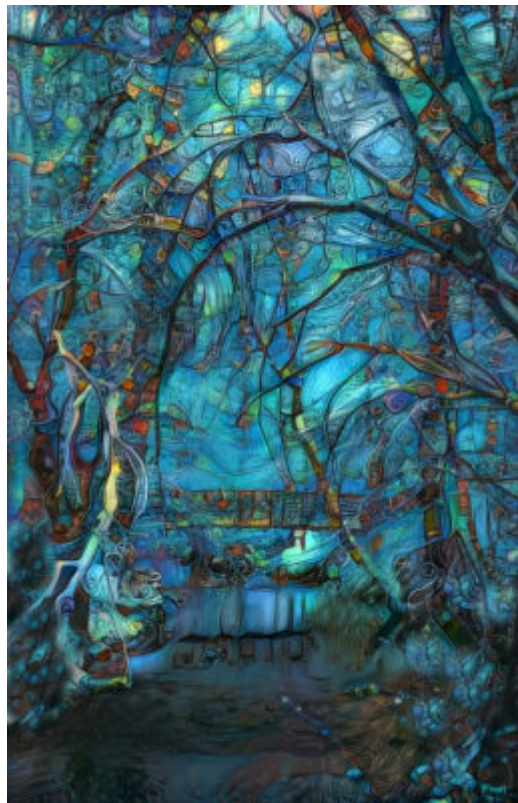


# “Remain Available for Miracles” by Larry Rawlings

December 6, 2020



## The Second Sunday of Advent

*Since no prepared text was available, what follows is a transcript of Larry's sermon.*

I entitled my sermon today “Remain Available for Miracles.” If your past is dirty, you know, make your future spotless. This past Monday, November 30th, was National Stay-At-Home Because You're Well Day and National Personal Space Day. Those two national days need to be every day until life returns back to the way we've known it for the past decades. And I offer a prayer for putting on a face mask to everyone:

*Today, God, as I prepare to go into the world, help me see the sacramental nature of wearing this cloth. Let it be a*

*tangible and visible way of living love for my neighbors and friends as I love myself. Christ Jesus, since my lips will be covered uncover my heart that people would see my smile in the crinkles around my eyes. Since my voice may be muted, help me to speak clearly not only with my words but with my actions. Holy Spirit, as the elastic touches my ears remind me to listen carefully to all those I meet. Make this simple piece be a shield and a banner, and may each breath that it holds be filled with your love, in your name and in that love I pray, amen.*

Okay. I want to talk a little bit about what's going on very personally. I've been hospitalized eight times in the last eight months beginning in march. I've tested negative for Covid all eight times so I'm the guy who's praying for a vaccine soon to end this thing. But you know even with the Covid vaccine I've still got some breathing problems and some lung issues that I've got to deal with probably for the rest of my life. But I haven't given up.

You know, because of the few jobs that I have, I have to go out and be around people who sometimes have their own rules. Case in point—I was on a metro train the other day and there were seven passengers on the metro car and all seven passengers had a mask, but only four of them had the mask on. For some reason, people believe that pulling your mask down to read your cell phone or to use your cell phone is a requirement, you know. And so that kind of makes me nervous. But I don't want to see this behavior. I'm a guy just — I say nothing, you know. I just move to another car, you know. to keep myself safe. But I won't give up. You know Jesus didn't give up.

You know, in my mind—this is my own opinion—as the Black Lives Matter campaign begins to fade until the next incident, I have

observed the Takoma Park police behavior in the past. In the city that I live in, it has improved but that isn't always the case. Late one night last summer an incident happened at the house where I lived. In the description that the eyewitness gave to the police was a short bald white guy but when they saw me they couldn't happen—they couldn't stop it to approach me. And I happened to be at the top of my driveway. I'm just sitting in my car that particular night. The alarm went off at the church and I was going out to investigate. But once the police saw me, you know they had to stop me. It was the whole police department. It was quite an embarrassing thing when that kind of stuff happens. And I get angry and I want to react. You know, I want to mouth off at them and just be an a-hole. But Recovery has taught me with straightening tongue and pain and so I kind of kept my mouth shut. The whole thing, it worked out in the end and I don't know if they ever found the guy that they were looking for. But they did let me go.

So the question is, have things changed in Takoma Park? You know in this small police force it's somewhat better but the situations that I observed, these things are continuing to happen. I've got two cases that I actually witnessed here in Takoma Park recently within the last month and both cases involve two very mouthy black guys who were very uncooperative but the whole Takoma Park police department surrounding them. But I saw no aggression from the police and I think part of it has to do with the whole Covid thing and them not wanting to touch people, so they stayed away. But I just sat back and I watched the whole thing play out. Eventually the police saw me watching them and I got kind of intimidated and I left. And so I don't know how the whole thing played out, whether those guys got arrested or not, but those things, they do continue to happen now.

