God's loving will for the world.

The Church of Jesus Christ is not gathering as usual, but the church is not a building of course but instead a people united in faith and in grace. In our dispersed reality the calling is still to follow the Messiah. How might we venture courageously, compassionately, into this new era?

"God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference." - Reinhold Niebuhr.