



March 7, 2023

When “I’m Fine,” Isn’t the Truth

By The Rev. Rachel Rickenbaker

“How are you?”

“I’m fine. You?”

This standard conversation happens many times in a given day. When you greet someone, especially someone you don’t know or see often, a common response you receive when you ask how they’re doing is, “I’m fine.”

Most of the time, the conversation moves on from there or it ends. Perhaps you are the one who tells others, “I’m fine,” even if at those times when you’re not.

It’s hard to know what someone is going through just by looking on from the outside. When Jesus did healings, there were likely healings not visible to the human eye, healings that perhaps only Jesus himself knew about. Even if someone had claimed to be fine, our Lord would have been able to see straight through to the truth, straight to their heart and mind, and know what they were going through.

The Psalmist sings, “The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit” (Psalm 34:18).

We have a God who not only sees all that is going on, but also knows what each of us faces. He is close to the brokenhearted because he himself was brokenhearted. He empathizes with us because in Christ Jesus, he experienced humanity to the fullest extent, and he has taken our burdens upon his shoulders.

“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin” (Hebrews 4:15).

It is easy for us, especially in our digital world, to hide behind a screen. In the years when Covid was most rampant and many church buildings were closed, the Church lost touch with so many of its people. It was always a breath of relief when I saw parishioners face to face – even behind car windows for worship in our cars or even on a Zoom or YouTube screen. It brings me joy today to see the faces of people in church on Sunday because I know I can check in and see how each is doing.

There’s something about being in church because we are brought bodily, face to face, in contact with others – others who have had a busy week; others who may have news to celebrate; others who may not be as fine as they claim. We bump up against other broken people, like ourselves, who have come to church in need of respite and God’s saving grace and peace. It is a blessing to truly listen to others in person and face to face, but much more difficult for us to truly listen to others when we are behind a screen.

This is true not just at church, but in our everyday interactions. When we ask how others are doing, it takes compassion and active listening to hear what another is going through. Even when we see someone face to face, we don’t always know what they are facing. Sometimes you may be in a place where you don’t feel like listening, and sometimes someone may not feel comfortable sharing their story.

And sometimes, there are moments where you can sense that the “I’m fine” isn’t the truth.

It's in those moments that we can be present, and trust in this truth: the Lord knows what each of us is going through, what is seen and what is unseen, and he loves us and empathizes with us no matter what.

As you ponder this message, you can experience this [music video](#) from Matthew West, "Truth Be Told."