

## When You Are Up to Your Hips in Alligators

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*O give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; for his steadfast love endures forever.*

*Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, those he redeemed from trouble. Psalm 107:1-2 NRSV*

In my Bible, the heading for this psalm is "Thanksgiving for Deliverance from Many Troubles".

The old saying goes, "When we are up to our hips in alligators, we often forget that our mission is to drain the swamp". I think a new twist on the old saying could be, "When we are in the midst of crisis, we often forget to thank the one who guides us through it."

The other day I heard a mental health professional say, "Crisis doesn't make us meaner or nicer than we normally are, but a crisis makes us even more so of who we really are." Have you found that to be true? Are any of us more of who we really are than we were before? Sometimes our kinder and gentler side shines through the midst of our troubles. Other times, the less patient side might blast through when we battle the alligators in the swamp. Since we haven't been able to "go to church" we might ask ourselves if we are still being the church?" The deep questions to ponder become these; "Are we being the thankful and faithful people of God? Are we allowing God's grace to shine in us?"

As we struggle through this prolonged health crisis, we may find that our anxiety levels are rising while we wait to return to our perceived normal life. Battling the alligators of this crisis should teach us something. No one wants to leave the swamp with nothing more than a battle scar. We ought to be able to take something from this time of troubles into our new normal which helps us to be more than we have been before. Wouldn't it be a shame if we came through this time without learning what is most important to us and who we love and appreciate?

Here are some of the lessons I've learned. I really do love and miss my family. I treasure the relationships I have with friends and coworkers. I'm thankful for the ability to buy what I need. Nurses, doctors, pharmacists, health care workers and first responders really are heroes. Teachers are worth their weight in gold. Clerks at the grocery and pharmacy deserve our courtesy. Early morning quiet time with my devotions restore my soul. The sounds of children playing tag and riding bikes fill me with immeasurable joy. These lessons of gratitude make me more so of the person I want to be.

When the battle is over, let us take with us the things that matter most. Let us take a renewed sense of gratitude for the One who guides us through the murky waters. Let us give thanks for the strength to face the battle. Let us give thanks for those who are facing the challenge with us. Let us give thanks for the relationships that have been strengthened and renewed. Let us give thanks to God, who guides us through the troubles we face. Let us live in grace and gratitude.

*Grace and Peace Be With You,*

**Rev. Dell King**  
Interim Associate Pastor

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