

Let us pray... Eternal God, gather your Spirit in this place, and open our hearts to love.... Guide our journey together, with you at the center. Amen.

Life as we knew it changed drastically in 2020, with the start of the pandemic.

Fear, uncertainty, and death plagued our planet... Causing people to respond in many different ways.

Sadly, the idea to mask or not became political... And toilet paper of all things, became one of the most sought-after items.

But it wasn't just toilet paper, as our country was consumed with a scarcity mindset... Which was reflected both in online shopping and in grocery stores, as shelves became eerily empty, and cold medicine and hand sanitizer were impossible to find...

And yet, even in the midst of all this chaos, fear, and uncertainty, the pandemic opened a space for love... A space where creativity, hope, and grace flowed.

From people singing from their balconies sharing messages of kindness, to finding new ways to engage kids through virtual learning, to funny memes and heartfelt commercials, to all of our brave front line workers, and all of the caring and dedicated health care workers...

We all experienced how beautiful it is to love our neighbors... By loving others from a distance, by supporting people you have never met, and by showing gratitude for people that are so often taken for granted...

And every day since covid began, we have journeyed together... And we have discovered that our world is no longer the same.

We may think things are back to normal, whatever that may mean, because it is easier to ignore the impacts covid has had on our society...

And it will be years before we fully understand how the pandemic impacted us... From kids who were in school and lost time being in person,

to technology, the workforce, churches, the healthcare system, and so much more.

Leaving a lot of unprocessed trauma, trauma that affects us individually and communally...

And, unfortunately there have been very few outlets to grieve, lament, and work through all that we have been through...

And it's not just covid... It's also the economy, political divisions, and whatever you are going through personally...

And so, we do the best we can, and we rely on our ability to be resilient...

And while resilience is a good thing, it can also be exhausting.

As Kate Bowler states...

"You are resilient... but I wish you never had to be.

Your survival cost you. And it's okay to name it. To be grateful AND outraged.

Yes, we learned so much. Yes, we overcame. We grew. But this perspective, we would give it back in a heartbeat.

You are resilient... but I wish you never had to be."

And resilience is also tricky to talk about theologically... Because resilience relies on what you can do... Which flirts dangerously close to works righteousness...

Which may mean, it is not really about how resilient you can be, or how resilient we are as a society...

Instead, it has everything to do with God... And how God works in us....

Shifting our view this way takes the pressure off of us... Since it is not our resiliency that is needed.

Instead, we are called to rely on God by opening ourselves to receive God's grace...

As it is by grace, we have been saved through faith. Faith that flows from our everlasting God...

And because God is everlasting, God has a never-ending source of resiliency, vitality, strength, and rejuvenation... And all of these things flow from God's very being...

As we heard in our reading tonight... Have you not known? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth... Those who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint...

The only way we can live into this passage is by waiting in God... Waiting by turning to God, instead of relying on what we can do...

Especially since we live in a world where collective trauma and grief exist...

And these forces bog us down and they continue to hold us down when we leave God out of the equation.

God does not want this for us...

God wants us to soar like an eagle.

God wants us to be nourished by Christ, the bread of life.

God wants us to dwell in God's shelter, and abide in the palm of God's hand.

So, we can be raised up on Eagles wings.

And the only way this can happen is by turning to God...

Trusting in God's good grace, and allowing ourselves to receive God's good grace.

Which is always easier said than done... And so, receiving grace, becomes part of our faith practice.

Practicing to receive grace without judging ourselves, so we can share these healthy practices and God's grace with others.

So, we can come together as one in Christ... Learning to live out our call to love our neighbors in ways that are sustainable and life-giving for all of creation.

It is not our responsibility to be everlasting... Instead, we are called to turn to the everlasting One, to soak in God's grace, and share this great news with others.

This is the good news that lives on, in Jesus... Through whom the Holy Spirit was poured out...

The same Holy Spirit that dwells with us now, who is waiting to be the wind beneath our wings... Amen.