

LOCKDOWN DAY 109 – 13 JULY 2020

Molweni dear family and friends of False Bay Diocese,

Scripture: Mark 10:42-45 Hymn: *I need thee every hour*

Here we are at the beginning of a new week, the day after the address and dressing down of our State President. The sale of alcohol has been suspended; a night-time curfew has been reintroduced between 9 pm and 4 am; no family visits allowed; wearing of cloth masks in public, covering the nose and mouth is now mandatory. The Government Gazette with regulations is free online at www.gpwonline.co.za

We thank God that the rate of new infections in the Western Cape is slowing down and we are beginning to see decreases. On the front page of the Sunday Times yesterday, a doctor, one of the many health workers helping in hospitals, shared his stress and frustration about who gets the bed in the hospital; he tells of how exhausted they are as health workers, their anxiety about the safety of their families, shortages of beds and protective equipment and then they go outside and see people without masks on their faces. Please people of False Bay, let us commit to not ignore this regulation. I am also asking you to co-operate with your clergy regarding the maximum of 50 people allowed at funerals and at graveyards. When it is a Covid-19 related death, the numbers are fewer. No family visits allowed, also means that we must not expect our clergy to make house calls. We are still in lockdown level 3 with stricter measures imposed.

In our church's calendar we remember Silas. He was a prominent Christian in the first days of the Church. Silas was a companion of St Paul and shared with him in the labours and sufferings of his missionary journeys. He appears to be the same as Silvanus who is mentioned several times in St Paul's letters and was also the writer to whom St Peter dictated his first letter.

The gospel reading set for today is teaching us about service. We, like Silas, must come alongside others in their sufferings. We must think and act the opposite of what the world thinks, even though we live in the world. Let us allow God's Holy Spirit to correct us when we become ambitious and seek for power and prestige, losing sight of willingly serving God and other people. Jesus was prepared to die for us rather than to stop loving us. Jesus showed us what "greatness" is by the way he lived and died. Jesus Christ, who is the Lord of all, stoops down low to lift us up. Even Christ came not to enjoy the service of others but to accept a lowly Servant's place and to give *his life a ransom for many*.

Let us reflect on the **dignity** of Christian service in this season of the Covid-19 storm in the Cape of Storms.

Many people are being pushed to the margins, over the edge of what they can bear. Are we standing with the least and the lost? Do we comprehend the reality of their poverty, loneliness and distress as society has pushed them to live on the margins? What part are we playing to bring them back into the circle of God's love. God's love knows no boundaries. God's love accepts, gathers and embraces.

Let this day not pass without us remembering the refugees who have nowhere to abide, nowhere to call home, nowhere to work. Their tears are falling on foreign soil. Creator God, Hope for the Hopeless, do not let their hope slip away.

Our Lord who gave his life as a ransom for many, takes our hearts to the prison cells. Take our hearts Lord to impoverished rooms where families have little to eat and parents are growing increasingly despondent for their inability to provide for their children. Take our hearts Lord, to each person who, at this very moment, is being trafficked for sex, labour, and any form of domination or enslavement that obliterates self-worth and erases freedom. In this time of Covid-19, our hearts are taken to people who are depressed and considering suicide.

As the community of Jesus' followers, we are called to serve and **reach out** to the prisoner, to the person suffering from addiction, the persons begging on the street, the person with mental illness, the teenager in a street gang, the alcoholic, a family shivering in the cold in the rubble of the havoc caused by the high winds and rains of last night.

Begin to imagine, how it must be for these people and in **our prayers** we put aside our personal judgments and biases about him or her. We pause to open our mind and heart to the Compassionate Spirit of Jesus who came *not to be served but to serve and give his life a ransom for many*. Where it is not possible to have the opportunity to meet the one you praying for in person, try to picture this person, walk in their shoes, sleep in their clothes. Compare your typical day with what their typical day would look like.

I offer you a concluding prayer written by Joyce Rupp: Holy One, your love unites all of us who live on this planet. We are truly brothers and sisters, joined in spirit through your abiding presence. Gather to your heart all the people who live in situations similar to the person I momentarily became. Enfold all those on the edge of society in your heart of compassion. Guide me to find and enter into actions that will help relieve the burdens of those who are oppressed. Thank you for the immensity of your love. Amen.

Some homework: write a letter to yourself from the person whom you have met today, telling you about their situation.

I am, Because we Are, Because God is ... Opening hearts to heal God's world. *Lord, I need thee every hour.*