

6 Easter A RCL 2020

In pastoral meetings, one of the most difficult discussions is from those who feel God has abandoned them

They feel this way because much is falling apart around them
They pray but don't get answers for which they are hoping
Or they just don't "feel" anything from God
In all honesty this is most difficult for me
Not to understand, because who hasn't felt this way
But to explain this in relation to the scriptures for today

Paul, who has escaped persecution to Greece has been walking around Athens and observing their religious lives

It is in this Greek culture that his faith in the resurrected Christ
clashes with their worldview
For the Greeks are very religious, with multiple gods, statues,
and temples
And one to an "unknown god"
His call as an apostle, one who is sent to preach the Good
News of Jesus Christ, comes to life
He proclaims what God is like to these people at this tomb

In summary Paul tells them and us:

God is the creator of all heaven and earth
God is too great to be confined to anything we ever make
God isn't in need of anything from us, since we are God's
creation

God is knowable, searchable and present

Now is the time to turn to this incarnate God

In turning to God, there are some expectations for each of us

We get this in the gospel passage from John
We are to obey the commandments of God
It is a way of saying, that in order to live life to the fullest, we
don't create it in our image, **but** in the image of our creator.
One of the biggest struggles for us is worshipping idols
Which often comes from, **coveting**, wanting what others have.
It was an issue for the Israelites in the OT, NT and us today

In fact, there is a biblical pattern of this struggle that has been set before us

When the people made worshipping God a priority, life
generally went well for them
However, when they disobeyed God, coveted, worshipped
idols, went their own ways, things went poorly
I wish life were this simple, but it isn't. There is the...
Question, "Why do bad things happen to good people?"
But it doesn't diminish the fact that there is something to
following God and a richer life versus going our own
way and experiencing difficulty.
I have met many a person who showed up at **church broken**
They followed their own way on the path to heartbreak
They started following God's ways/commandments and began
to experience healing and a whole new, full life in Christ
It is a powerful thing to watch

What further complicates my conversation with those who feel God has abandoned them, is the promise Jesus gives today

"I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Advocate,
to be with you forever."
The promise is that the Holy Spirit is an advocate for us
Counseling, defending, guiding, helping us each and every day
It is one of the great celebrations of baptism that we are given
the fullness of the Holy Spirit
The HS is always with us, "forever" and as Jesus says, "abides
with us and will be in us."

Some who feel abandoned is from people who live how they want

They get in a crisis, pray, and don't get rescued immediately
It is a reminder that God is not one to just dabble in
A relationship with God is an **abiding one, as with the HS**
It isn't a crisis prayer life, but a daily listening, following,
obeying, abiding
In the midst of this pandemic, so many have said this is the
only place that they could find peace
Isn't that how it is supposed to be?

Abiding is the call in our relationship with Christ

In the very next chapter, 15, John will explain this
Jesus says, "I am the vine, you are the branches"
We are joined together, and Jesus is our source of life
Modern day might be, I am the plug, you are the appliance
This is the essence of reducing the feeling of being abandoned

Each of us at some point, even if we believe we are doing everything correctly, are going to experience this struggle with God

It happens to all of us
Which is why Jesus closing words today are so important:

"I will not leave you orphaned
I am coming to you
Because I live, you also will live
Those who love me are loved by my Father
I will love them and reveal myself to them."

The greatest promise to us in our lives of faith

Jesus will be revealed to us
What a powerful promise to know that the risen Lord will
be revealed to us
Keep abiding, keep listening to the Advocate, follow the HS's
lead
It is the path to the richest, fullest life possible
And we will be filled with the fullness of God!!!!