

August 30, 2020

Rev Jen's 19th Love Letter From Lockdown

August Greetings to you,

The end of summer is here. Can you feel the seasonal change? Can you sense autumn approaching? I can. I can smell fall in the air. I can feel the joy and woe of this time of year. A time of year when I get... **“the blues”**. I call it “The before birthday, end of summer, going back to school/work blues”. I’ve suffered from these blues for a long time.

Today is my birthday! A day to celebrate God’s presence in me. I am so thankful and deeply aware of the spark of the divine in my life. I’m thankful for the relationship and for God’s guidance and direction. Thank you for this one precious life! This is my joy, and this is my birthday week of celebration!

And yet, those back to school, back to work, back to routine blues are very real. And powerful. Those feelings are dominant at this time of year. The BACK TO SCHOOL energy, anticipation and anxiety is very high. Even higher during these Pandemic times. There is more fear, more concerns, more worry. So many unknowns. And more mandated change...masks on transit, masks indoors, masks at school, while shopping and in any close quarters...and those are not the only changes. We continue to adapt and adjust.

There is a lot of emotion, worry, concern, anticipation, apprehension, and fear swirling around. Perhaps you too are feeling some of these feelings. That foreboding feeling that trouble is coming.

“From this time on Jesus, began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and undergo great suffering at the hands of the elders, and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.” Matthew 16:21

Did Peter feel that foreboding? Did he have those feelings as he took Jesus aside and rebuked him saying “God forbid it, Lord! This must never happen to you.”?

But Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; for you are setting your mind not on divine things but on human things.”

Then Jesus told his disciples, “If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me . For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.”

WTF!? Who to follow? Following Jesus means denying ourselves? It means focusing on divine things and letting go of all that human focus on all things distracting? Have we been setting our minds on human things? Focusing our attention and actions on all of the cares of this world while perhaps ignoring our eternal souls. Following Jesus means setting our minds on divine things even as we take up our cross and follow him.

WTF!? Where’s the focus? Well first of all... IT’S NOT ALL ABOUT YOU! Or me. It’s not all about saving ourselves and our lives and trying to gain the whole world. It’s not all about our possessions, our things, or even us. The focus is on “losing your life for Jesus’ sake” and in so doing finding your life. We could spend hours on this topic and the positive and negative consequences of the range of interpretations of what it means to “Lose your Life” for Jesus’s sake and to “find your life” in Christ. What does this mean to you?

What does it mean to willingly taking up your cross and follow him? What is your cross? How do you follow him?

Following! Focusing on discipleship and what it means to be the followers of Jesus. Do we commit to pledging our whole existence to his service? What does that look like in your life? Please take some time to think about your life of discipleship...your cross...your walk with him.

“For what will it profit them if they gain the whole world but forfeit their life? Or what will they give in return for their life? Such good questions for us to consider.

What do we gain? What do we lose? What matters in this life of faith and following Jesus? So many more good questions for consideration.

Following Jesus is a serious commitment that takes following and focus which is not always easy for humans to do. Taking up and carrying our cross is not easy either. Suffering, sacrificing, dying for Jesus’s sake is not easy. Sacrificial love is not easy.

There will be stumbling blocks along the way...times where we lose our focus and get subsumed by the earthly.

There will be crosses to bear...and we will tire from carrying them...

And there will be THE ROCK to which we cling during all the storms of life...

There are storms brewing...real hurricanes and tornadoes as well as figurative ones. The winds of change are whipping up all around us. The Pandemic Summer of 2020 is leading us into the Pandemic Autumn of 2020.

And WE THE FOLLOWERS, We the Faithful, are not afraid! We know there will be joy and woe on this journey of faith. We know there will be suffering and sacrifice. We know there will be death and we hold on to the hope of rising again.

We take up OUR CROSS and we follow THE ONE in all times and all places. And we are not afraid.

May the changes of season and of life be gracious to you as you carry your cross and follow him. May we all find the life abundant that comes from a life in Christ.

And may we continue this rich conversation about what it means to believe in and belong to Christ. So much to consider in this life of faith. And I'm so glad you are with me on the journey

Happy birthday to me and happy end of summer to you!

With love,

Rev Jen