

2002 GOOD FRIDAY
at 12:00 Noon

Grief. This is the day of grieving. Finally, we don't have to pretend that everything's OK. No, the world has changed. We are afraid and we are lonely. We are grieving the loss of many lives. The Coronavirus is causing grief.

Our congregation is grieving the loss of a member, who deserved better care and attention from his pastor in his last few weeks, but because of the Coronavirus I could not visit him. His beloved congregation couldn't even say "good-bye" to him. So we are grieving.

We are grieving the loss of many jobs. Our country's workforce is suffering. Single mothers are not able to put food on their children's table. Families have to go without Easter celebration. And yes, as Christians, we are grieving the way we used to celebrate Easter. We are all going through the stages of grief.

The five stages of grief were first taught by Elisabeth Kubler-Ross in her book *On Death and Dying* in 1969. Everyone grieves differently. With time psychologists have discovered that the five stages of grief don't necessarily occur in any hierarchical order. But it is helpful to identify the stages as we experience them. The stages are: Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression, and Acceptance. We deny the severity of the virus, we get angry with the virus. We bargain about how we can do Easter in light of the circumstances.

I can't tell you how many really good ideas I received from our congregation about how we should celebrate Easter this year. As good as the ideas were, even if we could do all of them, Easter this year would not be the same. We bargain, we deny the facts, we argue, we can't accept the loss. We have always had a beautiful Easter. Why not this year?

Remember, I am also grieving this loss of our first Easter together. I imagined two full services for Easter morning at Shiloh UCC. Remember the Everly Brothers, "*Dream...dream, dream, dream, Dream...*"

I had big dreams for the beautiful music and bells, but it will not happen that way this year. Only God knows why. Maybe we need to learn something. Maybe we need to appreciate the things we have and the people in our lives. Maybe we need to accept things as they are. I don't know. But I do know that acceptance ends the grief.

Today, on Good Friday, give your soul permission to grieve. Let the past go. Let the dreams go. Not forever; just for a moment. Let the tears flow for each other and a broken world... Remember, Jesus died on the cross and he knows our pain. His tears mingle with ours. He loved us so much that he let go. He let go of the kingdoms of this world. He let go of the riches of this world. He let go of being a Superstar. Jesus humbly gave his life into God's hands and let God take care of his soul.

Today we grieve with our Messiah. Today we grieve with our world. We don't need to pretend that things are OK; because they are not. Many people have died and are still dying. Many people are suffering because of job loss, fear, anxiety, and depression. For a moment, let this suffering fill your heart... and then bundle it up into a package and give it to God.

We cannot solve this problem. We can't bring people back from the dead. We can't help everyone who has been affected by the Coronavirus. For this, you need someone whose shoulders are much broader than ours.

God. God will take care of this world. We will still have an Easter this year, even if it will be imperfect, recorded in a small apartment, with a two year old running wild. Life will go on...

Allow your heart to grieve, but don't give up hope. After Good Friday, miracles will come. After this epidemic, life will recover. After death, there is a life everlasting. In life and in death, we belong to God. So hope, live, and pray.

Amen.

Hymn #499 In All Our Living / Pues si vivimos

Readings:

John 18:1-19:42