

Announcements-3-22-2020

We do not know how long the terms will be for our social distancing. Please follow protocols designed to keep us all in good health. I don't want to send you too many emails, but I do want to keep you informed.

I will include for your blessing some online resources that you can go to for daily strength; some studies or some devotional messages you can listen to.

Next Sunday we are looking at a way in which we can serve you with the Lord's Supper. More details will come out early next week.

We are looking at the possibility of being able to live-stream our services in the near future, but some work needs to be done to get us there first.

It may also be that some of our usual worship events and activities or meetings might and will be rescheduled. We are free to celebrate Palm Sunday and Easter at other times that suit us best. And it may be that the confirmation of our students may also wait until an appropriate time. And some events might not happen this year at all.

We are hearing that this current situation may be for 6-8 weeks instead of just two. Since that might be the case, we would invite you – if you are blessed to still have income – to send in your offerings so that the work of our ministry can continue.

Now, if you are one of those who has lost income because you work in a place that has had to shut down, if you have need for food or need help paying bills, would you please let me know. We will see what we can do as a congregation to support you and to care for you.

If you have specific prayer requests, also, please let me know. Also, let me know if the request is just for me, or for the prayer chain, or for our public prayer. And if someone is hospitalized, please let me know. At this time, it may not be possible for me to visit in person, but we can talk and pray over the phone.

Please continue to pray for one another and let me know if you have any needs that we can help with.

Study materials went out for the Adult Bible class study and for SS. I asked for permission from CPH to send those out and they granted us that permission for a month. I pray those are a blessing for you.

Chris sent you an email with today's worship information, I pray that you have that printed out before you or that you can view it while joining in this worship today.

I will also send out these announcements and the sermon in written form so that they can be printed off for those who don't make use of our digital services.

Psalm 27

The sermon: John 9, Lent-4-A, March 22, 2020; "That They Might Know"

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of our hearts be pleasing in your sight, O Lord, our Rock and our Redeemer. Amen.

Dear Friends in Christ Jesus,

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the Lord, Jesus Christ.

What a strange time it is. I'm here in our near empty church with Tim and Glen who are helping today. As you watch this, I hope we have a sense that we are together in the Spirit of Christ, and that though we are apart from one another, yet we worship our God and Savior as one in the body of Christ.

I have debated with myself this last week: do I address the situation full on with coronavirus? I don't think I want to as that seems to be all we have been talking about.

On the other hand, we don't want to totally ignore it either.

And if you do want to totally get your mind off it, well watch a good movie or read a book to pass the time. I suggest C.S. Lewis's "The Chronicles of Narnia," or J.R.R. Tolkien's "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy. Look for the Christ parallels and figures in each. I would love to do a study or group discussion of both someday.

But this also offers us, or many of us, time to be in prayer. And as we are in the season of Lent, we have time to be devoted to the reading, hearing and study of God's Word.

But now, as you have gathered to listen with yourself or your family, I pray that God will grant us His blessing and give us His Word that we might be comforted and assured of His grace.

We are looking at the Gospel lesson assigned for this day. We will find application to our current struggles; but ultimately, we will find our hope and strength and salvation in God who is good.

God's Word today leads us to see that Jesus is the Light of the world, and that we would see Him by faith.

Jesus was with His disciples somewhere near the Temple. And they passed by a certain blind man. And somehow it was known that that man was one who had been blind from birth.

Now the disciples reveal a certain view that is often held by people—a thought that I know I have had too. It goes this way: if something is wrong with someone—like being blind—they must have done something wrong against God; that is, He made them blind as a punishment for a specific sin.

I remember when I was 11 years old and I broke my arm. I remember thinking, “What particular sin did I do that God made me break my arm?” I know now that God does NOT work that way. That is the way that man thinks. That is why you have those mythical gods of the Greeks and the Romans, for instance, that are pictured as acting in that kind of a way. Those false, mythic gods were made up according to the way that man thinks a god would act. So, if some misfortune befalls you, you must have done something wrong to make the gods mad at you and punish you for that one wrong thing.

And that is what is behind the disciples’ question: who sinned? Was it this man who sinned while he was in the womb that he was punished with blindness? Or, was it his parents, one or the other, who sinned in some way to make god mad and so god punished them by making their son blind?

I remember hearing that kind of thing exactly about hurricane Katrina when it hit New Orleans 15 years ago (2005). I heard people say that it was God’s judgement against the sinful ways that some were living in that city known for the pagan partying of Mardi Gras. And some might think that way today about coronavirus. Can we say that it will infect only those that God wants to punish? NO.

