

THE FORECAST

A Bi-Weekly Newsletter

JULY 23, 2020

Rayne Memorial United Methodist Church

3900 Saint Charles Ave New Orleans LA 70115 // 504.899.3431 // www.raynenola.org



PLEASE NOTE

The Rayne Community is available online!

WORSHIP IS LIVE ON FACEBOOK AT 10A ON SUNDAYS.

www.facebook.com/raynenola.org/live

All On-site activities and worship are postponed until further notice.

Please note: our office staff is working remotely.

A REFLECTION

(UPON GLIMPING MY REFLECTION WHILE I WALKED BY A CAR WINDOW)

Let's start with this: I can tell you what I was **not** thinking: "Wow! Who's that slim, buff fella walking down the street?" Instead I got judgy, like real judgy, thinking: "My goodness, Jay, you've certainly gained the COVID 19, haven't ya? Chunky much?" Seeing myself reflected in that car window sent me down the rabbit hole of self-critique. Not the positive kind either. "Okay, lardy boy, time to get your stuff together." When you find yourself actually taunting yourself, you probably realize you've got yourself an issue. Know what I mean?

Body image. Having a healthy one is difficult for so many of us, at least I have a feeling that's the case. And that's bad news, even sad news; because that's when I take my God-given gift (what is a body - your body, my body, every **body** - if not an actual gift of God!?) and begin to diminish it, sully it with harsh self-talk in the echo chamber of our noggins.

That's why I am finding some real good news, even glad news, in the reminder the psalmist gives us: **I praise you, Lord, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; I know that very well (Psalm 139:14).**

Remarkably, the psalm gives us no clue about what the writer looked like. No idea about the writer's age, figure or physique, skin color, or ability. But take a look at that body image? The one thing the psalmist does not wonder about is this: we are "fearfully and wonderfully made." That is reason enough to praise God, maybe even share some grace with ourselves, bodies very much included!

Now I wonder this: what would happen if you and I trusted this moment right where we are, however we look, we are indeed wonderfully made. Despite what the world says about us, and in the face of the jeers we might be tempted to heap upon ourselves, our bodily creation is wonderful!

Two truths remain in the same space at the same time, perhaps held in **healthy** tension: one, my body (mind and spirit) would benefit from healthier habits related to what I'm eating and drinking these days, and that's fine; two, God's image does still shine out, from you and me and everybody. I believe with all my heart that truth is the unblemished good news: **wonderful are your works, O Lord, help us know that very well...**

Corporeally,

Jay

BLESSING FOR THE PLACE BETWEEN

When you come
to the place between.

When you have left
what you held
most dear.

When you are traveling
toward the life
you know not.

When you arrive
at the hardest ground.

May it become
for you
a place to rest.

May it become
for you
a place to dream.

May the pain
that has pressed itself
into you
give way
to vision,
to knowing.

May the morning
make of it
an altar,
a path
a place to begin
again.

—Jan Richardson from *The Cure for Sorrow: A Book of Blessings for Times of Grief*



Image:
“Between Heaven
and Earth”

[Inspired by Jacob's
dream of the ladder
of angels in
Genesis 28.]

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LECTIONARY

A weekly set of Scripture readings.

July 26

Genesis 29:15-28 • Psalm 105:1-11, 45b
Romans 8:12-25 • Matthew 13:31-33, 44-52

August 2

Genesis 32:22-31 • Psalm 17:1-7, 15
Romans 9:1-5 • Matthew 14:13-21

NEW BOOK STUDY

The first step to healing is to admit
something hurts.

Join in our book study: *White Fragility: Why It's So Hard for White People to Talk about Racism*, by Robin DiAngelo.

This 5 part session, hosted by Pastor Jay, is available via Zoom for physically distanced gatherings. Purchase of the book is not required for the class. **Sundays in August at 2:30-3:30p & Mondays in August at noon - 1p.**

RSVP Pastor Jay -
jay@raynenola.org or 225-772-3550.

