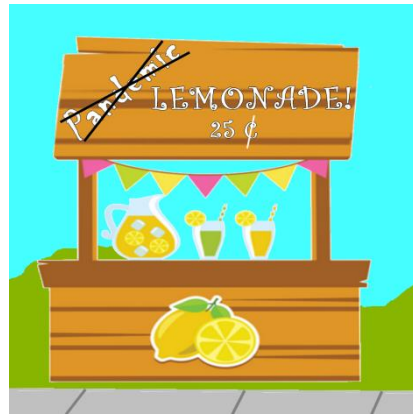


Lemonade

By: Rev. Mark Breese

Pastor Mark is the Agency Minister and the Director of Ministry & Community partnerships at Community Missions.

I keep thinking about lemons and lemonade. That is because one of my dad's favorite phrases was to say he was trying to "turn these lemons into lemonade." Whenever life handed you lemons (something not so sweet and hard to take as it is) then try to figure out how to make it into something good, like lemonade. I'm also thinking about it because I am hearing the phrase, or the sentiment of the phrase, all the time now. One can't turn on the radio or TV or look on line without running into some story about how someone somewhere is trying to make the best of these stay at home orders and other limitations we have to practice for the good of ... everyone.



This is all fine and I'm totally for it. It's way better to have a "the glass is half full" approach it times like these. And I am heartened by how there seems to be, in general, a true spirit of community even in midst of all the social separation. But I also keep thinking about how short our memories are.

So I want to share a quote that, maybe, just maybe, will help us all carry on the spirit of community, and the "glass is half full" outlook. I want to share it because I believe it holds a universal truth that is asserting itself exactly because of these stressful times. It comes from the prologue of a book of essays by Thomas Merton, a Trappist Monk and spiritual writer. Usually, I what you will find online is this quote:

"We do not exist for ourselves alone, and it is only when we are fully convinced of this fact that we begin to love ourselves properly and thus also love others."

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"We do not exist for ourselves alone, and it is only when we are fully convinced of this fact that we begin to love ourselves properly and thus also love others."

But even just a little more of the context around the quote brings us some of its deeper truths:

“...our love of ourselves is something we owe to others.

This truth never becomes clear as long as we assume that each one of us, individually, is the center of the universe. We do not exist for ourselves alone, and it is only when we are fully convinced of this fact that we begin to love ourselves properly and thus also love others.”

I think that these deeper truths that Merton is talking about are part of what is behind all these moments we are seeing of trying to make lemonade from the pandemic lemon we were handed. I hope that we all can carry these revealed truths with us into the future, that we will not forget having learned them and what it feels like to put them into action. It would be nice if the lemonade could keep flowing long after the lemon is gone.

The Thomas Merton quote can be found in *No Man is an Island*, page *xxi*. Although the historical context for much of Merton’s writing was from the Cold War era, I found the prologue to the book interesting to read in our current times. You can access the [prologue and first chapter here](#).

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