

Dear Friends

I was at an event in February where my friend and colleague Bob Haverluck made a presentation where he said something I found really intriguing and insightful. He said that if you think it, about almost all of scripture is about someone in prison, going to prison, or coming out of prison.

First of all, you have to expand your idea of 'prison' to include all forms of captivity. Next, step back and imagine Genesis, for example, as stories about Israel leading up to their captivity in Israel. Then Exodus to Deuteronomy as a record of Israel in captivity and delivered from captivity. Now consider the lament Psalms as cries for freedom. Imagine the setting of the prophets as taking place before, during, and after the deportation to Babylon. Picture the Gospels as tales leading to Jesus' arrest and the resurrection as the ultimate expression of release. Remember Paul as an apostle who was frequently imprisoned and wrote letters from his cell. Even Revelation fits the model as it was written during a time of Roman persecution of the church.

Okay, now expand your imagination even more and think of 'isolation' as a contemporary form of prison or captivity. All of a sudden you begin to see what we are going through in a different light. Now you know why faith is such a tremendous asset for confronting the corona virus. It is because we know the stories of scripture. We have heard them all our lives. We have worshipped and prayed and sang hymns that reinforce the stories of the Bible. And because we know the Bible, we know how this ends.

Those Bible stories tell us that from the beginning of time we have been capable of overcoming all forms of restriction and limitation and isolation. Those stories tell us that we were made to endure and even triumph over adversity. Those stories tell us that there is always a reason to have hope and that light shines in the darkness and the darkness cannot overcome it.

There is going to a slow release from this captivity. We are beginning to recognize the signs. Caution is the wise course. But confidence is wisdom as well. There is an old, old story that tells us all will be well.

Grace and peace,

Michael

P.S. My hope is to address this no more than once a month but I am grateful for the opportunity to invite you to show your support for the church as you are able. Your generosity in the past has left us in a healthy financial position. Similarly, the donations we have received since the State of Emergency began have been deeply appreciated. Nonetheless, our rental income and fundraising is far below our budget. We have applied for the Canada Emergency Wage Subsidy and expect to receive funds soon. If you are in a situation where it is possible to make a donation to the church during this crisis it would be most welcomed. For more information, please visit: <https://charleswoodunited.org/donate/>

Thank you.