This way of thinking that God punishes people with disease, or broken bones, or catastrophe for specific sins is not how God works. Disease and harm happens on earth because of sin in general. The body is broken by sin. The earth was broken by Adams fall into sin. So we see cataclysmic upheaval, and diseases, and accidents, and wars as a result of the brokenness of sin.

Beyond our understanding, God allow things awful things such as accidents and war and disease and pandemics and all sorts of cataclysmic events to ravage the earth. And all of these are used by God so that mankind might take warning and realize that man is mortal. And in realizing this, sinful people might repent of their sin and turn to God, seeking His mercy; and, then, in faith, believe in the cure that God has supplied: Jesus and the eternal life He will give.

So ... what was Jesus’ answer to the disciples about that man born blind? His answer dispels their human way of thinking.

John 9:3: “It was not that this man sinned, or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him.”

As we look more closely at our text, it is interesting to note that the blind man did not do anything to get Jesus to heal him. He did not approach Jesus. Jesus approached him. Jesus made mud with spit. Put it on the man's eyes and told him to go wash. And then, we get to see his sight healed, and his faith develop. The man who had been blind from birth came to see the light. Yes, physical light. But notice how the text is developed to show what was more important: he came to know the true "light of the world". He came to faith in Christ Jesus.

During this time of the COVID-19 pandemic, our hope and prayer is that we can give witness of the Gospel. The brokenness of the world comes from man's rebellion against God. And if it sin in the world that causes brokenness, then what is the fix for sin? What can heal our brokenness? Grace. Mercy. The love of Christ who gave Himself to save us. God loves us into heaven. He does not scare us out of hell. The fear of these days should drive us to the peace and hope we have in Christ who saves us from sin and has eternal life to give. That is how we pray people will respond to the Good News of Christ who saves from sin, death, and hell.

We see in chapter 9 of John's gospel that the miracle of sight made people have to face up to who Jesus was. The blind man who was given sight grew to believe in Jesus with an ever-deepening faith. Such faith led him to make some courageous and bold confessions—even to such a point that he got kicked out of the synagogue.

His parents were afraid. They did not want to be expelled from the synagogue so they were—at least then—non-committal. They deflected the interrogation to their son. Many today who hear the Gospel are non-committal. They can't be forever. At some point, people will receive Christ, or reject Him.

The neighbors were confused. Many today are confused. May God help us to help them see Jesus rightly.

The Pharisees and the Jews were against Jesus—even angrily and vehemently in opposition to Jesus. We see many in our world opposed to Christ, His Church, and those who follow Him. But stand firm in your faith in Jesus.

Today, with or without the pandemic situation, people will have similar responses to the gospel. Some will be angry. Some will kick you out and want nothing to do with you. Some will be confused. Some will react with "whatever". But ... maybe one more just might believe!

We see the reactions of those in our text in this one account only. I wish we could find out what happened in the long term. Did the man's parents eventually come around to believe like their son? How many neighbors were affected by this event and the witness that continued daily from the man who came to see Jesus as the Light of the world? Did

any of the Pharisees come to see the light—spiritually? We don't know. But—we do know that Jesus came so that they might see!

And that is what we can rejoice in today and every day of our lives. We have come to see that Jesus Christ is the Light of the world.

Coronavirus or flu or disease might destroy human life. But those who believe in Jesus will have everlasting life. God's healing of all our brokenness will be perfect in heaven. God is our Lord. Jesus Christ is our King.

If you have ever had Corona beer, you will see a crown on the bottle. According the Merriam-Webster online dictionary, corona is from Latin word corona, which means "[a] wreath, [or] garland worn on the head as a mark of honor or emblem of majesty." That is, something like a crown. When you look at pictures of coronavirus, it has projecting parts that can make some views of it look like a crown.

When I see it, I think of another crown—the crown that Jesus wore when He was made to suffer on the cross. On the cross He was our King. I know that I borrow this from some professor or other pastor in my past, but I like the way we consider this: if Jesus is our King, when is it that we see Him wearing a crown? On the cross. And the cross is His throne, some say.

That is our King. Our good and gracious King stepped down from heaven to take on the flesh of His fallen human creatures. And in that flesh, He fulfilled the Law for us. And in that flesh He took on our disease of sin and died for it. All this He did so that we might receive mercy and grace to become the children of God.

Who is King? Coronavirus? NO! Jesus Christ? YES. He has turned us from darkness to light—from sin and unbelief to faith and trust in the God of our salvation. We were blind in sin, but now we see the Light. That is why Jesus came—that we might see the Light—that we might see Jesus by faith and receive eternal life in Him.
Amen.

Now the peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.

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