



A couple weeks ago, I was taking part in some continuing education online, because, evidently, we pastors could still learn a thing or two, especially as worship and many aspects of organized religion continues to change during these pandemic times. The first speaker was The Most Reverend, Bishop Michael Curry, who would be the equivalent of our Presiding Bishop, Elizabeth Eaton, of the ELCA. The Most Rev. Curry serves as the Presiding Bishop of the Episcopal Church, but he became most famous just over two years ago, when he preached at the wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle, with many viewers all over the world convinced that *he* was

the highlight of all the royal pomp and circumstance that day in Great Britain.

And yes, earlier this month, Bishop Curry spoke with just as much passion as he did from the pulpit at St. George's Chapel in Windsor Castle, as he was convinced that we, on this side of the pond, are in desperate need of a spiritual revival: not in the sense of putting God back in the schools or filling the pews of the magnificent Episcopal cathedrals across this country, but for all of us to shift the way we see the world from a me-obsession to a we-focus.

Bishop Curry pointed out that when this whole pandemic started and the stay-at-home order ensued for the state of New York, where he works and lives, he was worried how it was all going to affect *his* daily living, how it was going to impact Michael. Nevertheless, the other higher-ups of the Episcopal Church wanted him to put together these short weekly videos, for their Presiding Bishop to give some sense of hope and reassuring Good News for Episcopalians all over the country.

So, he had his wife hold his cell phone as they recorded him in their back yard, but there were all these noises from construction crews, and as many of you know, technology does not always cooperate, leading to a fair share of frustration, to say the least. All relatively miniscule matters in the grand scheme of people losing their jobs, not to mention access to food and health care; so yes, we children of God could often use a spiritual revival to transform our me-obsession into a we-focus. We need reminded of the first verse of the Psalm this morning, with mercies and blessings and the very face of God shining not just on the psalmist, but on the whole world.

And as with The Most Rev. Curry, and all of us proclaimers of the Gospel, we are always on the lookout for such Good News coming to life in the present day, about those who wish to extend their share of blessings on others. The truth is we need not look any further than about an hour north of where the royal wedding took place just outside of London, to the home of a man named Tom Moore: a World War II veteran for the British, who wanted to give back to the nurses and medical personnel who provided the care that he said he was "eternally grateful" for, when he went through a cancer scare and a hip fracture years before. So, Moore made it his new mission to walk 100 laps around his garden before he turned the ripe age of 100 years.

After the pandemic struck his home country earlier this year, and in the weeks leading up to his birthday in April, his goal was to raise 1,000 pounds for the National Institute of Health for Great Britain (which would be about \$1,300 for us). Instead, as word got out about this aged veteran using his walker to help those helping others, millions of people started to donate, to the point of surpassing \$40 million. The worldwide attention might have just made him more famous than the preacher at the royal wedding, even drawing the regards from the Queen, who invited Captain Tom Moore to Buckingham Palace for the first knighting ceremony with the physical distancing precautions. He is now Sir, Captain Tom Moore, who remains under the impression that blessings, mercies, the very face of God is meant to shine on the whole world.

Because, soon enough, the Captain started a foundation, to provide some sense of compassionate blessings for those who are often overlooked by the masses of society. The Captain Tom Foundation, as it is perfectly called, proudly supports organizations that focus on disadvantaged veterans, those dealing with mental health issues, terminally ill children, hospice centers: all with the mindset that no one should ever have to face any setback in this life, whether it be because of a global pandemic or anything else, for that matter; no one should ever have to endure those struggles alone.

After all, this life as God shaped it from the beginning is not meant for a me-obsession, but a we-focus: for communities to be brought together to help each other in ways that we could not handle alone. Sometimes, we need a Captain Tom to remind us of such power in love, the very love The Most Rev. Curry brought to life in the sermon he not only preached to Meghan and Prince Harry, but for the whole world to hear. He said, “that Jesus began the most revolutionary movement in all of human history, a movement grounded in the unconditional love of God for the world. A movement mandating people to live that love. And in so doing, to change not only their lives but the very life of the world itself. I’m talking about some power, real power. Power to change the world.” It may get renewed around a garden in England with an elderly gentleman and his walker, but it was unleashed on the whole world from a cross and out of a tomb that no level of hatred or evil could keep it away from all of us to enjoy still to this day and for all eternity. And for that Greatest News of all, we most certainly give thanks to God, indeed! Amen!

Image: “Captain Tom Moore passes £23m in NHS fundraising” (BBC.com) April 18, 2020