

By: Rev. Mark Breese

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

Broken Radio

The radio in my car has not been working properly for some time. When it does decide to turn on, it plays, but only for a while—sometimes 5 minutes, sometimes 10 or 20 minutes. Most times though, it plays for a minute or two, goes silent for a bit, and then comes back on—but on a different station! Also, when it plays, the LED display often does not show the actual station numbers, but just random blinking LED lines. So usually these

days I plug my phone into a little portable speaker and listen to the radio that way. However, sometimes I forget my phone or the speaker and then it's hit or miss on the broken car radio.

On a drive to the grocery store about a month ago I had forgotten my phone. I tried the radio and, of course, it started turning on and off and flipping through radio stations. Just as I got to the grocery store and pulled into a parking spot, the radio had an on moment and landed on the end of an interview with a woman who lived in New Orleans. She was an older woman by the sound of her voice, and there was a mischievous smile in that voice, if you know what I mean. I only heard the last few sentences of the interview and this is what I heard, apparently picking up on the last few words of a question by the reporter.

Reporter: "... keep helping in New Orleans?"

Woman: "You just keep up your spirits best you can and trust"

Reporter: "But, first Katrina, then your sons, now all this! How do you keep going?"

Luke 24:29

"...Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent..."



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Woman: “It needs to get done. Somehow I know God abides with us. I don’t know what else to tell you.”

And that’s all I heard. My radio cut out then changed to another station, flashing random LED shapes at me. I’ve searched and searched on line for a transcript that would give me some clue who this woman is and what she was doing. It’s still a mystery.

Life keeps happening. Sometimes we all wish it would just slow down a bit and let us catch our breath. These days, a lot has been made of the way everything has stopped and much of the world has been forced to pause and just . . . be. Without a doubt this is true and has been a challenge in itself. But I also know from my own experience and talking with my family and neighbors, life also continues to happen for everyone. For some, that has been the biggest part of the challenge—how to manage the way life keeps happening while things have been closed, and now how to manage with the renewed risk of things opening.

Over the past few weeks, when life has been happening for me, and when people have told me that life, too much life, keeps happening and coming at them, I’ve been thinking story about my radio. Apparently this woman in New Orleans is doing some kind of community work. Something good, but difficult, that is helping people. Apparently she did it through Hurricane Katrina, through some kind of tragedy with her sons, and the current struggles of a global pandemic. Yet, she keeps going, and from the sound of her voice, keeps going with an attitude not of being weighed down, but an attitude that keeps a smile in her voice. Through it all “somehow,” she says “I know God abides with us” and that lets her keep going.

It’s a strange little moment, this blip on my broken radio. It is a moment that I keep hearing again and again in my mind, especially when a bit too much life keeps happening. The last few days especially, a lot of life has been happening for me. But it is comforting to remember this random gift, given through my broken radio, from a woman who certainly has faith that far exceeds mine—the words that are sometimes just exactly the ones that help me take a breath and remember, God abides with me, and with you, and with all of us.

Pastor Mark

There is a to a nice rendition of the hymn “Abide With Me” on the online version of this reflection. www.HopeForNiagara.org/broken-radio.

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