

March 24, 2020

Dear Eden community,

These are very strange times. 10 days ago, we didn't know we would be in city and county-wide self-quarantine, not in St. Louis, anyway. STL is neither NYC nor SEA, not even close. Now we are working from home, our children are home from school, and there is no toilet paper of any kind in the stores.

The question many are asking, "Where is God in all this?" is certainly one I have asked myself. And no one knows. Some who have suffered the virus, and even the death of a loved one, have asked, "Why?" and no one knows. God is not answering.

During this time of Lent, I am reminded of Jesus' trials before the Sanhedrin and Pilate, where he did not answer the questions hurled against him either. The only questions he answered were along the line of, "Are you the Messiah," the deepest longing of our hearts? "Yes," he said, and remained silent at other accusations. "If you are the Messiah, prove it! Tell us who struck you! Come down from the cross! Give us absolute proof that you are who you say you are!" But Jesus did not defend himself.

There was another time Jesus was asked whether he was the Messiah, the one we've been waiting for, this time by John. "The lame walk, the blind see, lepers are cured, the deaf hear, and good news is preached to the poor," Jesus said. The answer was already there, for all to see, if they wanted.

In a way, questions like "where is God?" "why?" are questions asking God to prove that God is God. "If you are God, prevent our suffering. Tell us who is at fault! Rescue your reputation! Rescue *our* reputation, those of us who have spoken up for you..."

Where is God in this pandemic? Is God in charge? God is silent because the answers are already there for us to see... God does not defend God's reputation or ours.

But God is all around us. Quietly, subtly, imperceptibly, infusing our lives. Are you in a better place you were a year ago? Has something improbable happened that has been good? Have you simply survived something difficult with grace? And have you been good news to someone who needed it?

I suspect that for most if not all of you, most if not all the answers to these questions have been "Yes." And so that is the answer we have, sometimes the only answer God gives, "Yes." "Yes," not to the questions that God prove Godself, but "Yes" to the deep longings of your heart.

What do you do with a God that answers the deepest longings of your heart but not your questions?

Stay well, stay connected, beloved of God.

Sharon Tan, Acting Dean