Today we hear the rest of Peter’s sermon and it forces us to look at what it means to have a crucified savior. This is a hard message in some ways because it is humanity that crucified Jesus. Last week we talked about Jesus death and how his seeming absence affects all of us: the witnesses, those first disciples, the 3,000 converts. It’s hard to cope with that desertion we sometimes feel when Jesus seems absent from our lives. It is hard to cope with the very human emotions of disappointment and sadness. However, this is precisely what was felt by those who witnessed or heard about Jesus death on a cross. Every time we hear the passion play many of us also feel these same emotions when we shout “crucify him, crucify him”. Those who were there witnessing this tragedy wondered how Jesus message and actions would be lived out when he was gone from this earth. We are in a time when we too are coping with quite a bit of disappointment and sadness. As we observe the effects of the pandemic on a global level with the deaths in the hundreds of thousands it’s easy to get overcome by deep sadness. This is especially true because so many are dying alone surrounded by clinical hospital staff who are covered from head to toe in protective equipment. Where is the humanity in that? Where is the humanity in a people that would crucify Christ; their own savior? The truth is that this experience forced the disciples, the witnesses, the 3000 converts and all of us who came after to reevaluate what Christ presence means to our world and each person in it. We must constantly wonder who is this God we follow and what does it mean to follow this savior who is so different from this world and its ways. Friends, we too are at a point in history when we are forced to look around us and see how the expectations and values we see daily in this country are different from what is truly important and needed in this world. We know that in this country most of us are consumed by our busy lives and we are constantly running around from this place to that. We refuse to slow down and suddenly almost everything has come to a halt for the last five weeks, for the sole purpose of saving lives and stopping the spread of COVID. We see that the ones most hurt by this shutdown are those who have been rejected by a system that favors the rich, the ones who hold positions of power and mainly white people. We see many who are willing to throw away their own lives and those of the most fragile among us to come back to “normalcy” before it’s safe to do so. That is either desperation or entitlement and maybe a little bit of both. But I think it is indicative of a culture and society which has a disregard for those who are crying out for help to just survive. A culture who doesn’t seem to value our oldest and wisest citizens. This national crisis has left the poorest among us without any means to pay rent or mortgage, buy food, and basic necessities for their families. This crisis has left many of those who are sick and in need of treatment unable to receive the care they need because of the hold on surgeries, beds, and hospitals that in some cities are now overrun by COVID patients. The lack of health insurance to the poor also makes them more vulnerable to the virus as they can’t maintain their health under normal circumstances let alone during a pandemic. The statistics also show us that our African American brothers and sisters are more adversely affected than any other population. This pandemic is really shining a light on a broken system that has favored the rich and white for far too long. Brown County seems to have its own specific challenges when it comes to dealing with the poor and the hungry. For instance, Bean Blossom has become a food desert since the grocery across from the church turned into a Dollar General. Many people do not have transportation to drive to a grocery store that is far from their homes. As we can know, today, more than ever before, we communicate largely through our smart phones and computers and if you are poor these items are very costly and even if you could buy the device, chances are the monthly internet cost would be beyond your budget. If you can’t afford internet then your children cannot do school right now as all the schools are closed. You cannot order groceries to be delivered online. A vicious circle is created that is nearly impossible to get out of without assistance of some kind. One of the projects St. David’s has been sponsoring for a few years now is the Farmers Market. Several of our members and the market manager Sandy Higgins have put countless hours into this outreach ministry for this years market. It is truly an act of love and passion to attempt to feed the poorest in the county. Our resources have been really tested to keep this market running and there is no question in my mind that the people of St. David’s will continue to find ways to feed the poor. What we don’t want to do is place our own people at risk. We want to find safe ways and innovative ways of getting food to those who truly need it which make sense given their lack of transportation and limited budget. Where is Jesus in the midst of our exploration of how to feed the hungry and maintain social distance and good health among our members and community? Is he absent? Could he be walking this path with us and we like the disciples can’t yet see his presence clearly? It is my hope that we like the disciples will join together with the community to seek out ways to find clarity. It is my hope and belief that we will find ways to see Jesus working through the power of the Holy Spirit to help us feed people and nourish our own community and we can do this as a group who is in this together. There is sadness and disappointment in knowing that our gatherings together for both worship and the Farmers Market will look and feel a lot different this year. We will have to give up some things we enjoy in order to keep one another safe and we will have to continue to explore how to do the work of feeding the poor in ways that make sense and reflect Christ presence among us. We are better when we join together to come up with a common mission as a church and as a world. My friend posted this beautiful response to the journey we are all on right now.

IN

We are all in.
God has called us home,
from the fields, the hunting grounds.
Each fishing boat moored,
each gatherer returned
with baskets stored.

We are all in.
Now there is no-one
but ourselves,
no-one but our own souls,
in which to dwell in deepest
communion.

Even in our homes,
with the sounds
of children stirring,
and another’s arms enfolding,
we have not been more aware
of our inner cells –

our cloistered beings –
the place in which we hear
but an echo of the other,
and the memory of what was
fades out,
the residue of dreams.

Only the now existing,
the very air,
with currents strange, alive,
in this time of imagining.
and the drawing down
of heaven.

Yes, we are all in.
But not only to rest,
and discover new ways of being.
But to hold the world sorrows,
as the elements
of all our possibilities.

Each of us apart,
cloistered in our quarters,
but with equal measures gifted,
and concoctions each
intrinsic
to the healing of the nations,
integral to a world restored in Christ.

~Ana Lisa de Jong
Living Tree Poetry
March 2020