

July, 2020

Dear Friends and Allies,

Well, events in the world continue to swirl with uncertainty. Tensions rise. The pandemic resurges. A fresh round of lockdowns is upon many of us. People and governments are reaching for control. This could be a tough fall.

Really rough times on our humanity; draining on the heart and soul. Even the best of us are feeling pretty tapped-out right now.

So—what’s the story you are telling yourself?

Remember, story is the way we orient ourselves in the world. Story is the way we figure things out, bring order and meaning to the events around us. The story we hold to at any given time shapes our perceptions, our hopes, and expectations; it gives us a place to stand. In this mad hour on the earth, what story are you telling yourself—or letting others tell you?

Is it a political narrative? A social narrative?

One story getting a lot of traction at the moment is the story of vague doom: O man, things are really coming apart. Another popular story is political optimism: Once we get the right people and policies in place, everything will be okay. There is, of course, the story of unrelenting uncertainty: Nobody knows what to do, or what’s really going to happen. And, there’s always the old survival narrative: *Just hunker down, wait it out, medicate.*

There are a lot of stories out there right now, all competing for your allegiance. Your submission.

Every day, I find myself needing to come back to the story Jesus is actually telling. There is a true version of the story, by the way; only one story, written by the hand of God.

Friends of Jesus know that we won’t see clearly until our hearts and minds are safe in the story God is telling—situated in the truth, interpreting things from God’s point of view, our feet on solid ground, our hopes and expectations all in the right place. For example, let me remind you of some of the core truths of the Biblical Narrative...

- God is very, very good. (*Does that grip our hearts right now?*)
- God is always deeply involved. (*Does that seem true?*)
- We live in a Love Story, set in a world at war. (*It’s always been so, ever since the Fall.*)
- We know things are rough before a wonderful turn of events. (*No to uncertainty!*)

Can you see how even one of these truths would rescue you in this mad hour?

Let's continue to delve deeper, get ourselves out of the news and chaos. I'm wondering how the story of God in Psalm 23 might inform the story we are believing ...

“The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing.

*(Jesus remains deeply involved in my life and world--guiding, leading, providing.)*

He makes me lie down in green pastures,  
he leads me beside quiet waters,  
he refreshes my soul.

*(God restores my weary heart...if I follow him. Where are my pastures and still waters, Lord?)*

He guides me along the right paths  
for his name's sake.

*(Don't get baited into the wrong battles; let God guide you in the path he has for you.)*

Even though I walk  
through the darkest valley,  
I will fear no evil,  
for you are with me;  
your rod and your staff,  
they comfort me.

*(Yes, we are in a dark time. But God is still protecting me and comforting me. I am not alone.)*

You prepare a table before me  
in the presence of my enemies.  
You anoint my head with oil;  
my cup overflows.

*(Not only that, God has a feast of goodness for me even in war; he fills my life with blessing!)*

Surely your goodness and love will follow me  
all the days of my life,  
and I will dwell in the house of the Lord  
forever.”

*(My reality is not determined by the pandemic, or violence, or the presidential election. God will always be faithful to me. My future is absolutely wonderful.)*

Maybe you should tape this to the fridge, and say it out loud every day. Do not let the world tell you what the story is. Only Jesus gets that place in your life!

Offered in love,

  
John