

[Story] A Peanuts cartoon showed Charlie Brown bringing Snoopy his dinner on Thanksgiving Day. But it was just his usual dog food. Snoopy looked at his bowl and said, “This is not fair. The rest of the world today is eating turkey with all the trimmings, and all I get is dog food. Because I’m a dog, all I get is dog food.” He stared at his food for a while, had time to think and reflect, and said, “I guess it could be worse. I could be a turkey.”

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Yes, we could be a “turkey” this year in this ongoing pandemic, racial conflict, unrested political climate, and all kinds of disasters such as earthquakes, fires, hurricanes, and tornadoes. And yet, we are here today to celebrate Thanksgiving. We all know that many families will have non-traditional Thanksgiving dinners and gatherings this year, as government policies and health regulations restricted the number of people who could gather together to share a meal and family activities. All these regulations make us uncomfortable, but those are for our safety and the safety of others. Keeping these rules are one of the ways we love ourselves and others as the followers of Jesus Christ. Simply, I am trying to say is...don’t make yourself and others “a turkey” for this season 😊 Be careful and be cautious.

By the way, I’m thankful that we have made through this year this far safely. But, honestly, I’m not feeling as thankful as I usually do at this time of year. So, for such a time as this, I have to be intentional about giving thanks. How about you?

1 Thessalonians 5:18 says, in everything we are to give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus. When the Bible says in everything give thanks to God, it means we should be thankful to God in the good times as well as the not-so-good times. Let us be honest. It is not easy to thank God in the midst of pandemic.

One of the ways that can help us to be thankful for such a time as this is to know that we are positioned for purpose. God never does anything by accident, planning is never random, and His purpose for us and our lives was set in place even before we were born. Friends, God created us for such a time as this, He has a plan for us!

So, if you are here right now, I would say that you are here for a purpose, a God-ordained purpose. You have been brought by God to this moment in history and positioned where you are for God's purpose and His glory. God who has positioned you where you are will accomplish it with your cooperation. This cooperation starts from listening. The only way you're able to hear is when you quiet down the nosy in your life.

I was very unhappy in March and April when I had to do so many new things I've never learned how to do, and yet I was expected to do or obligated to do. When the pandemic occurred and changed the ministry platform from offline to online, I wanted to run away from the ministry honestly. I am a process person, but the pandemic changed everything over the night and before adjusting myself to it, it changed again. Consistently dealing with changes really made me tired physically, mentally, and spiritually. I didn't have enough time to think or process. As the Nike commercial says, I was in a "just do it" mode. It was hard.

However, thankfully within two months with the help of the Leadership Team of the church, we were able to put the new basic frame of ministry in place. After that, I was able to have time to think and reflect. Having a quiet time with God helped me to see the blessings in this pandemic journey and restored "Sunny-ness." I would like to take a moment to express my heartfelt appreciation to my hubby Sung, Joyce Brady, Tim Brady, Bill Jaeger, Les Miller, Gloria Juan, Sue Pyun, and Peta Mareko who put up with my "intensified uptightness" for two months and kept me together. Thank you for your unconditional support and patient. You are a godsend!

Through the quiet time with God after two months of "pandemic tornado," I realized that God has taken the Good News of Jesus Christ through me and through Kona United Methodist Church beyond our imagination in pandemic. We worshipped our awesome God with many people we've never met in person. Glocally—globally and locally—God has brought all people from all places to worship! Isn't it amazing?

When Queen Esther's cousin, Mordecai, sent Esther word that the Jews were going to be annihilated, he basically told her in Esther 4:13-14, "Don't think that you can just ignore this disturbing trend. Yeah, I know it's been tough, but this is your destiny. God put you here. Do something for such a time as this!"

Do you hear God's voice in this passage? Don't just ignore this disturbing trend of pandemic. Don't just complain about it. Yes, it's been tough, but stand up for Christ. Wake up and do something. It's an opportunity for us to shine Jesus through us.

I think it's important for us to read on and see Esther's response to Mordecai written in Esther 4:16: "Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my attendants will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish."

Esther knows confronting the king is likely to mean certain death. She's going to have to use her gifts of beauty, intelligence, and personality to persuade the king. But before she goes to see him, she sets aside three days to retreat, fast, and pray before God.

When we are seeking to live up to God's call, I think we need to follow Esther's example. First, get all the support we can. Esther had Mordecai and the Jews pray for her. We need to get our small group to support us in prayer. If you don't have a small group, now is the time for you to find one. Kona United Methodist Church offers several small groups you can join. Just contact me if you are looking for a small group to join. I will match you up with a group you will enjoy. The people of Kona United Methodist Church are so awesome! I am confident that you will enjoy the small group you will join here at Kona for sure. Anyway, just let me know.

One of the biggest challenges we face in pandemic is isolation. Disconnectedness! You who feel lonely and left out now, I commend you to come out of your cave in the name of Jesus Christ today. That is not the right place for you stay at. For such a time like this, you need to come out and hang out with God's people virtually or physically. You need to be supported by others. You cannot get through such a time like this alone. I pray that God will grant you strength and courage to come out of your cave today. All people need the Lord! All people need the Lord with skin on. You are not alone. We are here for you.

And second, we need extended time alone with God. Schedule a retreat with God. Whether it's an overnight or a weekend, or for an hour, we all need to have a quiet time with God if we want to hear God. We need to quiet down the nosy around us in order to hear God. As someone is praying for us, we also need to pray for

ourselves. Bless yourself. Comfort yourself in the presence of God. Intentionally create a time with God.

God has positioned us purposefully where we are right now. I don't know what God's purpose is for you particularly, but I know He has one. And I know it is not just some grand, future purpose. God has a purpose for you right now. May we all intentionally be thankful for such a time as this by knowing we are positioned where we are purposefully today. Amen.