



THIS WEEK'S PONDERING

DECEMBER 10, 2020



"Praise be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God."

II Corinthians 1:3-4

I hope this finds you well.

The passage above is one I've used on hundreds of occasions. It's used as a part of the prelude to a funeral service in the Lutheran Book of Worship. Paul writes because he has been away from the church in Corinth for some time and longs to see them again. He and his traveling companion Timothy have been through some rough times and had to not once but twice cancel plans to travel to that city and "be refreshed" by the believers there. So, Paul is a bit downhearted when he writes. An aspect of Paul that is commonly overlooked is how important being with other believers was to him. Paul, the great theologian and evangelist, had a soft spot in his heart for fellow believers and often writes about his eagerness to be with them – even if he knew that longing that was not possible to fulfill.

To the Philippian church, Paul said *"God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus."* Paul was the architect of the church's theology of "incarnation" – he used the phrase "God in Christ" all the time. He also understood how important was "the incarnational" nature of the church. Jesus the "person" not the "proposition" is what constitutes our hope. People matter, and we matter to one another. It's been a while since I wrote to you about our Stephen Ministry – we've not publicized it so much simply because it is a person-to-person ministry and, well, we've been cautioned for nearly a year about "person to person" interaction and conversation.

But the need for such a comforting and care-giving ministry is perhaps even greater now than at other times. We have Stephen Ministers available, and I want to invite you to consider receiving one for yourself if you are feeling the weight of isolation or anxiety right now. Much of our Stephen Ministry work at present is done over the phone – respecting the need to keep face to face conversations short or to a minimum. But our leadership team (myself, along with Scott and Peggy Langelin) would be glad to visit with you about obtaining a Stephen Minister, even if for a shorter time while pandemic-related restrictions are in place and you are simply looking for someone to talk to. Our Stephen Ministers are trained for that very sort of thing.

Sharing sorrow is a godly thing – ordained of God and a signature of the Christian church. Our Stephen Ministry team is eager to carry that burden with anyone, so please notify us if we can help.

The peace of the Lord be with you all.

Pastor Ken