

Signs of God

The image of a mother comforting her child in the middle of the night because of a scary dream has been running through my head this week. I distinctly remember my own mother comforting me after our family had been visited by a traveling fire alarm salesman. As a small boy, I really didn't have a way to process everything the man said but the little movie he showed where people were caught in a burning house definitely made an impact! I had nightmares for many nights, constantly afraid that our own house would go up in smoke with us in it. My mother held me tight and reassured me, in ways and words I can't quite remember, that we would all be safe and everything would be "all right", that I would be "OK". Needless to say, we bought the fire alarms and they are still in my dad's house today.

Comforting a child may not seem like an extraordinary thing.

After all most mothers, or fathers, in cultures all around the world do so without a second thought.

That's what parents do but of course *some children never hear "it will be OK"*.

In particular I think this morning of orphans in Haiti whose earthquake nightmares are not rocked away or victims of domestic violence who are caught in a nightmare even while awake.

These unpredictable and undeserved tragedies fly in the face of every attempt to say

"It will be OK".

Who are we to make such promises?

What provokes a person to say "You will get through this. It will be all-right"
when we cannot know the future?

There are two possibilities. Either the comfort is false [and we perpetrate a lie]
or we act in faith that **there really is** an order to the universe,

an "all-right-ness" that is beyond our ability to see.

Humans, no matter who they are or where they come from,
have this sort of instinct to trust, to believe that things will be "OK".

Author Peter Berger calls this phenomenon a "signal of transcendence"¹ which I translate as a "sign of God". Mothers comfort their children by telling them it will be "all right" and by doing so they unknowingly communicate one of the core experiences at the very center of becoming human:

TRUST. [And you thought you were just trying to get the crying stopped so that everyone could get back to sleep ☺]

That is often the case in life. The extraordinary, the [transcendent/divine reality](#) of God is [hidden](#) within everyday, [ordinary](#) tasks of living.

Some look at the world today; the violence, the greed, the selfishness, the disasters- both natural and man-made, the pain, suffering, and loss that is unavoidable even in Bloomfield NE and say "How can you believe in a good God?"

"How can you possibly trust that everything will somehow be "all right?"

Life is a mess. At times it can seem like we are in a bad dream. Just turn on the news on any given day. Right now we cannot escape the environmental disaster happening in the Gulf of Mexico. The sludge covering the water is strangely symbolic of the suffocating chaos that seems to affect nearly everyone at one point or another. Who can possibly tell us that things are going to be OK? What [mothering presence](#) can give us the reassurance we long for?

¹ Peter L. Berger, *A Rumor of Angels*, Doubleday and Co., Garden City NY, 1969, p. 65.

The gospel of John boldly promises that **God** will.

Jesus, the son of Mary and the son of God, who has experienced the nightmare of death and yet triumphed over it, is uniquely qualified to tell us, “Peace. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not let them be afraid” - *Hush little ones, everything will be all right.*

The church year is in transition. We are recognizing the end of the Easter glow. Soon the white-draped cross will be gone and the “Alleluia” banner will retire until we call for it again next year. In its place will be the fiery red of Pentecost. We will celebrate with five young people who desire to affirm the promises of their baptism, the promise made to Landon this morning in his own baptism, the promise that come what may, **it will be all right.**

-Not because of what we do but because of what **God has done for us.**

In the ultimate act of **mothering**, God entered into our world, shouldered our burdens and worries and fears upon the cross, and forever destroyed their power to dictate reality. We have been freed to live in a peace that passes all human forms of understanding. And the extraordinary thing is that **this peace exists right in the heart of messiness** and suffering. The peace of God is not the absence of difficulties but faith that all will be “right” in the end. That is really what the whole book of Revelation is about. The great vision of the new Jerusalem is a vision of the world when it is “all right”. It is a vision of how things will be when people will see and experience God face to face.

That is a hope not yet fully realized but I want to leave you this morning with a thought about its *commencement* – its ongoing inauguration in the world. Jesus says that *already* God comes and makes a home with us through the power of love – love that is essentially **faith** in God’s good future put into **action** in the messiness of **here** and **now**. If the oil spill in the Gulf is a symbol of the toxic mess life sometimes becomes, then I’ve got one word to describe the faith that says things will be “all right” – HAIR.

That’s right **hair**. Right now nearly 500,000 pounds of hair has been collected from all over the country and is being stuffed into tens of thousands of nylon panty hose because... because somebody figured out that if an otter’s fur is so good at collecting oil, then we can use hair to soak up the oil from a spill and prevent some of the damage it might cause. Hair stuffed in long tubes of panty hose can soak up nearly three times its weight in oil, wrung out, and then used again. Right now, hair salons and pet grooming shops from all over the country are fighting the nations largest oil spill with clippings of hair they would normally throw in the garbage! That is faith acting on the conviction that somehow things will be ‘all right’. It is the divine, renewing, creating power of God at work in the ordinary stuff of life.

The point is this: **Love is faith put into action.** Just believing that things will magically get better without acting on that faith is like a mother who tells herself the crying child will be all right but never gets out of bed to wipe the tears and tell the child what they need to know. God has gifted you and me with faith and a hope for a good future.

Do you have hair to spare? Love is shown not by doing what is easy or what makes sense. **Love acts on faith** even when you don’t know the outcome. Love trusts that no act of kindness or goodness or mercy is ever in vain. Let us go out today empowered with God’s mothering love, holding and rocking one another and all those who live in pain and brokenness, acting in faith **that God has spoken the last word** and things WILL be “all right”.