

# MINISTER'S MESSAGE

SUNDAY NOVEMBER 8, 2020

KNOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

## I am Not Irrelevant

Based on Amos 5:18-24

I'm always indecisive in November. The weather begins to turn to a cold sleet and the days grow shorter. It's too early to begin celebrating the Christmas season, but I know I should be ordering gifts online, to avoid mailing delays next month. And as I write this, the American election is still up for grabs. Regardless of your political leanings, the decisions of our neighbouring country do have an impact on we Canadians. More concerning, the tone and temperament which comes after announcements are made will have an even bigger impact on our anxious global society for the months to come.

Into this indecisive mix of emotions, we stumble towards November 11th. Fifty years ago, there would have been no question to what we would be doing on Remembrance Day. Stores closed, uniforms old and new were pressed, community cenotaphs were raked and trimmed, and wreaths were laid. But as time has moved on, the reality of the great conflicts of our past has lost

some of its intensity. In a world that is as chaotic as ever, we pray that the sacrifices of these long ago battles have not lost their relevancy. And this year, more of our beloved veterans and their stories will slip away unnoticed in the fog that is COVID.

I sometimes wonder, "Is anyone listening, anymore?" Or perhaps better stated, "Does anyone want to hear anymore?" (those are not the same questions). And far in the recesses of my heart I hear a plaintive cry from an unknown soldier,

"Do not let my death be irrelevant.  
My death mattered.  
Not just to my family or my lover or my children.  
My death meant something for the people of the world.  
Do not let my story or my sacrifice become irrelevant."

The prophet Amos spoke at a very different time in history, but with the same frustration. A Chosen People: caught up in their time and place, with little time, or little place, for God. Amos spoke, not as a voice of YHWH that was

lamenting the loss of interest by the people for their faith. Amos did not speak as a religious leader, pleading with the people to return to their values and their temples and their traditions. Amos spoke for a God frustrated and fed up with people who had made Him irrelevant.

*Though you bring choice  
fellowship offerings,  
I will have no regard for them.  
Away with the noise of your  
songs!  
I will not listen to the music of  
your harps. (v22,23)*

"I am tired of your talk and I'm fed up with your feeble attempts to make motions towards Me, thinking that I will be satisfied and turn My attention elsewhere. Do not

think you can placate me with some unfelt offerings and insincere songs. Do not cry out to Me at the altar begging for the 'Day of the Lord' to arrive, for you are so unprepared for that day, if it were to come it would be the darkest day of your life. Wake up, and see what you have become. Peel back the layers of this earthly life of yours, and expose what is underneath. Show Me the truth of who you are

underneath the layers of worldly things you have wrapped yourself in. These are irrelevant to Me. Show Me what lies hidden at the very core of your being. For I want to know, "Is there something there?"

*<now that was rather intense>*

We are a shaken people. The layers of life and living we have carefully cocooned ourselves in, to protect us from the big bad world out there, or to help us glide through our daily routines, have been stripped away by a virus, and our fear of what is yet to come. We are exposed, spiritually speaking, in a way many of us have never experienced before. We are forced to see ourselves, for what and whom we truly are, rather than what and whom we would like the world to see.

We may not like everything we now see about our self.

We must now look upon ourselves as we truly are, good, bad and ugly.

We must learn to accept more fully, and more honestly, who we really are, deep down underneath all those layers.

And after you have wrestled with all that, I suspect that there is a small voice within each of us, like the soldiers

of so long ago, crying out, "I don't want my life to be irrelevant."

While most of us will never become important, on the political stage, each of us is important on the spiritual stage. Each of us is important to our God. Each of us is answerable at some point to our God, for what we have done, what we have not done, and what we have left undone.

We become relevant:

When we do what needs to be done,

When we turn away from what should not be done,  
When we finish the tasks that remain undone.

We may not be remembered by the world,  
But we will be remembered by God.  
And we will not have been irrelevant.

Our efforts will have mattered.

Our lives will have made a difference.

Our soldiers fought and died to make our world a better place. Their families grieved their loss and swallowed their sacrifice for the belief in a greater good. Our efforts today, as soldiers of Christ, matter. We remain, an 'exposed' people for the world to see in these uneven times. Suddenly, in the midst of COVID, we, today's

disciples, have become relevant again.

God is no longer captured and contained underneath layers

of churchy civility.

God is exposed in the rough and raw moments of life.

God is exposed in the small acts of kindness and resurgence of generosity.

God is no longer irrelevant in a world that had largely pushed Him aside.

A quiet revolution has begun.  
We are no longer irrelevant to an irreverent world.  
Will you join the revolution?

*But let justice roll on like a river,  
righteousness like a never-failing stream! (v24)*