

Scripture Reading: Psalm 138

Only in the darkness can you see the stars. —Martin Luther King Jr.

They still tell the story at William and Mary College of daffy, magnificent President Ewell. For a century and a half, this prestigious Virginia school had been a leader among American universities. Then came the Civil War. In the hard days of reconstruction that followed, William and Mary went bankrupt. Soon it had a deserted campus, decaying buildings and no students.

As with so many Southern schools after that tragic war, everyone wrote it off as dead. Everyone, except its president. He had given his best years to advancing the liberal arts through that school. He refused to give up now. So, every morning, President Ewell went to the deserted campus, climbed the tower of its main building, and rang the bells, calling the school to class.

He behaved as though the school was still there.

People thought he was crazy. Nevertheless, every day for seven years, President Ewell rang the bells at William and Mary, in defiance of the despair and hopelessness that would destroy everything he held valuable.

Eventually and miraculously, it worked. Others caught his vision. Students, teachers and money returned. Today, America's second oldest university thrives again, because of the hope of a single man.

Today, people suffer all around the world. Churches are shuttered by the threat of disease and uncertainty and scattered by the fear of disease and uncertainty.

Many people are shut up in their homes or apartments having no else to go: no work, no restaurants, nor entertainment venues. It's such a different atmosphere from the bustle and high-energy life we're used to.

But we persist, wherever we are.

We worship God in our homes and online with a virtual community of believers. We read the Bible. We pray on bended knee. We give thanks. We help others in their time of need. We walk humbly with God.

We're ringing the bells of hope.

And someday, we shall have our reward.

—Timothy Merrill

Prayer: God of grace and mercy, you are our hope. We cast ourselves upon you in utter faith and confidence. There is none besides you! In Jesus' name. Amen.