

Friday, January 15, 2021

Dear Emmaus family and friends,

“Where can I go from your Spirit?

Or where can I flee from your presence?” (Psalm 139:7)

The psalmist who wrote these words goes on to affirm the omnipresence of our God. There is great comfort in knowing that God is with us everywhere and always. We do not get that kind of assurance anywhere else – ever.

This will be part of my sermon for this weekend. I am preaching on this psalm because the message of an all-encompassing God may just bring some peace of mind into the midst of the turmoil of life in the here and now.

In preparation for my sermon, I read these words and thought about how we just can't get away from the news coverage chronicling the political scene in our nation's capitol and in other various locations around the U.S. Most times, this is the top story at the beginning of yet another newscast. The raging pandemic, hoped for vaccines and stimulus checks, the roller-coaster economy, all come in close second, third, fourth and fifth.

Growing out of the divisiveness is something we are becoming more and more aware of – something called ‘cancel culture’. The best I can understand is that cancel culture is where someone – anyone – who writes/tweets/says anything that even one person doesn't like or doesn't agree with is at peril of losing friends, or followers (on social media), or even their career.

I'm not making a political statement here. Sure, a good amount of cancel culture has to do with politics, but it isn't limited to that arena.

Here's an example: Cyndi Lauper (67 year old singer, songwriter, actress and activist) was ‘cancelled’ because of her New Year's Eve performance that some thought wasn't up to the standard they were expecting. Fans and friends rushed to her aide. That was nice of them, but they wouldn't have had to do that if we all just acted with a little more kindness.

Cancel culture is a campaign of negativism that has infected our society with a growing hatred. This hatred is tearing us apart. What can we do about it? (*I'm so glad you asked.*)

First, don't participate in negativity. Hateful words or actions doesn't help anyone. It doesn't help your spirit. Negativity fosters hostility. I don't need to tell you that we don't need any more of that.

Second, don't follow it. Separate yourself from the stories that drag others down and spread ill will through social media.

Third, be proactive and spread a generous helping of kindness.

That is my encouragement for you for this week.

Coming up at Emmaus:

Saturday (1/16), 5 p.m. – Parking Lot Worship

Sunday (1/17), 10 a.m. – In-person Worship

Sunday (1/17), 11 a.m. – Zoom Adult Bible Study

Tuesday (1/19), 10 a.m. to Noon – Food Pantry

Tuesday (1/19), 6:30 p.m. – Congregation Council Zoom Meeting

Thursday (1/21), 6:30 p.m. – Stephen Ministry Zoom Class

Saturday (1/23), 5 p.m. – Parking Lot Worship

Sunday (1/24), 10 a.m. – In-person Worship

Sunday (1/24), 11 a.m. – Zoom Adult Bible Study

Sunday (1/24), 3 p.m. – Jazz Concert in our parking lot

Sunday (1/31), 11 a.m. – Congregational Annual Meeting

Join us in the parking lot on Sunday, January 24 @ 3 p.m. for a FREE afternoon of JAZZ. This concert is being brought to us by Mr. Tom Macklin and his talented friends from the Central Florida area. We have enjoyed the performances by Tom and friends before and we are so pleased to welcome them back. A free-will offering will be collected so that we are able to continue to offer excellent music opportunities for our community. Bring your lawn chairs and sun visors. The concert will be broadcast over your car's FM radio and also live-streamed on our Emmaus Facebook page. **Don't miss this concert!**

Thank you for your ongoing gifts and offerings for the work and ministry of Emmaus Lutheran. We appreciate each and every gift.

We are also asking that you keep our food pantry in mind as you consider your gifts to Emmaus. The need in our community is great and our cost for keeping our food pantry open has increased. We depend on your generous gifts to help us feed our community. Thank you.

I am confident that God will prevail over all of the challenges we – as a nation and as individuals – are facing. God is good – all the time!

With you in hope, in prayer, in thanks and praise,

~Pastor Mark