

# Am I Taken Care Of?

Scripture: Psalm 23, Matthew 6: 25-34 // Psalm 139 & Matthew 10: 29-31  
Date: March 15, 2020

## **ABSENT OF COMFORT**

### CULTURE FAILS

We are currently facing a significant crisis - a crisis of fear vs. faith as we have been besieged in the last couple of months, weeks and days with data and announcements regarding Covid 19. A disease that has no vaccination to prevent or antidote to cure. Many have lost their lives to this disease and we are uncertain as to the extent. But death is not exclusive to Covid 19. Our sister in faith Joanne DeBoer passed away this week. A new marriage of six months – ended suddenly and Jack’s life goes on – alone.

Yet Covid 19 is not the only aspect in our world creating crisis of faith and fears. We face financial cutbacks straining our financial stability and security. In addition, we also see an increasingly number of relationships that are strained and becoming estranged. Even in the church – the place that used to be the place of certainty – we recognize that in many churches, numbers are decreasing and young people disappearing. The parts of our lives that we used to faithfully depend on have become a place of fear.

### TEXTS - PSALM 23 & MATTHEW 6

The text in Psalm 23 describes hard times. It describes a walk through a valley – a valley that is in shadow. A valley of death, of despair, of doom and gloom. It has the appearance of enemies clashing or enmity contrasting parts of our life against each other. Matthew 6 speaks blessing of prayer and providence, but it does so in the recognition that there is hardship in the concern for food, drink, clothing both in the present and in the future.

### VISION 2020

Over the last few months here at Maranatha CRC we’ve been walking a journey of reflection by using questions to seek greater clarity of who God is in 2020 even as we exist in the midst of an uncertain and unclear world. We are currently in week three of our Lenten journey to the cross and empty tomb of Easter. The vision continues as we seek to see ourselves in the light of God and our questions regarding who God made us to be and who God is calling us to be.

Part of that process has involved the Heidelberg Catechism which is a teaching tool of the CRC to integrate scripture, faith and life. Its very first question asks - what is your only comfort in life and in death. The question leans into the reality that we are not alone but belong body and soul to Jesus Christ because of His forgiveness on the cross and the freedom from the devil.

YET our vision remains cloudy because of all those many circumstances that loom large over our everyday living. IS God still large and in charge in the midst of this hard-pressed world and is there any hope?

In early February we asked a similar question – Is God In Charge? With the news that there was this new Coronavirus running through Wuhan China, with the news that an airliner shot down in Iran with many Canadians on board, with the news of basketball player Kobe Bryant’s sudden death – the world seemed much more vulnerable. That perception stronger now as we wonder – with Covid 19’s power and influence growing – is God capable of delivering us from our fears and of delivering us into our freedom.

## **ASSURANCE OF COMFORT**

### PRESENCE

The resounding answer through the catechism is YES. The next segment from it assures us of God’s presence in our world – in our very lives.

*He also watches over me in such a way that not a hair can fall from my head  
without the will of my Father in heaven;  
in fact,  
all things must work together for my salvation.*

In the gospel of Matthew chapter 10 is part of the background for this context. It speaks of how God knows when a bird (sparrow) falls to the ground and how not even a hair from your head can fall away without God knowing. God’s presence is further described in Psalm 139 and see that God knows us so well that all we do, all we say, all we think, all we believe is known to Him.

Just as God is aware of us – we are reminded that God is also present with us. The text in Psalm 23 reminds us that even in the darkest places - God is still there. His rod and staff comforting us as they guide our journey and guard our well being along the way.

Jack and Joanne were making plans for their future and now those plans have changed with her passing. While some might say how tragic this is after only six months of marriage Jack and Joanne both agreed in a recent visit that the blessings, they’ve enjoyed in sharing the last months and years together far diminish any losses.

Likewise - this virus has us more aware of our own health and our environments. COVID 19 encourages social distancing which can result in us becoming more intentional about our connections and our conversations. A blessing as we begin to look closer at our friendships and families and treasure them more and more.

We are all on a Lenten journey of self discovery and of seeking answers of meaning, life and even faith. An awareness that is found most fully in the person and work of Jesus Christ. The Son of God / Son of Man who walked amongst us – as one of us – and died on behalf of us restoring us back into the covenantal relationship with God. Christ continues to intercede on our behalf and the Spirit speaks with sighs and groans that our words cannot convey.

## PROVISION

In Matthew 6 God declares that he takes care of the sparrows and so how much more will He also take care of your basic needs of food, drink, clothing and shelter and so much more. In Psalm 23 a table is prepared that is filled with blessings and an overflowing of abundance as goodness and love that follow us each day of our lives.

God promises to provide for our needs, yet we are in a consumer driven culture. A culture that is driven by a vast number of wants that often outweigh its needs. What would our gratitude – our trust – our faith – look like if these needs (the basics of life – but also the luxuries of life) were met by God and God alone.

We are also in a culture that is driven by determination. Determined to understand what's going on, determined to fix things when they don't work any more and determined to get ahead in life. Another question for us today might be - What would it look like for us - to not be able to fix a problem, to not be able to understand a solution or to not be able to provide for ourselves or others. In fact, what would it be like for us to depend – on others or on God? Not just for today – but tomorrow as well

## ACCEPTANCE

### TRUST & FAITH

Into this world of questions and answers we are challenged with a question to us. Can we trust God? Can we – as Matthew 6 challenges us – to stop worrying and to start worshipping. To seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness and trust that all else that we need will be given to us when, where and how we need.

Psalm 23 reminds us that God seeks to rest us by having us lay down with quiet waters and green pastures. That God seeks to restore us by refreshing our soul and walking alongside of us. Can we accept the possibility that less – by us - could be more if the more was from God?

Joanne DeBoer is with her – our – God now. A woman who lived through some very difficult periods of her life YET - her life and her faith remained focussed on God. The God of blessings in her family, her engagement with Maranatha and of course her deep love for Jack during the last few years of her life. She knew that she was not her own but belonged – body & soul, life & death – to God.

This attitude of Joanne becomes a challenge and encouragement to us. We are reminded that we belong to God because He guards us from harm and He guides us through harm because of His great love for us. The God that knows each and every follicle and molecule also knows our destiny and our calling. The God who made us to belong to Him so that all that happens to us, in us, for us and through us will remind us that we are taken care of in this world and in the world yet to come!

AMEN and AMEN