Greetings Friends

This Sunday is Palm Sunday. Palm Sunday marks the beginning of Holy Week for Christians. During Holy Week we remember Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem and the overturning of the tables in the temple courtyard. Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday we remember the growing tension between Jesus and the religious authorities. On Maundy Thursday we remember the final gathering Jesus had with his disciples where he washed their feet, gave them a new command to love one another as Jesus had loved them, shared a final meal with his friends and then his arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane.  On Good Friday we remember the trial and crucifixion of Jesus and the laying of his body in a tomb. Holy Saturday is a day of waiting with the other disciples. Waiting for the Sabbath to end so that we might go to the tomb and prepare Jesus’ body for a proper burial. Then on Easter Sunday we gather in wonder and amazement as we discover that Jesus is no longer in the tomb but that God has raised him.

It is a story we know well because it is the foundation of our faith. Yet this year’s Holy Week will be like none we have experienced before.

The Covid-19 Pandemic has overturned the tables of normality throughout the entire world. We find ourselves, like Jesus’ first disciples, in a time of worry, fear and anxiety.  Like the first disciples none of us knows what will came next. We wait with bated breath like the first disciples for the penny to drop. What will happen tomorrow?

As I have thought about it this Holy Week that we are about to enter I have come to realize that it is a lot more like that first Holy Week with all of its uncertainty, worry, fear and tension than we may realize.

So I ask myself, “What did Jesus say and do to help himself and his disciples?” He prayed and led them in prayer. He continued to teach about the love of God. He continually assured his disciples to not be afraid, to trust in God. He reached out to those in need with healing and hope. Jesus remained faithful to God and God’s call.

As I thought about these things I have come to realize that these are the things that we need to be doing this Holy Week as well. In fact during this pandemic there is a greater urgency for us to do these things. We all need to spend time in prayer, grounding ourselves in the presence of the Holy. We have to all hear Jesus’ words to not be afraid. This pandemic will pass. We will get through this. We all need to be faithful to God’s call in our lives by staying home, looking out for one another, reaching out with phone calls and emails. We all need to be checking in with our family, neighbours and friends. These are the ways we can live out our faith during these anxious times.

We can also spend less time watching the news and more time remembering the story of Holy Week. In order to help you with that I have attached a document that you can use. It is divided into daily readings for you and I invite you to begin on Sunday and read a portion each day during Holy Week.

We can also spend less time watching the news and more time listening to hymns of our faith that remind us of our faith and who we are as Christians. To help you do that I have included some links to YouTube Videos that you can listen to.

The thing about this Holy Week that is different from the first Holy Week is that we know how it ends. We already know about the empty tomb and the resurrection. But again this Easter Sunday will be different from any that we have ever experienced. What will really be different is that we will join together with members of West Bank United Church for a virtual, online Easter Service. We will do this by using the app called Zoom.  If you do not have this free app installed on your computer or ipad I invite you to do this in the coming week. If you need help to do this call your kids for help, ask a friend or contact me and I will help. This Easter Sunday Service will be like no other you have attended.

My dear friends please remember I am only a phone call away if you want to talk (250-488-2780).

Thank you for your continued support of Summerland United Church.

Thank you to those who are on PAR, thank you to those who drop off their offering, and those who mail in their offering.  Your faithfulness blesses all of us.

Your Brother in Christ, Armand Houle

I leave you with a prayer composed by Jan Richardson and shared with me by Linnea Good..

Blessing in the Chaos

To all that is chaotic

in you,

let there come silence.

Let there be

a calming of the clamoring,

a stilling of the voices that

have laid their claim on you,

that have made their home in you,

that go with you

even to the holy places

but will not let you rest,

will not let you hear your life

with wholeness or feel the grace that fashioned you.

Let what distracts you cease.

Let what divides you cease.

Let there come an end to what diminishes and demeans,

and let depart all that keeps you in its cage.

Let there be an opening into the quiet

that lies beneath the chaos,

where you find the peace

you did not think possible

and see what shimmers within the storm.

- Jan Richardson

from The Cure for Sorrow: A Book of Blessings for Times of Grief