

- To all the Saints at Manatee Life Church,
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**SCRIPTURE:**

1 Peter 4:12 (MSG) – Larger reading: 1 Peter 4:12-19

*Friends, when life gets really difficult, don't jump to the conclusion that God isn't on the job.*

**STORY:**

An old woodsman gives this advice about catching a porcupine: "Watch for the slapping tail as you dash in and drop a large washtub over him. The washtub will give you something to sit on while you ponder your next move."

**OBSERVATION:**

What do we do with the things that go bump in the night? How do we handle the trials and tribulations that come across our threshold? Could these difficulties be something like trying to catch a porcupine? We are not really sure what to do with him while we ponder our next move. And so it is with our “bump in the night” moments.

It would seem so wrong to blame God for those difficulties, but the majority of people jump to that conclusion... that somehow God was asleep at the switch and/or we are being punished for something that we have done. Every pastor has had the experience of being confronted with the eternal question, “Why me?” This question carries with it the assumption that since we are “faithful” in our attendance, giving, Bible reading, etc. somehow we should be exempt from life’s difficulty and the things that go bump in the night.

This Covid-19 virus could be viewed as one of those “bump in the night” things. We attempt to point fingers as we try to fix blame. And, yet, it is here and doesn’t seem like it is going away anytime soon. Well meaning individuals have tried to use the pandemic as some kind of message from God... like he is telling us that we need to put prayer back in school... start following the 10-Commandments... eliminate the availability of abortions... fight against the acceptance of certain lifestyles... I’ve heard it all and all these well intention people

are doing is sitting on the “washtub ... pondering their next move.” And by the way, God doesn’t operate the way some people are suggesting.

While we are sitting on the washtub contemplating our next move we need to remember that God is still on the job and that there is absolutely nothing that we are facing that is beyond the reach of God. Admittedly it is hard to sit on more than one washtub at a time. We’ve all tried to do that haven’t we? It is hard, extremely hard, to deal with more than one “porcupine” at a time... and it seems, at least on the surface, that an army of porcupines has invaded our life. The result is that we get pricked and cornered and worn out, but even then God is within reach and is more than capable of dealing with our sticky situation.

We want the porcupine removed, eliminated, eradicated... but is that God’s reality for our situation? What God might just be giving us is the insight and strength to live with the “porcupines”... to tame and train them... they are all still there, but we are changed. We just have to remember not to try to pet them.

**QUOTE:**

*“Being challenged in life is inevitable, being defeated is optional.”* – Roger Crawford

**PRAYER:**

Lord, if you won’t remove the porcupines of our life, and then help to learn to live with them.

And the faith journey continues, Pastor  
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