

TOGETHER

Prayer Walk

6.19.20

For the last fifty years, the property on which you are standing has been a place of gathering. We gathered to worship. We gathered to learn. We gathered to teach. Doves gathered for VBS and Trunk or Treat and fireworks. Some have come here for counsel. Some have come for help. Some have come to serve. Some have come to play ball. All have come to belong.

And then suddenly and unexpectedly it stopped.

Over the last 90 days few have come here. None have gathered here. In large part none have really gathered much of anywhere. This parking lot has been empty. The halls, the classrooms, the large gathering spaces, they were vacant...silent...lonely.

But this weekend the cars will begin to return. The people will begin to gather again. The children, the teenagers, the college students, couples, singles, parents, widows, brothers, sisters...they will be wearing masks and benevolently keeping their distance, but they will be here **TOGETHER**.

This, it would seem, is the beginning of a new chapter, the genesis of a new era. We will be glad to resume some of the things that have happened here for half of a century...rituals and commissioned customs that have endured for generations. AND we will be part of something NEW. Things will not be the same. They can't ever be the same. They **MUST NOT** be the same. Whatever you believe about God's role in causing what has happened in these days, you can be sure of this...

He will not waste these days.

He can and will do a new thing.

Greater days are yet to come.

In anticipation of this weekend and this new beginning, if you are able, you are invited to go on a walk. There is no specific path laid out. Just walk at least one lap around the Harpeth Hills building. You can drive it if you need to, but you are invited to walk if you can. You might choose to take the shortest and quickest route. You might choose to walk the outer edge of the property. Find your way. There are no expectations, just a simple invitation.

There were two who took a walk together. On that particular day they took a road toward a town called Emmaus.

"They were talking with each other about everything that happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them..."

It's not just an ancient story. It's a current reality. Remind yourself. As you walk, **HE WALKS WITH YOU**. Talk to Him. Pray.

Who Is He?

Adoration

As you begin to walk and talk with Him, start the conversation with adoration.

Praise Him by declaring who you know Him to be.

Abraham knew Him as **Promise Keeper**.

Hagar knew Him as **The One who sees me**.

Isaac knew Him as the **One who provides the sacrifice**.

Moses knew Him as **I Am**.

Rahab knew him as the **God who delivered His people from Egyptian slavery**.

Joshua knew Him as the **Conqueror**.

David knew him as the **Shepherd**.

Mary knew Him as the **Lord worthy of serving**.

Who do you know Him to be?

Adore Him as you walk **TOGETHER**.

Near the back of the property away from Old Hickory Blvd, behind the community rooms you will find a prayer garden with some trees and picnic tables and a pillar made of stones. Pause there along your way and read the next section before you walk on.

What Has He Done?

Reflection/Remembrance

Before the people of God entered into a new era, the possession of a land that had been promised for generations, they had to cross a river. It was a “watershed” moment.

They took twelve stones from the river and constructed an altar, perhaps like the one you are seeing now. It was to be a place of remembrance. A way of telling the next generation what God had done.

As you continue to walk with Him, reflect with Him about what He has done.

What has He done in ages past? What has He done by way of the cross and empty tomb? Where do you see His movement throughout history? Where do you see His hand in your own life? What has He done in recent days? What are your “watershed” moments?

*One generation commends your works to another;
they tell of your mighty acts.*

*5 They speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty—
and I will meditate on your wonderful works.^[b]*

*6 They tell of the power of your awesome works—
and I will proclaim your great deeds.*

*7 They celebrate your abundant goodness
and joyfully sing of your righteousness. (Psalm 145)*

On the east side of the property, beside the colorful gated playground you will find a cross. Pause there and read the next section before you walk on.

What Have You Done?

Humility/Repentance/Renewal

The day before the people of God crossed the Jordan River into something new, Joshua told them, *"Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you."*

It happened to Job. After he was reminded of who God is and what God had done, he said, *"My ears had heard of you but now my eyes have seen you. Therefore, I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes."* Job 42:5

It happened to Isaiah. When he found himself in the presence of God and was reminded of who He was he cried, *"Woe to me! I am ruined! For I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips and my eyes have seen the King, the Lord Almighty!"* Isaiah 6:5

It happened to Peter. When he caught just a glimpse of who it was that was in his boat, he fell at Jesus' knees and said, *"Go away from me, Lord: I am a sinful man."* Luke 5:8

Perhaps it is happening to you right now. You are beginning to remember, or even to discover, that the One who walks with you, with whom you have been talking, is holy.

