



May 6, 2020

### ***SADNESS AND HOPE, SIDE BY SIDE AGAIN***

I can't keep up with the columns, interviews, and webinars about how the world will look different on the other side of this coronavirus. The consensus seems to be that our society will not go back to normal, because too much of what used to be normal will have been lost. At the same time, our values, our priorities, and our sense of what is possible have all been challenged, changed, and often enlarged.

In our prayers, there has always been both sadness and hope. From year to year, we have lifted our prayers of sorrow and grief for the losses that we bear. Today, these prayers have become more needed and more numerous.

At the same time, our faith has always urged us to look for rebirth and new life, with the promise of "a new heaven and a new earth." The faith we share has been forged and refined by times of upheaval and loss. For the Jews and Christians who are our ancestors in faith, there was no contradiction between mourning for what has been lost and hoping for what will be new.

When the Hebrew people were taken into exile in Babylon, about six centuries before the birth of Jesus, they left a record in the scriptures that includes the most heartfelt prayers of sadness and of hope.

*"By the rivers of Babylon—there we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion"* begins Psalm 137.

And in the midst of exile, the prophet Isaiah gave God's message: *"I am about to do a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert."* (Isaiah 43:19).

This is the path of faith: to walk forward with sadness and hope, side by side. As we grieve, and work to mitigate loss wherever possible, let us also hope for the new world that God can make. May it be a world in which humanity rediscovers the value of personal connection, cares for neighbors, commits to public health, and gathers with renewed commitment to sing praise to God.

Peace,

Rev. Dr. Matthew Wooster  
Senior Minister