

Take a Friend

Take Care: Part 5 “Take a Friend”

Rev. Cameron D St. Michael – June 27, 2021

5th Sunday After Pentecost

Readings: Genesis 2:4b-22; Ecclesiastes 4:7-12

Reflection: Psalm 122

Greeting: Let your faithful love comfort me Lord. Let your compassion come to me so I can live again. Your word and your instructions are my joy! Your righteousness lasts forever! Praise the Lord!

Prayer: God our guardian, you know the worries in our hearts and the troubles that weigh on our minds. Refresh and renew us by your Holy Spirit, and give us a right heart, that we may be strengthened in faith so that we may more fully love and seek the paths you lay before us, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Reflection: Psalm 122

I was glad when they said to me, “Let us go to the house of the Lord!” Our feet are standing within your gates, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem—built as a city that is bound firmly together. To it the tribes go up, the tribes of the Lord, as was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord. For there the thrones for judgment were set up, the thrones of the house of David. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: “May they prosper who love you. Peace be within your walls, and security within your towers.” For the sake of my relatives and friends I will say, “Peace be within you.” For the sake of the house of the Lord our God, I will seek your good. (Psalm 122 NRSV)*

We read the words of Psalm 122 and we hear of joining together to follow the Lord. That we pray for peace and bless with peace for the sake of those close to us. That we look for good for the sake of God’s house. How do you seek God with others? How do you bless others with peace? Do you join together with others to find hope? How do you share that hope with the world?

Prayer: O God, help us to seek you as we care for ourselves. Let us always look to you together. May we be blessed in your peace as a community. Help us to seek out your love that you may strengthen us in our faith and our hope. Hear our prayers and have mercy on us Lord. May you always guide us and lead us by your righteous hand. Amen.

Now let the words of our mouths, and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Sermon:

Our scripture readings for today come from the Common English Bible. Our first reading for today comes from Genesis chapter 2 verses 4b through 22.

On the day the Lord God made earth and sky— before any wild plants appeared on the earth, and before any field crops grew, because the Lord God hadn't yet sent rain on the earth and there was still no human being to farm the fertile land, though a stream rose from the earth and watered all of the fertile land— the Lord God formed the human from the topsoil of the fertile land and blew life's breath into his nostrils. The human came to life. The Lord God planted a garden in Eden in the east and put there the human he had formed. In the fertile land, the Lord God grew every beautiful tree with edible fruit, and also he grew the tree of life in the middle of the garden and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. A river flows from Eden to water the garden, and from there it divides into four headwaters. The name of the first river is the Pishon. It flows around the entire land of Havilah, where there is gold. That land's gold is pure, and the land also has sweet-smelling resins and gemstones. The name of the second river is the Gihon. It flows around the entire land of Cush. The name of the third river is the Tigris, flowing east of Assyria; and the name of the fourth river is the Euphrates. The Lord God took the human and settled him in the garden of Eden to farm it and to take care of it. The Lord God commanded the human, "Eat your fill from all of the garden's trees; but don't eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because on the day you eat from it, you will die!" Then the Lord God said, "It's not good that the human is alone. I will make him a helper that is perfect for him." So the Lord God formed from the fertile land all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky and brought them to the human to see what he would name them. The human gave each living being its name. The human named all the livestock, all the birds in the sky, and all the wild animals. But a helper perfect for him was nowhere to be found. So the Lord God put the human into a deep and heavy sleep, and took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh over it. With the rib taken from the human, the Lord God fashioned a woman and brought her to the human being. (Genesis 2:4b-22 CEB+)

Our second reading for today comes from Ecclesiastes chapter 4 verses 7 through 12.

