



SAINT MARK'S

EPISCOPAL CHURCH

A fire in London, earthquakes in Guatemala and Mexico, multiple shootings including a shooting of elected officials, are just a few of the headlines that made the news in this last week. It seems that anxiety, fear, and tragedy tend to be dominating the world these days. We can feel harassed and helpless. Not to mention the slings and arrows that we all go through in our personal lives. Whether it is social or financial issues, substance abuse, medical issues, job or food insecurity, or even car troubles. What ever it may be we all have things great and small in our lives that seem to pile up. We can feel like a sheep without a shepherd. The harvest field looks much the same as it did when Jesus sent his disciples out. Tired and scared there are a lot of people who need to hear the good news.

News of the new kingdom, news of disease being cured, and sickness being healed. We have a lord that is calling us to follow him in going out and doing none other than miracles. And Saint Mark's has been faithful in taking up this call. Whether it is volunteering at the food pantry, knitting a prayer shawl, Christ Care groups, Eucharistic Visitors, whatever it is, we are a community that goes out a proclaims the good news. But doing all of these ministries does not make us immune to that world of anxiety, fear and tragedy we hear in the news. Doing these ministries does not make us immune to dealing with all the troubles big and small of modern life. In the

gospel lesson today, we are both, at the same time, the disciples being sent out to cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons, and we are also the crowds, the ones in the field who are harassed and helpless, the sheep without a shepherd.

So I want to focus this morning on how we take care of ourselves in ministry and share with you some conversations the clergy and staff of Saint Mark's had on how to deal with these worries and anxieties of everyday life. A couple of verses beyond the Gospel reading we just heard, it says. "If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town." We talked about the act of shaking dust from our feet. As we go through our day to day lives it is easy to collect the dust of worries and fears and carry them with us. So these are some things that help us shake that dust off of us. They are little dust dances that help us refocus on what's important. This is by no means a complete list and you are invited to add your own as you practice some of these things by yourself.

Prayer was one of the biggest responses, and a variety of prayer types, centering prayer, praying through the psalms, the Daily Office of morning and evening prayer. Through prayer we stop and remember who we are and who's we are. We reorder our lives, and remind ourselves of God presence in our lives.

Art and music, were also brought up a lot. Poems, a favorite song, a beautiful painting, a photograph that changes the perspective of how you

see the world. Whether it is creating art and music or appreciating it, it allows us to slow down to see the beauty in the world.

Nature was another big one, taking a moment in the morning to sit on the porch or going for a walk, noticing the trees swaying in the wind, birds singing, the fragrance of flowers. Or maybe it's watching a thunderstorm roll in, being reminded of the beauty and power of creation. Realizing how very big this creation of God's is.

We also talked about finding little moments where we just stop. Anxiety fuels itself and without noticing it you are just on autopilot. Acting and reacting and usually making things worse. So when you feel like your on stress autopilot, just stop. Build in reminders in your life to help you slow down. Maybe its every time you brush your teeth, or wash your hands, remind yourself to stop and take a second to pray. One thing to help with this that Saint Mark's has done is added a stoplight prayer to our sign out on the corner of Mississippi and Evergreen. This is a time that society is forcing us to physically stop moving for a moment, so we might as well make use of that time and pray.

By taking these moments to slow down, casting all of the worries and anxiety on God. Taking the time to do a dust dance; shaking off that anxious dust from your feet and leaving it where it is, you discover that God has gone before you to those places of trouble in your lives, and God is with you in those places. You discover that the kingdom of heaven has come near. That nothing can separate you from the knowledge and love of

God, that God somehow has this big, crazy world under control and that the only proper place to put all those fears and worries is to give them up to God, and to just rest in the knowledge that in the end all shall be well. By taking those moments you experience the peace of God that passes understanding and are renewed to follow God out into the harvest again.