

The Road Less Traveled – October 28, 2016

Things have been somewhat chaotic around the church for the past week or so. Last Wednesday evening there was a water main break down the street from us. When the water was turned back on late that night, the pressure blew a valve in the men's restroom in the hallway between the Narthex and the kitchen, and water flowed all night long. When I arrived early Thursday morning, I found much of that area flooded, including the hallway, four offices and a portion of the Chapel. For the past eight days, we have dodged blowers and dehumidifiers and dozens of electrical cords, not to mention the noise of all of that equipment running 24 hours a day.

On Sunday, that part of the building was off limits, requiring several groups to move and everyone to take the long way around to access different parts of our campus. Our Wednesday evening Fellowship Meal had to be moved, not to mention Bible studies and other meetings that were scheduled for the Chapel. Church staff has been displaced from offices, and we have all had to find new ways to be flexible as we clean up the mess.

But we are cleaning up, and we hope to have the use of our entire campus on Sunday, though we will not be totally put back together. I am grateful for everyone's flexibility and good humor as we move through this process of remediation.

That said, it has been chaotic.

But the experience – First World problem though it is – reminds me that oftentimes the church does its best work in the midst of chaos. We don't often think about what we do in those terms, but it is true. We are at our best in the midst of chaos. Usually it doesn't involve our physical campus. More often it is in the midst of the loss of loved ones or when a marriage is struggling or when our children pose unique challenges. It's when a job is lost, or life throws us one of those unexpected curves that we all face. We see the chaos when we set out into the mission field, whether it's hurricane relief in New Orleans or flood relief in Taylor or the rebuilding of a neighborhood in Little Rock or a school in Belize.

In those instances, we do good work, important work. But we do more than that. In those times that we show up, we do so as the living witness to the most ancient of promises. It's a promise that we find at the very beginning of the biblical story. In the first chapter of Genesis, God begins to create. The earth, we are told, was a formless void, consisting only of water and darkness, two things that, to the ancients, represented fear, uncertainty and chaos. The first thing God does is to bring light to the darkness. Then God creates a dome in the midst of the chaotic waters, separating them and creating a pocket of tranquility and peace and security. That dome kept the chaos at bay and served as the stage for the rest of creation.

It's an apt metaphor for a church that exists in the midst of a chaotic world, a world that often seems to move beyond our control. And it's an apt reminder of what we have to offer that world. We can't promise that chaos will not visit your life. In fact it's almost certain that it will. But what we do offer is hope and a promise. The promise that God is moving in the midst of the chaos. That God – by sheer love and grace – can create in our lives that pocket of peace that keeps the fear of the unknown at bay. That the chaos may rage all around us, but we exist in that holy space that God will use as the foundation for a Kingdom.

That's the promise to which we are called to witness. That's the divine story that we have to tell. That's the hope that we can offer.

It's good work that we do. But more important, it is holy work.

See you Sunday.