



## TRANSCRIPT: BISHOP'S VIDEO MESSAGE TO THE DIOCESE OF WEST TEXAS

AUGUST 18, 2020

Hi, this is Bishop David Reed of the diocese of West Texas with a word to the people and clergy of the diocese that I am missing very much in this sixth month of the pandemic. I wanted to just bring you a word for both update and a word of encouragement as we look into the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, about life in the diocese and life in your congregations. I wanted to begin, in a sense, where I stopped.

So, here is a portion of Psalm 36, "Your Love, O Lord reaches to the heavens, and your faithfulness to the clouds. Your righteousness is like the strong mountains, your justice like the great deep. You save both man and beast, O Lord. How priceless is your love, O God! Your people take refuge under the shadow of your wings. They feast upon the abundance of your house; You give them drink from the river of your delights. For with you is the well of life; and in your light we see light." (Psalm 36:5-9)

Those are a few verses from Psalm 36, and that's where I ended my address to diocesan council last February. In a sense, that was one of the last things I've said to the whole diocese, other than letters regarding COVID, and Zoom meetings *about* COVID. I just wanted to have a little time to speak to you about the love of God, and our hope in Christ.

I had been toying with a series of Bible studies and reflections to offer the diocese that will be called, "Well, This is What I Planned to Say," going back and thinking about all of the long list of things that we've had to cancel or postpone. I know it's no different where you are, both in your personal lives and in your congregational life. It's a long litany of disappointments as we have had to back away from one another and put things off that we love and cherish.

We continue to live with and try to respond appropriately to the pandemic. Updated guidelines have just come your way. By way of encouragement there, keep doing the things that work: wear masks, keep six-feet apart, when you can be outdoors, be outdoors (that's much safer), sanitize, practice good hygiene. Those things work to slow the pandemic and will be a way by which we overcome it. Our guidelines are not intended to be an obstacle, but to be a means by which we can continue to be the Church and to worship together, even if apart, to find ways to study the word and to hear the word, to be God's people in this particular time and place.

It is a time of anxiety and uncertainty. The times right now are anxious enough, and the future is uncertain in so many ways, on so many levels. And yet, we continue to live with hope. We are a people called to embody hope and resurrection, to trust that God is doing a new thing, and to look for the ways that God is acting today and will be acting tomorrow to restore his people.



And in the midst of my own tendency to whine and moan and complain about how hard my life is right now, I'm very mindful of how many people are *truly* suffering, how many people have experienced such depths of loss. We need to be mindful of that and also look for ways, not only for us to hold the Church together, but ways to break the Church apart, in effect, and send the body out into the world, in the name of Christ to love and serve and bring healing.

I applaud the clergy, certainly, and the lay leadership who have worked so hard in your own settings to do things well, and to be a means of grace and healing for your people and for your community. We, of course, have been saddened by so many things at the diocesan level that we've not been able to do. And yet, we continue to look for ways to do those ministries, to continue the mission.

We couldn't do Summer Camp at Camp Capers, but we were able to offer family retreats in very safe ways to provide opportunities and spaces for God's grace and love to operate and make a difference in people's lives. Family Camps at Mustang Island were held in a reduced and limited way, but they were held, and people were blessed by their ability to participate in that. The same is true at Duncan Park in Colorado. We're finding ways, just as you all are finding ways, to be the Church and to joyfully be the Body of Christ, even in the midst of pandemic.

I want you to know the diocesan staff continues to work hard for the sake of the mission of the church and the 87 congregations in the diocese. We're looking for ways to provide some financial relief, both for the present stresses that people are under and anticipated stresses as we look for and hope for an economic recovery that may be some time away still.

For some time we sort of hunkered down and were hoping that this would pass over quickly, and along with the rest of the world, I think we are now shifting and adjusting and finding ways to live with this in ways that are as safe as possible, but also, allow us to carry on as the Body of Christ. The diocesan staff is always available to you to work with you on plans, and whether things that you're pondering, activities and gatherings, that if those are safe and the risk is reduced sufficiently to warrant those kinds of gatherings at this time.

Long, long ago, in February at diocesan council, we introduced the theme from Ephesians, "To live with the eyes of our hearts enlightened," to look and pay attention, and look again for the ways that God is at work in our midst.

God is not restricted by the pandemic, we are. And so the love and grace and mercy of God are ever available to us, and available to us so that we might offer that to others. And I encourage you to open your eyes and pay attention, and look for the ways that our Lord is present and the ways that the Spirit is moving in our midst, even now, to restore, and to bind up, to renew and revive.



So that, when that great day comes and we're able to regather as we all long to do, that we trust that the Spirit has led us this far, and that it is the Spirit that will continue to lead and guide us on the other side of this.

I wanted to conclude with a passage of scripture that has been bubbling up to the surface for me for quite some time now. I'm sure it's not original with me, but I wanted to read to you a brief passage from Isaiah, and then comment on it briefly.

This is from Isaiah chapter six, and it's the call of the young Isaiah to be a prophet. Chapter Six begins:

In the year that King Uzzi'ah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and his train filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim; each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;  
the whole earth is full of his glory.”

And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: “Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!”

Then flew one of the seraphim to me, having in his hand a burning coal which he had taken with tongs from the altar. And he touched my mouth, and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips; your guilt is taken away, and your sin forgiven.” And I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?” Then I said,

“Here am I! Send me.” (*Isaiah 6:1-8 RSV*)

“In the year that King Uzzi'ah died” – the death of a King is no small thing. In the year that King Uzzi'ah died, everything seemed to shake and tremble. All that was known, all that was trusted, all that seemed so stable started to fall apart in the year of the death of the King. Isaiah says, “I saw the Lord.” In the year when everything started to fall apart, everything I'd counted on, everything I'd plan seemed to shake and tremble, I saw the Lord, high and lifted up.

In the year of the pandemic, in the year where so much of what we planned and hoped for hasn't happened. In the year of the death of so much that we have looked to for security, and trust has been shaken, we see the Lord, high and lifted up. And as with Isaiah, our response is humility and awe to find ourselves in the presence of the living God, to be surrounded and aware of his glory, brings us to our knees in humility.

Humility leads us to openness to see and to hear, to see with the eyes of our hearts enlightened. And the response to that humility, that the voice says to Isaiah, not “You're right, you're not worthy,” but “Whom shall I send? Who will go out in my name, with my words?” In the year



that King Uzzi'ah died, in the year of COVID-19, we're invited to see the Lord, high and lifted up, and to know that his glory fills the earth, and that he calls us still and asks, "Who? Who will go? Whom shall I send?"

Thank you. God bless you. God, keep you safe.