Next, I saw under the sun something else that was pointless: There are people who are utterly alone, with no companions, not even a child or a sibling. Yet they work hard without end, never satisfied with their wealth. So for whom am I working so hard and depriving myself of enjoyment? This too is pointless and a terrible obsession. Two are better than one because they have a good return for their hard work. If either should fall, one can pick up the other. But how miserable are those who fall and don't have a companion to help them up! Also, if two lie down together, they can stay warm. But how can anyone stay warm alone? Also, one can be overpowered, but two together can put up resistance. A three-ply cord doesn't easily snap. (Ecclesiastes 4:7-12 CEB+)

This is the word of God for the people of God. Thanks be to God.

For the last message in our series on self-care, we come to “Take a Friend.” And this is sort of the culmination of all of the different self-care things that we have discussed. And I took a look at two different readings for today that helped to get the point across that we don't do this alone. And the first, I'm using in a way that people may not be used to. We often look to the second chapter of Genesis, and we see many different ideas. But how often do we equate it to fighting loneliness? But as I was thinking about this idea that we aren't meant to be alone, I kept coming back to this reading. And the reason was that in everything that comes across in this story of man alone in the garden, it's a quest to find companionship. All sorts of things are tried, but nothing's quite the same as having someone else around. When I read this account, I couldn't help but think that it was really a story about how people are not meant to be isolated and alone, but people are meant to be together. And we hear that repeated in our reading from Ecclesiastes. There we get that there's no point in people being isolated. That two are better than one. That when one falls, the other can pick their companion up. That everything is better when you've got company. And I think this one really hit home after this last year with so much distance and isolation. And the point that's made in both of these readings is that we aren't meant to be alone.

When we look at this through the lens of the other issues of self-care that we've talked about in this series, it all fits in. Because often, it's someone else that helps us to recognize that we need to take a step back from everything, to be away from the crowds. We rely on others to help us when we need to take a break, to be able to recover, to be able to have somebody to help us along the way. And we also know it's easier to take responsibility when we have somebody to help us recognize our own mistakes. Because we keep each other accountable for our actions. And then, even when we take time alone, we can take time alone with others. That sometimes we just need to be away from all the hustle and bustle and spend that time just with the people we care about and the people that help us to be our best. And when we take advice, we take advice from others who understand our situation and understand what it is we're going through. And on the flip side of all that we can be the one to help others to recognize when they need to step away and take a break. We can help others recognize when they've made a mistake and need to atone for it. We can help others recognize when they just need time to recenter themselves. We can give advice to those in need. But it all comes back to the idea that we need to be able to take a friend on the journey.

And we see this in Christ. Christ didn't travel alone but had people that were there as apostles and disciples and his helpers and his followers. But we also see that Christ had friends. When he visits Martha and Mary, when he weeps over Lazarus, it's not out of losing follower, it's out of losing a friend. When he goes to see Martha and Mary, he's visiting his friends. Jesus knew the importance of having friends. People he could count on. People he knew might let him down, but people who would be there. We see it when Paul sets out. Paul goes out with companions for his travels and makes friends in the places he goes. We see that with the prophets. When we see Elijah in his time of need, one of the things that helps him to

come back is a friend in Elijah. I think it's important that we be able to recognize that we aren't meant to do this alone. God doesn't want us to do this alone. God knows we need companionship, and that we need each other to be able to do what God needs us to do.

I say this for all the reasons that I've stated, but also because it's not good for us to be alone, because we get lonely. We need people to talk to, even if it's just somebody to be there, to share our company. I know I've had many times where I can sit down with a friend and say nothing for a long period of time and just be comforted in their presence. That's important because it lets us be the best that we can be. So that we can be the best followers of Christ that we can be. Because we can't be true disciples alone. We need each other, to hold each other accountable, to help each other. To lift each other up. It's an important aspect of who we are. And it is important part of who we are in Christ. And so, we need to be able to recognize that that we need each other in one form or another. That we help each other in so many ways.