I, however, had another incident with the Takoma Park police department a couple of months ago. About a month ago I was riding my bicycle on Sligo Creek Parkway and when I came out of the parkway onto the street, a police officer and I crossed

paths. When he saw me, he immediately turned his lights on and I responded like I typically respond to them and I just kept on going. Once he passed me, I observed him turn his lights off. So the whole idea of racial profiling is still happening. It was a beautiful sunny day, you know, when that happened. I had done nothing wrong. There was no reason for the police department to turn his lights on and even take a second look at me. I had done nothing but that racial profiling thing is still happening. I'm saying again it is still happening.

So the question of mine is always, What would Jesus do? You know Jesus would not end up in a confrontation with the police department. Jesus would go about his business. Exactly what I did... You know Matthew 21 says, "Jesus said to them in reply, Amen, I say to you. If you have faith and do not waver not only will you do what has been done to the fig tree but even if you say to this mountain be lifted up and thrown into the sea it will be done. Whatever you ask for in prayer with faith you will receive." I say to everyone here Remain Available for Miracles. Matthew 7: "Ask it will be given to you, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be open to you." Again, I say to you, Remain Available for Miracles, "For everyone who asks receives; the one who seeks finds; and to the one who knocks, the door will be opened. if you then who are wicked know how to give good gifts to your children how much more will your heavenly God give good things to those who ask." John 14 says, "amen, amen, I say to you. Whoever believes in me will do the words that I will do and will do greater ones than these." Remain available.

I want everyone to not give up on this year. Keep fighting for the good. Keep showing up. Keep loving. Keep giving. Keep being kind. Keep caring. Keep trying new things. Keep showing grace. Keep on. This world needs us to believe in the good. Say to yourself, God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change, courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference.

Living one day at a time and doing one moment at a time, accepting hardships as a pathway to peace, taking as God does, the sinful world as it is, not as I would have, it as God would have it. Trusting that God will make all things right if I surrender to God's will so that I may be reasonably happy in this life and supremely happy with God forever and ever in the next life. Amen.

I say to everyone here, God bless you and have a good day. However there's more: I've got a story to tell. It's a Christmas story:

### **"The Night Before Christmas 2020"**

*Twas the year 2020, and all through the house  
every creature was stirring, from Human to Mouse.  
The stockings were tossed on the chimney, who cares,  
it's been months since we entertained, would Saint Nick even  
dare?  
The children were nestled all snug in their beds  
as visions of rubber gloves danced in their heads.  
Mama in her gaiter and me and with my mask,  
had just settled our brains for a long cleaning task.  
When out on the roof there arose such a clatter.  
I sprang from my mop to see what was the matter.  
Away to the window I flew like a flash.  
I peeked through the shutter, barely touching the sash.  
The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow,  
gave me faith that someday we'd have somewhere to go.  
When what do my wondering eyes should appear,  
but a miniature sleigh, and eight spotless reindeer.  
With a little old driver decked out in full gear,  
I knew in a moment we'd have Christmas this year!  
More safely than Hazmat the reindeer they came,  
and he whistled and shouted and called them by name.  
Now Clorox! Now Pine-Sol! Now Lysol and Purex!  
On Comet! On Purell! On Top Job and Germ-X!  
Wipe the top of the porch! Then the top of the wall!*

*Now wipe away! Wipe away! Wipe away all!  
As dry leaves that before the wild hurricane fly,  
when they finished and then took a jump to the sky.  
So up to the housetop the reindeer they flew.  
With a sleigh full of masks, and Saint Nicholas too!  
And then in a twinkling I heard on the roof,  
the pawing of each little rubber gloved hoof.  
As I pulled up my mask and was turning around,  
Down the chimney a big bucket came with a bound!  
It was covered in plastic from bottom to top,  
and the contents were sterile, despite the long drop.  
I missed seeing his eyes and his dimples so merry.  
But this virus prevents that, these times are so scary.  
I imagined his face and his little round belly,  
That shook when he laughed like hand sanitizer jelly.  
But I saw him outside though, as he stood near his sleigh,  
and I laughed when I saw him, from six feet away.  
With a wink of his eye and a wave of his hand,  
I felt warm inside, Santa too understands.  
And without a word I went right to my work.  
I filled all our stockings, then turned with a jerk  
And laying a finger aside of his mask,  
The reindeer rose up, they had finished their task.  
He waved to me then, to his team gave a shout,  
and socially distancing, quickly flew out.  
But I heard him proclaim as he drove out of sight,  
Merry Christmas to all, we will all be all right!*

*As attributed to Anonymous at  
[https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?id=178535833785&story\\_fbid=10157836199528786](https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?id=178535833785&story_fbid=10157836199528786) and elsewhere*

Blessings. Thank you.