

St. Mark's Episcopal Church
April 7, 2019
The Reverend Rick Veit

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It is sanctuary. Tradition states that not even a soldier could come after an enemy who had gone through the red doors of a church, because anyone who would dare to desecrate such a holy place would be considered doomed.

St. Mark's was and is a place of healing for those in need of help, in need of love, joy, and hope. We are a place of support for black people, gay people, police, teachers, lawyers, students. We are not a place of support for those who bully. However, we are here for those perpetrators. They are in need as well. Friday night was not, however, the time to support their needs and their needed healing.

“Thus, says the LORD, who makes a way in the sea...I am about to do a new thing. I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert, water in the wilderness, rivers in the desert.” God is like the friend who always cares and then literally takes care. You are being abused by a perpetrator, in pain and suffering? I will lead you out of that poor life situation. You are in a wilderness, alone and afraid? I will give you the right path to follow into fellowship and safety. You are thirsty, famished? I will give you drink. I will give you sustenance.

In reaching out to the people in need, God used the prophet Isaiah, who became proactive in his faith to help in God's work. Isaiah wrote in the 8th and 7th centuries BC, when the people of Israel had been abused and ransacked by the Assyrian government. Isaiah reminded the people how God helped during the time of the abusive Egyptian empire hundreds of years earlier, how he led the Israelites through the sea into safety away from people who were lost in their wickedness. Isaiah assured them that God helped then, and that God will help now.

Nearly 200 years after Isaiah, in the 6th century BC, the Psalmist wrote when the people of Israel once again were being abused, this time by the Babylonian government. They had, in fact, been removed from their homes and sent into exile. God used another disciple, the writer of the Psalms, to help bring hope and love into the world. The people needed help...and God helped them, using ordinary people like you and me.

“When the LORD restored the fortunes of Zion, then were we like those who dream. Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with shouts of joy. Then they said among the nations, "The LORD has done great things for them." The LORD has done great things for us, and we are glad indeed... Those who sowed with tears will reap with songs of joy”

If you have ever lived a difficult life, a life of tears, God reminds us here that even Israel could be saved from terror after terror, pain after pain, challenge after challenge. Those tears will lead to songs of joy with our LORD. And if you have never helped someone in a difficult situation or are in need of direction in life yourself, God will use you to help others. There is no situation too great for God to assist. There are 60 different opportunities here at St. Mark's alone for you to become active in the healing process for yourselves and for others.

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Our God loves us and cares for us. And God uses us to love and care for others. That is our call, not to sit back and let God do all the work, but to do the work ourselves through God's inspiration. And if we do not do it, then people in the world, i.e. you and I, will continue to suffer. When we follow Christ faithfully, as Paul taught us, we mirror Christ, we mirror our LORD. We help others. We give the water, literally. We lead people through the through the Red Sea. We help people through the deserts and wildernesses of life. And we help on random Friday nights in Cheyenne when people are in great suffering.

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