

Dear People of University Lutheran Church,

Sometimes we have to step back to get a clear perspective about life. Last night I spoke with my dear friend, Rod Reamy, for an hour and a half. It was wonderful! Rod is like a brother and I love him. Rod is in the process of moving from Bozeman, Montana to Great Falls, Montana. Over the last few months, he has been driving to Great Falls to remodel his new home, and then back to Bozeman to clean out his and his wife Tracy's old home. He told me the drive back to Bozeman is harder, because he knows when he gets there, he will face certain difficult memories of Tracy's cancer and especially her death.

You see, Rod's wife, Tracy, died of ovarian cancer last July. Tracy fought a courageous battle with cancer with the intention of surviving it. Well, she was not able to survive, but it wasn't for lack of faith and prayer. Perhaps her last heroic effort was to be the same warm and sparkling Tracy at her daughter Allyson's wedding and marriage to Ben, last May 25<sup>th</sup>. Sadly, during the summer she declined and died on July 29<sup>th</sup>. This means Rod has not only survived his wife, Tracy, but he, Tracy and Ally together, had also survived the death of their 10-year-old son and brother, Tucker, 17 years ago.

This is what I mean about perspective. Sickness, suffering, tragedy and death have been around a lot longer than this coronavirus pandemic. This is not to say suffering and death caused by this loathsome virus is somehow less devastating. It is simply to serve as a reminder that as hard as this is, people have been going through hardship and struggle as long as there have been people. And, as long there have been people going through hardship and struggle, there has also been a faithful and loving God willing to walk with us through it. Herein lies our reason to have hope even in this hard time!

In Romans 8:35, the Apostle Paul asks, "Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will hardship, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" And how about ovarian cancer, the death of a child, the coronavirus pandemic, social isolation, or economic distress? Paul then answers both his and our questions in Romans 8:38-39, "I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Nothing can separate us from the love of God we have in Christ Jesus! Of course, this includes the 2020 coronavirus pandemic, as well as all the personal, social and economic hardship it causes us. I have to admit, I shutter at the thought of people I know and love dying from this loathsome virus. However, I will not let this terrible thought which occasionally floats into my mind rule the day. No, I simply won't. Instead, I will let the love of Christ rule my heart and mind. I will let the love of Christ, as well as the faithfulness and generosity of our good and gracious God, rule every moment of every day.

This means, if you are feeling more and more anxious, if you are wondering about the future of your life, or the life of your children and grandchildren, or the future of our country or world, then let me give you some perspective. You are a daughter or son of the living God. The living God loves you and despite the presence of the coronavirus, has bright plans for your future. So, now is the time and wherever you are is the place, for you to surrender yourself, your worries and anxieties, your life and future, to Almighty God, whose love for you lasts far beyond this pandemic – all the way to eternity.

Thank you, Lord, for my friend, Tracy Reamy, who is alive in you, and who inspired these words.

You are in my prayers,  
Pastor Tom