

Do you think Jesus ever had a moment when He thought to Himself: “the whole world has gone mad?” Maybe He did maybe He didn’t, but lately that’s how I’ve been feeling. There is mass hysteria at every turn. Everything feels unhinged and chaotic. We avert one crisis only to confront another; we overcome one obstacle only to be greeted by an even bigger one. One wave crashes upon us and another follows closely behind. The ups and downs of all the troubling news of the pandemic, the scandals, the elections, sickness, paranoia, riots, violence- put it all together and what do you have? A jumbled mess on a colossal scale! And because of this, we are tired and moody and a bit on edge. You can feel the tension. You can see it on everyone’s faces. In our fear, in our anxiety, in our exhaustion we lash out at others. Tempers flare, emotions run high, feelings get hurt. Where is the balance? Where is the escape? Where is the peace?

Well, the simplest answer is: those blessed gifts are found only in Christ. We should not look for such things below. They are not to be found in the world. We must seek them where they are to be found. Christ is our peace. He, alone is our source of help and hope. Politics won’t save you. Right governments won’t save you. Social reform won’t save you. For these are manmade ideologies, and nothing fashioned by mankind will ever bring true and lasting stability. Salvation from the darkness and woes of this life is in Christ our Lord. But where is the Lord right now? Where can we find this peace found only in Christ? And our Lord responds: “Where two or three are gathered in My Name there I am with them.” It is here, dear brothers and sisters in Christ, where we meet the risen Lord. It is here where our Lord has promised to offer His gifts of peace and contentment. Christ is our refuge and our strength and we find His mighty fortitude right here surrounded by each other. Our life with Christ exists in our life together. It is here with each other where we discover our sense of belonging in this fallen world, and if I may borrow a word that is so popular in our modern culture right now, it is Christ who gives us our identity. When we enter this sacred space ‘who we are’ is far less important than ‘whose we are’. Our race, our gender, our age, our nationality- each of these count for nothing. They are forfeited for a higher identity in Christ. In Christ, it matters not if you are male or female, slave or free, Jew or Gentile. In Christ the oneness of humanity is restored. And this restoration in Christ opens up new pathways for deep and meaningful connection. This will always be the chief blessing of dwelling in Christ, of being a part of His Church. It is right that we call this space we are in a sanctuary. For it indeed is sacred. The earth we stand upon is holy. Hallowed by God’s

name, blessed by God's Word, filled with God's presence. When we enter this temple we enter another dimension. The world is out there, but we are in here. Out there, we all have earthly paths to walk, earthly jobs to hold, earthly responsibilities to attend to, earthly cares to fret over, but in here we are free of such earthly restraints. In here our identity is not found in being a worker, an employer, a parent, a spouse, but rather as a child of God.

The transactions of the world have no place in the Church. To the world the Church is useless. But then again the world measures worth based on a servile definition of production. As Christians we must agree then the church is indeed useless if by that word 'useless' we mean having no utilitarian value. The Church does not exist to produce, to buy, to sell, to exchange or to bargain. The Church is not a means to an end, she is instead an end unto herself. She is her own blessed end. For the Church does not point to a greater reality, she embodies the greatest reality of all.

Where is the life we have lost in the living? Where is the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? If all the restrictions of this pandemic can serve any good purpose in our lives let them serve to teach us detachment. Let them serve to assist us in hitting the reset button on this thing called life, to leave behind our former selves, to set ourselves free from the materialistic trappings and security held out to us as if they were salvation. By faith let us seek release from this time-bound world. The Christian life is a lifelong quest to transcend time and its relentless attrition. Perhaps now is the time to live that message for now more than ever we see this world for what it is- a fallen world; a world in a state of decay, a state of corruption, a state of ruin. Christ's Church is more than just brick and mortar. It is a portal that offers us this transcendence. Because the life God creates for us in His Son is infinitely better than any life plan we could ever devise or develop for ourselves. And once we realize the bankruptcy of our own life's ambitions God offers us a new life, a life which transcends all earthly understanding. In this new life, God grants us a peace which surpasses all human understanding. Such godly peace cannot be understood with our minds. It must be felt and experienced. Our souls wait on the Lord. In the darkness we are still. But in the darkness there shall be light. And in the stillness there shall be clarity. It is my prayer that we never let the world take from us what is ours in Christ, our Lord, but instead continue to find in this place that peace, which the world cannot give nor take away. Amen.