FOOD PANTRY

Thank you for your continued support. We are able to help more neighbors because of your generosity! *Canned Vegetables are our most consistent need!*

Items we always need:

- Canned Vegetables
- Canned Fruits
- Pasta
- Peanut Butter (1lb jars)

Please leave your donations in the vestibule of the Epiphany House, 3924 St. Charles Avenue, then call or text Jacob Nichols 225-588-0560 after you have left your donation.

If you are unable to bring a physical donation, please consider contributing monetarily to the Food Pantry by mail or online.

DO NOT BE AFRAID

God's Got You

*Don't fear, because I am with you; don't be afraid, for I am your God.
I will strengthen you; I will surely help you;
I will hold you with my righteous strong hand.*
Isaiah 41:10 (CEB).

It has been over 4 months since our world changed. No gathering in the sanctuary or chapel for worship. No parties or gathering with friends. No graduations, or proms, or large weddings. Not even funerals for those we have lost. The end is not in sight. I remember when we made the decision to suspend gathering in person for worship answering someone as to how long before we could meet, with "at least 6 weeks." Well, I was wrong.

We have been staying apart for over four months now. Most of us know someone who has been ill with COVID19 or may even have contracted yourself. Some of us have lost friends or loved ones. I go between wanting to know everything that I can about the virus to not being able to read or hear one more thing. I, as most of you, have grieved over missed graduations, ring ceremonies and awards delivered on porches, special birthdays and anniversaries celebrated alone and so much more. But we are not all alone- God is with us. We have agonized about family members who were extremely ill or dying who we could not be with and comfort. But even they were not alone as God was with them. God is with us; we just need to look sometimes.

God tells over and over in scripture that we are not to be afraid that he is with us. In the summer after Katrina, I did an in-town mission trip in New Orleans with 'my' youth group, sleeping in the church, working at UMCOR sites and I used the hymn, **Be Not Afraid**, as the theme. The next year I had to write a Bible study with 5-7 classes around a theme for a seminary course. I remembered how many passages this hymn had contained and chose "Be Not Afraid" as my theme. As I started my research, I was overwhelmed to find that the Bible contains over one hundred passages with "be not afraid" or "fear not". Although I did not study all of them, in all that I read, God said not to be afraid that he was with us, had something exciting for us, would care for us and that all we need to do was trust him.

God is always with us. In these hard times, we may forget. He is present in the beauty of the sunrise and sunset and the lush flowers even if we can only see them thru the window. He is in the faces of our family members, even if we can only see them from the porch. He is in the voices of our friends, even if those voices are only over the phone. He is present in our worship even though it is over Facebook Live. God has our backs. You are the presence of God in your support of Rayne and her ministries in this troubled time. Your support, kind words and generous gifts have been a blessing to me and to all our staff.

During this week, I pray that you feel God's presence with you and that you will not be afraid. Please call the church or email me or other staff members if you need something or just need a friendly voice. God is with us, we are not alone, we do not need to fear. Please remember these words that are the refrain of the hymn **Be Not Afraid**,

*Be not afraid,
I go before you always,
Come follow Me,
and I shall give you rest.*

Blessing, grace, peace and love,
Nancy Hopkins, Lay Servant Minister

PRAYER LIST

We pray for healing of –

**Chuck Pate, Win Schibler, Debbie Strickland,
Melba Maleta and her sons Henry and Edward,
Dan & Jane Sikes, Rick Hammontree,
Robert Wilson, Jim Jeter, Andrew McLetchie,
Cida Lancaster, Ronald Sepanik, Marjorie Lentini,
Emily Chancellor, Robin O'Bannon,
Barbara Everett & Judy Mastainich.**



PRAYER REQUESTS

James 4:8 reminds us, *“Draw near to God, and He will draw near to you.”*

In this time of social distancing, comfort is found sensing the nearness of the Creator.

If you would like to share prayer requests,
email them to Pastor Marissa marissa@raynenola.org.
Or mail a note to the church addressed with "Attention: Marissa."

Please indicate if the request is public (shared in the newsletter)
or private (supplied to the Intercessory Prayer Group).