Here by the cross share with Him what He already knows. It is why He allowed himself to be put on a cross. Confess. Repent. Come clean. He won't stop walking with you.

*Then I acknowledged my sin to you
and did not cover up my iniquity.*

*I said, "I will confess
my transgressions to the Lord."*

*And you forgave
the guilt of my sin. (Psalm 32)*

Specific moments call for specific prayers.

Recent days have heartbreakingly reminded us that there is a disturbing difference between the way that black people and white people are treated in our cities and neighborhoods. Some of the reasons for this are deep-seeded in a long sinful history of violence and abuse that ought to bring us to our knees in grief and lament.

The effects of the atrocities of the past continue to echo in the present because we are often too proud or too afraid to examine our own personal biases.

The people of God can lead the way in abolishing racial injustice through a willingness to invite Christ to examine our own hearts.

David invited God, *Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. 24 See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.* (Psalm 139)

Join your church family in this same invitation in prayer right now.

As God exposes our biases, may we have the courage to confess, to repent, and to truly live differently.

As you continue your walk, now in a time of confession, pause on the front porch of the main building. While you are there, read the next section before continuing on.

What Will You Tell Him?

Thanksgiving/ Communion

On a bench to the right of the front doors of the church building you will find a box containing prepackaged elements of communion. Please take one.

On the other side of the Jordan, the people of God celebrated Passover just before they marched toward Jericho. That day something significant happened...

...on the plains of Jericho, the Israelites celebrated the Passover. 11 The day after the Passover, that very day, they ate some of the produce of the land: unleavened bread and roasted grain. 12 The manna stopped the day after they ate this food from the land; there was no longer any manna for the Israelites, but that year they ate the produce of Canaan. (Joshua 5:10-12)

For decades they had eaten manna, the daily bread provided by God. And then that day, they tasted the first fruits of a promise for which they had been waiting since the time of Abraham. They had much to celebrate. No doubt their hearts were flooded with gratitude.

For decades people have walked through these doors on the first day of the week to gather with around a table that included the two simple elements you hold in your hand. That stopped in March, at least in this location.

This Sunday some will walk back through these doors. Others will gather outside near the pillar of stones you visited earlier, in front yards, on back porches, or participate from home. But the constant is this...**God keeps His promises.** The Passover. The Crossing of the Jordan. The cross and empty tomb. He is faithful. And He has made another promise. One day we will cross another Jordan River of sorts. This Lord's Supper will stop and we will eat the fruit of a new land. We will come **TOGETHER** around His table. We have much to celebrate and anticipate. No doubt our hearts are filling with gratitude as well.

Take and eat. Then what will you tell Him? "Thank You" is a good place to start. As you are thanking Him consider the significance of this day. **Today is June 19.** It has come to also be known as Juneteenth.

"The people of Texas are informed that, in accordance with a proclamation from the Executive of the United States, all slaves are free."

Those words issued by Gen. Gordan Granger on June 19, 1865 finally marked the official end of slavery in the United States after a two-and-a-half-year delay from the original date set in the Emancipation Proclamation. For this reason alone, there is much to remember and be thankful on June 19th.

Things are not yet as they should be. The work of renewal is not yet complete. We will talk with God about that next. But moments like Juneteenth are reminders that the work of renewal is indeed in process.

Give thanks.

Read the final section below as you complete your lap around the building.

What Will You Ask Him?

Intercession/Revival

5 On the seventh day, they got up at daybreak and marched around the city seven times in the same manner, except that on that day they circled the city seven times...

20 When the trumpets sounded, the army shouted, and at the sound of the trumpet, when the men gave a loud shout, the wall collapsed... (Joshua 6)

There is no expectation that you will walk around this building 7 times. You are welcome to do that, but you are not at all expected to do that. Still in this final turn of your lap around the building the commission is to begin to pray for walls to collapse, not of the **church building**, that would be a shame, but perhaps walls of the **church** nonetheless.

May the walls around our hearts collapse. May the walls that divide us from one another collapse. May the walls that keep us insulated and unengaged with those around us collapse. May the walls of unbelief collapse. May the walls of fear collapse.

As you finish this walk with Jesus, ask Him to shake down walls.

It is hard to know what God's role was in causing this disruption but once again we are convinced that He will not waste it. Let's not be guilty of wasting this time either.

This is a new day...a new era.

Give a loud shout. May walls collapse.

What will you ask Him? How will you walk with Him?

When you arrive at your car, your walk with Him is not ended.

This is just the beginning.