

“How are you?” This routine greeting automatically rolls off our tongue to acknowledge the presence of someone we know without getting ourselves too involved with them. How would we react if they answered with anything other than, “I’m fine” or “not bad”. What would we do if someone responded; I’m going through a rough time and I’m not sure where God is?

Nowadays, “How are you?” has taken on an increased significance for us. When we ask it of someone, we sincerely want to know, because we know no one is really doing “I’m fine.” Everyone is struggling at some level in this unprecedented time. So when now we ask, “How are you?” we really mean it. That is one of the blessings that have come out of this time of lock down. Our words and actions are becoming more purposeful. We are paying more attention to our interactions. We are making more of an effort to check in with people. I have heard from a number of people with whom I have not spoken in ages, reaching out to re-connect and see how I am doing, and I have done the same with some of my long lost friends and relatives.

There are indeed blessings to be found in the midst of challenges. In the Bible Psalm 23 reminds us that the Lord makes us lie down in green pastures and lead us beside quiet waters. While in no way I believe God caused the Covid-19 pandemic, I do believe God is working through it to make us lie down in green pastures. We have overworked ourselves and God’s creation to the point that this pandemic feels like a time to lie down and rest, to recuperate from our unhealthy schedules and habits and to let the planet be restored too.

And what happens when we lie down in green pastures? Again Psalm 23 reminds us, “He restores my soul.” Such a funny concept, when we think about it. Why would our souls need restoring? And how can this happen in the midst of a crisis in which people are losing their jobs, their businesses, their loved ones, their patience and their peace of mind? These times can feel more soul crushing than soul restoring. I think it depends on how we use this time of crisis. I was talking with a friend a few days ago who was feeling a great sense of accomplishment for completing a project he had been putting off for a long time because he was too busy. He has used this lock down time to clear away clutter and restore a

space in his house that had been neglected. Could we do the same thing with our souls? Where do we even begin?

We begin in the green pastures and quiet waters. It means slowing down, finding a quiet place and just being still - listening, breathing, and relaxing. These small actions won't change the world, but they might change our world. We do not take enough time to be still. And it may be a challenge right now if people have young children at home. But regardless, finding time to be still is a wonderful way to let the residue in our souls drift away restoring that part of us that most connects with God. This will make us more in tune with the needs of those around us, our families, friends and neighbours and also helping us to remember that God is with us, even here, even now.

Every blessing in Jesus our Lord and Saviour,

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