Dear Ones in Christ,

I greet you in the name of the One who is Love. Let us quieten our hearts to hear God’s word for us today.

Today’s Lectionary psalm is Psalm 116:1-2, 12-19

1 I love the LORD, because he has heard my voice and my supplications. 2 Because he inclined his ear to me, therefore I will call on him as long as I live.

12 What shall I return to the LORD for all his bounty to me? 13 I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD, 14 I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people. 15 Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his faithful ones. 16 O LORD, I am your servant; I am your servant, the child of your serving girl. You have loosed my bonds. 17 I will offer to you a thanksgiving sacrifice and call on the name of the LORD. 18 I will pay my vows to the LORD in the presence of all his people, 19 in the courts of the house of the LORD, in your midst, O Jerusalem.      Praise the LORD!

When each person dies from COVED-19 God notices and cares. When black men and women are killed at the hand of police God notices and cares. When loved ones die, God notices and cares.

My friend and colleague, Rev. E.G. Clark died June 5th. He befriended me soon after I moved to Morris Fork. He was excited that there was someone closer who would fill the pulpit for him. He even scheduled his vacation time around when I could preach for him.

While I’m so sad for his death I rejoice when I think of him. While we were very different, we were also much the same. We loved the LORD, and we loved the people we served, even when they irritated us, and we irritated them. Our biggest disagreement was he rooted for Louisville while I rooted for the Wildcats.

Even in death there is reason to sing praise. God is with us in our grief. Their baptisms are now complete in the Lord. God listens to our cries, hears us, and answers our prayers.

So, what shall I return to the LORD for all his bounty for me? I shall sing praise. I will give thanks. I will proclaim how faithful and loving God is in life and and in death.

How will you render your praise for God’s bounty to you?

Please pray with me. Most gracious and loving God, we praise you for your steadfast love that endures forever. Hold us and others as we mourn the deaths of so many, and help us to sing your praise in the midst of these trying times. In Christ’s name we pray. Amen.

Rev. Janice A. Stamper