

Another new week begins. We are starting to see changes around us and I pray that we can work together with calm, reason and respect toward one another as things begin to open up around us.

Monday, May 18, 2020 Devotion

¹⁹You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; ²⁰for your anger does not produce God's righteousness. ²¹Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls. (James 1: 19-21)

Now, as a Lutheran minister I know that the book of James was Martin Luther's least favorite book of the Bible and he even felt it should have been left out of the Canon. I happen to like the book I just feel that it says a lot of things that make sense in a world that need to hear a bit of common sense. I think I have more comments and marking in this short book than any other book in my Bible. What I have written by these verses is: "Listen first, especially when there might be conflict. Anger can tear down in seconds".

How well do we listen to people, especially if we are on differing sides of an issue? Most of the time we do not do a good job of listening and understanding how another person understands or sees a situation. Then again, many times the other person does not want to listen to our side of an issue either. So, instead of working together to solve a problem, voices are raised, words become cutting and backs are turned toward one another in anger. It does not end there though that anger at times is unleashed at the undeserving person who is encountered next.

Sadly, right now there is a whole lot of angry words being spoken in the world and finger pointing. These uncharted waters that we are in are not only causing people to be anxious, but also angry.

At the beginning of 2020, I started twice a week to provide meditative prayer at the parish I serve, once mid-day and once early evening. I have found that to be the most healing and calming part of my week. Other people at times have come and joined me, but even when I am by myself it seems to take away any anger I might have. It helps me to listen to God and to others. Maybe, just maybe it is why I have been able to write these devotions six days a week for over two months now. I already know that these will come to an end eventually, but listening first, will not end. Maybe if we all did that, we can put aside our anger and work together as our Father in heaven wants us to.

Lord, there are too many angry voices that surround us today. Help us all to listen to the concerns and fears of those people. Give us to the words that bring comfort and healing instead of anxiety and anger. Bring to us the peace that the world cannot give but only comes through your Son Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior in whose name we pray. Amen.

Peace

Pastor Ida Iverson