

Devotions for Holy Week, the Sixth Week of Lent -- Palm Sunday, April 14 to Holy Saturday, April 20
Contemplations on Obstacles to Loving Our Neighbors

Lament

Be gracious to me, O Lord, for I am languishing.
Oh Lord, heal me, for my bones are shaking with terror.
My soul also is struck with terror, while you, O Lord, how long?
Turn, O Lord, save my life; deliver me for the sake of your steadfast love.

Psalm 6: 2-4

Readings

[A man] asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

Luke 10: 29b-37, The Parable of the Good Samaritan

The story of the Good Samaritan shows us two obstacles that keep us from loving our neighbors well.

Fear. *Fear was one of the primary deterrents to the priest and the Levite engaging. To stop and help the wounded man would have put them at risk. After all, if he had been attacked on the desolate road between Jerusalem and Jericho, what guarantee did they have of safety? What if the attackers were still close by? What if this dying man was part of a set-up? Fear is one of the primary factors keeping us from loving our neighbors, too. We ask, "What will the effect be on our lives if we get involved? What will the effect be on our kids if we open up our lives and homes to people with problems?"*

Lack of Margin. *For many of us, the problem is not that we don't have a desire to help. It's that we haven't left any room for it. Our heart may be in the right place, but our calendar isn't.*

From the blog of Rev. J.D. Greear, President of the Southern Baptist Convention

Are we willing, as disciples of Christ, to create spaces in our lives, to notice other people in our pathway? Culture is driving us away from some space or margin in our lives. Create margin in your life that is not rushed or packed with activity. It is actually countercultural to have that margin.

Get Their Name, by Bob Farr, Doug Anderson and Kay Kotan

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

John 14:27

*Face your fears with faith.
Examine your assumptions in light of the facts.
Attack your anxieties with actions.
Release your cares to God.*

From **Unafraid: Living with Courage and Hope in Uncertain Times**,
Rev. Adam Hamilton, Lead Pastor, Church of the Resurrection UMC, Leawood, KS

Reflections

Christian discipleship calls us to a path of increasing service to others. Doing this well means battling our fears.

- What do you think are sources of fear and anxiety here in our community? Are economic issues the main stressors? Or is it something else?
- Imagine what it would mean to transform Chelsea and your neighborhood into your vision of God's Blessed Community. What would be different? How would your own life be different?
- Are you conscious of feeling a lack of "margin" in your life? What would help you adjust that?
- Ultimately, our fears are eased via confidence in God's promises and Christ's resurrection. What role do we, as members of the congregation, have in reinforcing each other's confidence and faith? What can we do – via words or actions – to convey that confidence to newcomers?

Hymn

What a fellowship, what a joy divine,
Leaning on the everlasting arms;
What a blessedness, what a peace is mine,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

Leaning, leaning,
Safe and secure from all alarms;
Leaning, leaning,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

Oh, how sweet to walk in this pilgrim way,
Leaning on the everlasting arms;
Oh, how bright the path grows from day to day,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

Leaning, leaning,
Safe and secure from all alarms;
Leaning, leaning,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

What have I to dread, what have I to fear,
Leaning on the everlasting arms;
I have blessed peace with my Lord so near,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

Leaning, leaning,
Safe and secure from all alarms;
Leaning, leaning,
Leaning on the everlasting arms.

United Methodist Hymn #133, Leaning on the Everlasting Arms

See a moving slide show of vintage photos, with Iris Dement singing, at
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s1r-aTbaA-c>

Prayer

I have fears, Lord.
Concerns for myself and my family lead me to scramble for a sense of safety.
Help me to remember that Your Way offers a life of human flourishing, and that
in You, the worst thing is never the last thing.
Let me put on Your whole armor, and be the neighbor You would have me be.
In the name of Christ our Lord, Amen