

Giving from Inside the Cave

A Stewardship Reflection

Ok, I'm going to be frank here, I have not been feeling all that generous in these days of Covid19. My wife and I take seriously the lethality of this disease and we have hunkered down. We are having groceries delivered and ordering supplies online. We're talking to friends and relatives on the phone and via Zoom. The only people I see in person are delivery drivers and the occasional neighbor when I walk to the mailbox with my mask on. Some days I feel like I'm inside a cave peering out into the great unknown, unable to do anything that makes a difference in a world that is hurting so badly.

I know there are many layers of imagination that have been added to the Christmas story. The version I'm thinking of today is the picture of a manger surrounded by darkness except for a single star above and the glow of love around the cradle. The manger seems a bit cave-like to me on this day. It is not where Mary and Joseph would have chosen to be. It was what was available, and it was the shelter they needed. Here's the passage that stood out to me today:

They (the wise people) entered the house and saw the child in the arms of Mary, his mother. Overcome, they kneeled and worshiped him. Then they opened their luggage and presented gifts: gold, frankincense, myrrh.

The spirit of Christ is with us today just as the Spirit was with us in that manger so long ago. The presence of God is with us, in our homes and in our caves. The spirit of Christ is alive in our communities, among protesters in the streets, with volunteers in our food pantries, and with healthcare workers and first responders.

Our monetary gifts and prayers connect and strengthen that mysterious, holy spirit that ties us all together. When we are unable to move about freely and safely, our donations make possible that which is impossible for some of us right now. These are no small gifts. They are sacred and necessary, not just to provide essential services, but necessary for our spiritual health. These gifts, given with intention, break open our hearts, increase our compassion and keep us involved in bringing the world one step closer to God's imagining.

I may continue to feel that I'm in a cave at times. I think we're in it for the long haul with this pandemic. But I am going to work on a weekly spiritual practice of giving to things I believe in: to my church, to the UCC and to the Conference, to direct service organizations, to the Black Lives Matter movement, to climate change organizations and political efforts that reflect my faith and my values.

Will you join me? Who's on your list? To whom do you already give and who will you add to your list? Together we can connect our gifts and prayers with the enormous and courageous power of God to make a difference.

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