

Greetings to all the Saints at Manatee Life,

SCRIPTURE:

John 19:1-2 (MSG) – Larger reading: John 19:1-16

“So Pilate took Jesus and had him whipped. The soldiers, having braided a crown from thorns, set it on his head, threw a purple robe over him”

STORY:

The early American Indians had a unique practice of training young braves. On the night of a boy's thirteenth birthday, after learning hunting, scouting, and fishing skills, he was put to one final test. He was placed in a dense forest to spend the entire night alone. Until then, he had never been away from the security of the family and the tribe. But on this night, he was blindfolded and taken several miles away. When he took off the blindfold, he was in the middle of a thick woods and he was terrified! Every time a twig snapped, he visualized a wild animal ready to pounce. After what seemed like an eternity, dawn broke and the first rays of sunlight entered the interior of the forest. Looking around, the boy saw flowers, trees, and the outline of the path. Then, to his utter astonishment, he beheld the figure of a man standing just a few feet away, armed with a bow and arrow. It was his father. He had been there all night long.

OBSERVATION:

Where do we get a sense of protection? How do we achieve the overriding principle that we are not in this thing by ourselves? When do we develop a trust level that God is there on our side? We simply look to Jesus and what he went through.

There is nothing that we face that we have to face by ourselves. Absolutely nothing! There is nothing over which we need to be stressed about. There is nothing that should cause us anxiety. There is nothing which should result in worry or concern. And yet, we do.

This pandemic has got us all frazzled and stressed out. The isolation is driving us nuts. The inability of just going to the store or to a restaurant or to gather with neighbors and/or friends for a simple chat, game of cards is driving us to the edge. In times like these we each need the assurance that we really aren't in this thing by ourselves. In times like these we turn to Jesus and know that he has been right there all the time... that he has never left us.

Jesus faced it all and God was there with him. When we realize that the darkness has passed and another day is dawning (and it will eventually dawn – this pandemic is not our new reality forever) it is then that we discover that our Heavenly Father has been standing “just a few feet away ... armed” and God will not allow anything to harm us. We are safe in the arms of the Master.

QUOTE:

1. I've seen the lightning flashing,
And heard the thunder roll,
I've felt sin's breakers dashing,
Trying to conquer my soul;
I've heard the voice of my Savior,
Telling me still to fight on,
He promised never to leave me,
Never to leave me alone.

o *Refrain:*

No, never alone,
No, never alone;
He promised never to leave me,
Never to leave me alone.

2. The world's fierce winds are blowing,
Temptation's sharp and keen,
I have a peace in knowing
My Savior stands between—
He stands to shield me from danger,
When earthly friends are gone,
He promised never to leave me,
Never to leave me alone.

3. When in affliction's valley
I'm treading the road of care,
My Savior helps me to carry
My cross when heavy to bear,
Though all around me is darkness,
Earthly joys all flown;
My Savior whispers His promise,
"I never will leave thee alone."

PRAYER:

Thank you for standing guard in our moments of darkness. Thank you for guarding us from harm. Help us to learn to trust you in all things at all times.

And the faith journey continues, Pastor Jim
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Sunday at 10:30 we will once again gather in our sanctuary for worship as the people of the King and His Kingdom. As we gather let me remind you of the guidelines that we will be following:

- **Temperatures will be taken** as you pull into the parking lot.
- **Wear a mask** and the mask must stay on during the entire service
- **Hand sanitizer** will be given upon entering.

- **Physical Distancing** - Sitting only in the designated “**Safe Seats**”
- **DO NOT CONGREGATE** in the Narthex or aisles or parking lot.
- **NO SHAKING OF HANDS or HUGS.**
- **Offering boxes** are positioned at each door
- **No Bulletins**
- **Fill the pews from the center outward.**
- **Exit by the door nearest you – *Do Not Congregate!!!***
- ***IMPORTANT: ... If you have*** a headache, slight fever, runny nose, slight cough, achy body, watery eyes ... **STAY HOME.**

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