

Dear Leominster Church Family, Letter #7

Greetings again from our humble abode that was built about 100 years ago. It has had assorted renovations over the years, including the biggest one we did when we moved here a few years ago. I remember when we were changing out the front door and I discovered a bunch of rolled up newspapers serving as insulation. I opened one of them up and it was from 1946. There was an ad for a Brockleman's Market in Worcester, and the tag line said this.. "*Your mighty dimes go far at Brockleman's.*" All the produce was ten cents a pound and all the canned goods were ten cent's a can. The way it's going, it won't be long before gas is ten cents a gallon!

Let me share a little piece of my personal journey with this corona virus saga that continues to impact all of our lives. Now I certainly know the importance of doing God's will, and in my heart, that's what I want to do. But am I the only one who struggles with translating what I *want* to do, what I *should* do, with what I *actually* do? (Are those crickets I hear?) To be more specific, what challenged me this week is found in 1Thessalonians 5:18 where the apostle admonishes us in this way... "In *everything* give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." "Give thanks in *all* circumstances" is how many of the other translations read. Well, I confess, there have been times in the past few weeks where my grade for giving thanks would be a D-. And that's being charitable.

But as usual, God in His great mercy allows things to fall into my life, or come to me in unique ways that are both timely and effective in getting me on track to doing His will, including what 1Thess. 5:18 says. Let me share how it happened. I received a poem this week in the mail which came as a delightful surprise, being as I am, a lover of all manner of verse. A little sticky note attached to the poem pointed out the author was unknown, so I typed in the first line of poem and it came up as a very contemporary work, having been created within the past month. I found out the author was a woman by the name of Kristi Bothur. She's a pastor's wife from a small Baptist church in South Carolina. As I read her blog and got a little more acquainted with her ministry, I was impressed that this woman, despite the circumstances that had come to her, was still reaching out to others, still serving others despite the hardships and loss that she had personally experienced. While she expressed gratitude for her husband and two children, she let her readers

know she had lost 5 other children through failed pregnancies. You read it right, five. Now that's loss. But even with all this, her website oozed with the aroma of thankfulness, despite her tragic circumstances. Here she was, still seeking, with God's help to let her light shine, to tell her story and to make a difference for Jesus.

And friends, that's what we all want to do isn't it? To let our lives shine with the love and compassion of Jesus, to keep trying, with His help, to make a difference for His glory, despite life's losses, and to do His will by giving thanks in all things, no matter what.

As I mentioned, I love poetry and have a few favorite poets. Dr. Suess is high on my list, especially "*How the Grinch Stole Christmas.*" I still get choked up every time the Who's down in Whoville come out, join hands and sing, despite their great loss. So you will quickly see why I was so delighted with her creative takeoff on Suess's classic work. Enjoy!!

With thanksgiving to God, Pastor Mark and Pam

How the Virus Stole Easter
By Kristi Bothur

Tw'as late in '19 when the virus began, bringing chaos and fear to all people, each land.

People were sick and hospitals full. Doctors overwhelmed, and no one in school.

As winter gave way to the promise of spring, the virus raged on, touching peasant and king.

People hid in their homes from the enemy unseen. They YouTubed and Zoomed, social-distanced, and cleaned.

April approached and churches were closed. "*There won't be an Easter,*" the world now supposed.

“There won’t be church services, celebrations are out. No need for new dresses when they can’t go about.”

So Holy Week started, as bleak as the rest. The world, it was focused on masks and on tests.

“Easter can’t happen this year,” it proclaimed. *“Online and at home, it just won’t be the same.”*

Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, the days came and went. The virus pressed on; it just would not relent.

The world woke on Sunday and nothing had changed. The virus still menaced, the people, estranged.

“Pooh pooh to the saints,” the world it was grumbling.
“They’re finding out now that no Easter is coming.”

“They’re just waking up! We know just what they’ll do!”

Their mouths will hang open a minute or two, and then all the saints will all cry boo-hoo.”

“That noise,” said the world, *“will be something to hear.”* So it paused and the world put a hand to its ear.

And it **did** hear a sound coming through all the skies. It started down low, then it started to rise.

But the sound wasn’t depressed. Why, **this** sound was triumphant! It couldn’t be so! But it grew with abundance!

Then the world stared around, it was popping its eyes. Then it shook! What it saw was a shocking surprise!

Every saint in each nation, the tall and the small, was celebrating Jesus, in spite of it all!

It hadn't stopped Easter from coming! It came! Somehow or other, it came just the same!

And the world with its life quite stuck in quarantine,
Stood puzzling and puzzling. *"Just how could it be?"*

"It came without bonnets, without candy gummies. It came without lilies, cantatas, or money."

Then the world thought of something it hadn't before.
"Maybe Easter," it thought, *"doesn't come from a store. Maybe Easter, perhaps, means a little bit more."*

And what happened then? Well the story's not done. What will **YOU** do today? Will you share with that one..

..Or two or more people needing hope in this night? Will **YOU** share the source of **YOUR** life in this fight?

The churches are empty, but so is the tomb! And Jesus is victor over death, doom, and gloom.

So this year at Easter, let this be our prayer. As the virus still rages all around everywhere.

May the world see hope when it looks at God's people.
May they see that God's church is not a building or steeple.

May the world find Faith, in Jesus' death and resurrection. May they discover some Joy, in a time of dejection.

May 2020 be known, as the year of survival. But not only that,
Let it start a revival!