

## PACE Devotional 14 Jun 2020 during the COVID-19 Pandemic

**S1** Hear these words from 1<sup>st</sup> Peter, chapter 4 verses 8-11:

Above all hold unfailing your love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins. Practice hospitality ungrudgingly to one another. As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God's varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who utters oracles of God; whoever renders service, as one who renders it by the strength which God supplies; in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ.

My theme this morning is "Close and Open". Normally we say "Open and Close", but I am looking at a window that closed with C19 until now.

C19 has caused us to close, slow down or change many things: **S2**

- many airline flights and stores were closed
- most public gatherings (like PACE & CUMC) were closed
- hugs and handshakes were withheld
- social distancing (6')
- masks
- serious handwashing (20 seconds)

While all these make us feel closed off, not all of these are bad. We now have learned, *and practiced*, ways that can reduce our vulnerability to other illnesses and diseases.

But where God closes one window, God opens another. I think that is one way that "God works for good".

A hymn that I grew up singing shows us how we can open up. I wish we could sing it together, but unison just doesn't work with Zoom. I am tempted to sing the chorus, but I will abbreviate to just the verses: **S3**

Open my eyes, that I may see glimpses of truth thou hast for me;  
Open my ears, that I may hear voices of truth thou sendest clear;  
Open my mouth, and let me bear gladly the warm truth everywhere;  
Open my heart and let me prepare love with thy children thus to share.

I can just hear you singing the chorus: “Silently now I wait for Thee...” I look forward to the day when we can actually sing together!

Today is Flag Day. Many of you have been to the DMA, where one of its finest paintings is **S4** “The Icebergs” by Frederic Church. At the debut of that painting, which was two weeks after the fall of Fort Sumter, Church called it “The North”, in support of the Union. **S5** Here is Frederic Church’s “Our Banner in the Sky”, a painting which became a poster for the Union in 1861. I think this illustrates one way that God opens doors for us. In the sunset, the stars and the clouds, Frederic Church saw the glorious hope that God gives to each of us in God’s creation: all around us, every day.

I want to repeat the Scripture for today, so that you may find encouragement to open some doors: **S6**

**Above all hold unfailing your love for one another, since love covers a multitude of sins. Practice hospitality ungrudgingly to one another. As each has received a gift, employ it for one another, as good stewards of God’s varied (and Amazing) grace: whoever speaks, as one who utters oracles of God; whoever renders service, as one who renders it by the strength which God supplies; in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. 1<sup>st</sup> Peter 4:8-11**

Here are 2 examples of people opening doors. I am grateful to Nelson Cain for bringing us virtually together via Zoom. When the church closed and we could no longer meet in person, Nelson provided a way to open the doors of our houses to our computer cameras. I am also grateful to Jocie James, who suggested the parade that we celebrated on Friday June 5<sup>th</sup>. She gave us

another way to open doors (“car doors”) “where 2 or more are gathered in His name.”

We are people with “Open Minds, Open Hearts and Open Doors”. Just like Mister Rogers, will you open some doors today?

I would like to close by reading a hymn I wish we could sing together. **S7**

Blest be the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love;  
The fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above.

Before our Father’s throne, we pour our ardent prayers;  
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one, our comforts and our cares.

We share our mutual woes, our mutual burdens bear;  
And often for each other flows the sympathizing tear.

When we asunder part, it gives us inward pain;  
But we shall still be joined in heart, and hope to meet again.

Next week is Fathers Day, and Jim Alexander will display the photos and memories of your fathers, as he did this past Mothers Day.

I hope you will take some time this afternoon to find those and send them to Jim today.

**CLOSING PRAYER:**

For our Closing Prayer, I am reading the words written in 1876 by Episcopal priest Daniel C. Roberts for the centennial of our Declaration. Roberts had served in the Civil War.

While it lacks those stirring trumpets, by listening we can find connections to Fathers Day, to our current pandemic, to Flag Day and to our personal faith in God.

1. God of our Fathers, whose Almighty Hand  
Leads forth in beauty all the starry band.  
Of shining worlds in splendor through the skies  
Our grateful songs, before thy throne arise.

2. Thy Love divine hath led us in the past.  
In this free land by thee our lot is cast.  
Be thou our ruler, guardian, guide, and stay.  
Thy Word our law, thy paths our chosen ways.

3. From war's alarms, from deadly pestilence,  
Be thy strong arm our ever sure defense;  
Thy true religion in our hearts increase,  
Thy bounteous goodness, nourish us in peace.

4. Refresh thy people on their toilsome way;  
Lead us from night, to never ending day;  
Fill all our lives, with love and grace divine,  
And glory, laud, and praise be ever thine.