

3. MOSQUITOES: Praying Through Hard Times

“Pray in the Spirit at all times in every prayer and supplication.

To that end keep alert and always persevere in supplication for all the saints.”

– Ephesians 6: 18

In case anyone is wondering, yes mosquitoes are small insects that bite, and their irritating itchy bite seems like it lasts half the summer. Mosquitoes can ruin a lovely evening reading on the back deck in a few whirring moments. And that whiny hum of their buzzing wings in the bedroom? That can drive anyone to distraction.

Yes, they may be a reliable source of food for birds, bats, dragonflies and frogs in the chain of life, but they are also vectors for deadly disease, especially malaria.

So why am I considering mosquitoes as one of our “inventions of summer?”

Because life is sometimes hard and we are living in troubling times and mosquitoes, with their annoying ways, can teach us something about praying through hard times.

We’re talking about the hard times that come to each of us as part of being human with soft bodies in a hard world. We get bad news. We struggle with disappointments or anxiety or fear. We grieve the loss of loved ones or dreams, or the best job ever, or a friend who moves away, physically or emotionally.

How do we pray your way through hard times like this? Seriously, reflect on this because we all have ways we pray. Perhaps it is the urgent “Dear God, do something.” And that’s ok. It’s not a prayer for the long haul but in a moment of pain, it is a reaching out for comfort. A prayer of lament will take us through that transition from pouring out emotion to a space of living with. Read the Psalms for lessons in lamenting.

Silence is a friend of the pray-er in hard times. There may be no words, but a silent being in the Presence of the Divine wherever we experience that Presence (in a garden, walking by the shoreline, with a friend who holds space.) You have your prayers for hard times, I am sure.

Beyond our personal supplication, I am also talking about praying in a hard world. Did you read the Ephesians story of “putting on the armour of God?” I’m uncomfortable with all the military images: Helmets. Breastplates. Shields. It is what soldiers in Bible days put on before they went into battle. Writing to beleaguered Christians, the writer of this letter used the image of enclothed warriors to encourage living faithfully in a hard world. It was the metaphor he had at hand.

Uncomfortable, I still chose it because I think this teaching calls us to wake up and struggle against powers that limit justice for all through privilege for a few. We wake up to so many world concerns each day. The violence, the wars and rumours of war, the crumbling of beloved institutions, the cost of food, the threats to community, the culture of loneliness. And more.

The passage from Ephesians calls us to dress ourselves with righteousness, faith, and truth.”

We are called to embodied action in the world; a world that is hard for so many. We put on our sneakers, zip up our jackets, and put on our ball cap or sunhat and live out Christian practice in the world. This takes some figuring out, but it is our call to prayer in a hard world. Let the mosquitoes be your reminder.

“You will be my body, my hands and feet and word
for a world that needs healing and justice and good news.”
- Jesus in John 14

The early Celts savoured the beauty of creation but they were also so very aware of the chaotic and threatening forces in their lives and in the life of the world. Many of the songs and blessings call for help in a time of unpredictability and turmoil. The early Celts called on God to circle them. Here is one blessing for you to use on your path as you enact prayers in hard times.

God above me
God below me,
God before me
God behind me
God inside me
God outside me
God is on my path
And I’m on the path of God. **Amen.**