I really wanted to finish with this point because it ties all the others together. It brings us to this final bit of self-care that we can easily miss. Self-care isn't something that you just do by yourself for yourself. Self-care is something that we do for ourselves and for each other. That without it, we aren't the disciples we could be, and God knows it. So, the next time that we think about the way that we care for ourselves and the way that we care for others, we should remember that those things are intertwined. That we don't do one thing to help others and another to help ourselves. Often the things that we do to help someone else, help us. All the things that other people do to help themselves help us when we are doing it right. And we help each other in Christ's love and in Christ's care, that when we reflect Christ's compassion, it helps us internally. Our hearts are made lighter when we don't carry burdens with us. That when we're able to let go of anger and resentment, that we don't carry grudges, that it's better for us, and it's better for the people around us. And when we can be a good example of how to do that, we help others to be better disciples. And when we surround ourselves with people who are becoming better disciples of Christ, we become better disciples. That we become better followers, that we learn to be servant leaders. Both in how we treat ourselves and how we treat others.

I encourage you to reflect on what it is you do to take care of yourself. And think about how that impacts your life, and how it impacts others. And think about the ways that you strive to help others and think about the ways that it improves your life, that it improves your heart. And know that God has always meant for us to be together. That just as we are of one body, redeemed by one blood, that we are one people in Christ, if we do not take care of ourselves, we cause the body to hurt. When we do not take care of each other, we cause the body to hurt. But when we do take care of ourselves and each other, that we grow in love, and compassion, and mercy, and grace. And we find that all our lives are better when we learn to love each other and to love ourselves in the grace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit Amen.

Prayer of Confession and Pardon: Have Mercy upon us, O God, according to your loving kindness. According to the multitude of your tender mercies, blot out our transgressions. Wash us thoroughly from our iniquities, and cleanse us from our sins. For we acknowledge our transgressions, and our sin is ever before us. Create in us clean hearts, O God, and renew a right spirit within us; through Jesus Christ our Lord. May the almighty and merciful Lord grant us remission of all our sins, true repentance, amendment of life, and the grace and consolation of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Offering: If you are so moved to make an offering, you may send it to the church treasurer, or you may send it to the PO Box listed below. We are still the church, and the church still needs your support to keep doing all the important work that we do.

Lord's Prayer

Dismissal with Blessing: May we go forth reflecting God's love in our lives as we go forth in the peace of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Pastor Cameron will be on vacation from June 28th-July 4th.

Our Current Series – Take Care

Our series is *Take Care* and each week we will look at different aspects of self-care and the ways God helps us to take care of ourselves.

May 30th – *Take a Step Back* - 1 Kings 19:1-16

June 6th – *Take Responsibility* – Acts 22:3-21

June 13th – *Take Alone Time* – Matthew 14:22-23; Mark 1:35-38; 6:30-32; Luke 5:15-16; 6:12-13

June 20th – *Take Advice* – Exodus 18:13-26

June 27th – *Take a Friend* – Genesis 2:4b-22; Ecclesiastes 4:7-12

Prayer List

Rev Charliam Renner	Bishop Frank Beard	Our Conference	Our Healthcare Workers
Patti Corder and the Greenup Ambulance Crew		Angie Veach	Eric Veach
Cathy Devall	Brock McMorris	Ed & Verna Titus	Henry Catey
Jake Kiser	Cindy Cisney	Nancy Hoke	Don Wells
Tricia Adkins	Don Stewart	Michael & Makenzie Reynolds	Ronnie Winstead
Annie McMorris	Dwight Parsons	Trinity Powers	Lauren Stewart
Charlie Henderson	Rosalee Chancellor	Phyllis Gable	Sage Martin
Dalton McFarland	Terri Kemper	Darrell Quick	Shelley Murphy
Jeff Davidson	Richard Durham	Kathy Hanks	Nora Werner & Family
Wayne Carrell	Gary & Mary Winterrowd	Leo Smith	Bonnie Hite
Donna Graham	Kevin Drum	Greg Williams	Eloise Buffenmeyer
Martha Roberts	Charlie & Charlotte Baxter	Paul Schulte	Kim Hennes
Ruth Ann Finley	Randy Paul	Family of Patricia Taggart	

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