

## THE NEW NORMAL!

Gracious God, we don't even know what is normal anymore. But we thirst for it. We call on your peace and healing salve to bring us to a place where our hearts can beat normally again... Where we can sleep at night... Where we can find our center. God help us find a NEW normal where food, justice, loving our neighbors become our priorities instead of a new car or our savings accounts. Help us walk in the world with new eyes of gratitude and grace. We pray for the people of South Dakota, Michigan, California, New York. We pray for Virginia Leach and we pray for Lloyd Mueller. Surround them and their families with your calm and peace. Amen

Our lives have changed totally within the last couple of weeks.

Our schools have closed, and we have spent more time with our children than we ever have. We have dance parties science project, card games and long hikes. And yet we miss the wisdom and kindness of our teachers. We have missed ball games and scouts.

We stand in line at the grocery store watching the "X"s for the six feet distant rule. And we are also aware that there are people counting pennies trying to feed their families on so little. Cashiers wear face masks.

LA now has blue skies, New Yorkers can hear birds singing in the morning, and there are coyotes around the Golden Gate Bridge. The mass hustle and bustle has stopped. And our earth has responded. We are pausing because we have had to.

And yet, we miss community. We pray for those on ventilators. And commencements ceremonies have been cancelled.

The health care system has been over run and the people we love have either been laid off or are working unbelievable hours.

Those who our society has paid the least and considered invisible, have emerged as heroes.

This time has put a light on our priorities and we can't go back.

1. GONE FISHING- In the Gospel of John, we hear after the resurrection, the disciples hid behind closed doors. They are terrified that the Roman government will come after them. The resurrection doesn't seem real to them yet. Jesus comes through the locked doors to them and sends them out to do ministry. But the next scene we see is of the disciples fishing. They stuck a "Gone Fishing" sign on their locked doors and trolled the waters in the early morning. They want to go back to NORMAL. They want life to feel normal again. Fishing was what they did before Jesus had called them. They released a deep breath- **Now this feels right**. This feels familiar. They didn't catch a thing! But they were out on the boat doing what they had always done... that is BEFORE JESUS.

But, as the sun is rising, a figure shows up on the shore. He tells them to throw the net on the other side of the boat... and there they are again, like when their ministry with Jesus first began. Deja vu – When they listen to the stranger- Their nets become so full, that they were about to break.

Peter-the one who ran scared at the crucifixion, the one who tried to walk on water and sank like a rock, the one who was impulsive... the one who defended Jesus passionately in the garden- he was the one who recognized Jesus and he, without thinking twice dove in the water.. he swam and ran toward Jesus. out of breath and sopping wet, he embraced Jesus.

You see, Peter and the disciples could never go back to the OLD NORMAL. They had had too many experiences with Jesus- Pigs flying off a cliff, Lazarus raising from the dead, healing people from dawn till dusk. Watching meager piece of bread and fish being multiplied to feed thousands. Their lives had been changed by Jesus. What would their new normal be?

2. BREAKFAST- Jesus had a fire going. On that fire he cooked some of those fish, some fried biscuits and honey... They ate this luscious food. Sharing a meal is a sacred act. It is a way to nourish both body and soul. And Lord knows these disciples needed it.

When families gather, they laugh and share stories. They remember. - when I gave my sister a black eye, when my other sister came home drunk from a party, when my Dad drove across Lake Ponchatran to meet my sister while a hurricane was brewing, when my sweet proper mother uncharacteristically yelled at the pastor ... learning how to sew and bake biscuits with our grandmother... and she made coffee so strong that a spoon could stand straight in it. Singing off key with our grandfather. We remember the good times and confusing times.

Around this meal, the disciples also remembered- They remembered how hard the road they traveled was. But they also remembered the miracles along the way. They remembered the hopeless people who found joy. They remembered the blind who received sight. They remembered. This remembering brought them back to themselves. But, this time, it would be different.

3. VOCATION- It was at this point; Jesus took the ever so passionate Peter to the side. He asked him- “Do you love me? “Three times he asked him. Peter was hurt. Of course, he loved him. But, the first two times when Jesus said,” Do you me?” Jesus was using the Greek word- AGAPE for love . It was a sacrificial love, a divine , abundant love. BUT, Peter replies ” Of course I love you.” with the Greek word PHILA – which mean brotherly love. A beautiful love, but it had its limits. That did not stop Jesus. The last time Jesus asked him if he loved him he used the word PHILIA as well. He loved Peter and he believed in him. He accepted his limits. He accepted him as he was. Jesus was calling Peter to a new normal. He was challenging him to a new vocation. After all that he had been through, he could not go back to his business of fishing.

According to Buechner, vocation is **“The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world’s deep hunger meet.”** When we are looking at all that we have walked through, we can’t go back to the way that thing have always been. It is important for us to take a walk on the beach with Jesus and ask where the place of great gladness in our lives meets the place of the world’s hunger. “:

What brings you gladness?

What is the world's deep hunger?

Where those two things meet is where you are called to be.

**Brene' Brown says: "We will not go back to normal. Normal never was. Our pre- corona existence was not normal other than – we normalized greed, inequity, exhaustion, depletion, extraction, disconnection, confusion, rage, hoarding, hate and lack. We should not long to return my friend. We are being given the opportunity to stitch a new garment. One that fits all of humanity and nature. "**