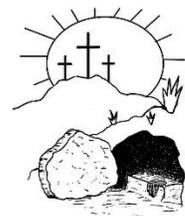




ONE VOICE



Churches: ♦Bethany ♦Immanuel ♦Lunder ♦Silver Lake ♦Winnebago

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Volume 13, Issue 4

April 2020

From the Pastor's Desk

"But the angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples. 'He has been raised from the dead,' and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him.'" Matthew 28:5-7



The Corona Virus has upset our daily schedules and created havoc in our lives. We have lost our routines. We have lost our sense of normalcy. Our students aren't getting up early in the morning to go to school. They aren't seeing their friends in classes. The teachers are not teaching their lesson plans. The meals the students would have eaten at school now have to be planned by parents and extra groceries bought and extra time for shopping must be figured in the schedule. Our student athletes aren't able to train and practice or gather to lift weights. Fellowship is cut off as restaurants are closed, theatres are closed. For adults the bars and Casinos are closed. Travel plans for business or fun is not recommended. For those who love sports, there is nothing to watch or attend. The fun and excitement of March Madness has been canceled. The NBA has canceled their schedule. The NHL has canceled the hockey schedule and the hockey schedule at all levels including the North Iowa Bulls season has been shut down, just when they had a brand-new arena to attract new fans. Professional Baseball has been placed on hold as baseball fans were eager to catch the spring practices, hearing the crack of the bat and watching their team score.

Entertainment is just one of the many things that have been messing up our routines, our daily lives. Besides school closings, our worship services have been canceled by the order of the Governor and CDC guidelines. Our Lenten fellowship over meals will be missed. Our Lenten journey, worshipping together, singing the Holden Evening Prayer together is discontinued interrupting our spiritual preparation for Easter. Even our Easter is postponed until the end of April, as of now at least.

All these cancellations and closures of school, worship, theaters, sporting events, doctor and dentist appointments, funerals being delayed, not being able to visit loved ones at nursing homes or hospitals, sudden shortages of supplies at grocery stores, not being able to shake hands and greeting each other, all public events canceled, only gatherings of ten people or less being seven feet away from each other are mega interruptions in our lives. This is definitely not how we planned or envisioned how we were going to go about our lives a couple of weeks ago.

The same could be said for Jesus' disciples and his followers. They weren't experiencing closures and cancellations do to a virus. But things drastically changed from one Sunday to the next. As Jesus was getting closer to Jerusalem, the crowds were getting bigger and bigger. When Jesus had his disciples fetch a young donkey foal for him to ride, the people ripped palm branches from the trees and they

shouted "Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord." They laid their cloaks on the road for Jesus, greeting and welcoming Jesus as a king coming to his capital city Jerusalem. The disciples were filled with joy to see their Lord receive such a welcome from the people. When the Priests and Pharisees yelled to Jesus from a wall of the city telling Jesus to instruct the people to tone it down or the Romans would come and there would be trouble. Jesus replied, "If the crowds were quieted then the stones themselves would shout for joy." It was a great start to the week.



The week kept getting better. Jesus marched up the steps of the Temple and when Jesus saw all the animals and money changers in the Temple, Jesus cleansed the temple, chasing animals out of their pens, flipping over the money changer tables with coins rolling across the Temple floor and Jesus yelling to "Stop making his Father's house into a Market place." The next day Jesus successfully refuted challenges by the Priests, the Pharisees, the Lawyers and even the Herodians.

Things were looking good and then they changed. Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus. All of the disciples abandoned Jesus. Peter denied even knowing Jesus three times. Jesus was mocked. Jesus was beaten. Now the crowds shouted, "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" Jesus was crucified, died and was buried. Mary Magdalene and another Mary were on their way to anoint Jesus' dead body. They thought it was the end of Jesus the Messiah of God. The end of Jesus bringing the Kingdom of God to the people.



But then there was another change. When they got to the tomb, instead of seeing Jesus' dead body, they saw an angel with good news. "Do not be afraid! He is not here for he has been raised." This changes everything.

Now the sadness and sorrow of Jesus dying on the cross is gone. It is no longer the end of Jesus bringing the kingdom of God to people. Jesus, the one who had been crucified, is alive. Jesus lives. Now the message of the angel is also a message to us. "Do not be afraid!" In the midst of the brokenness of our world, all the interruptions caused by the virus, in the midst of sorrow, in the midst of uncertainty, Jesus comes. Jesus has defeated the powers of sin and death. Jesus lives. Jesus interrupts the power of sin and death in our lives. Jesus comes to bring his love and peace. Jesus comes with victory over the brokenness of the world, even the brokenness of a virus or death. Jesus interrupts our brokenness as our Risen Crucified Lord speaking gently, "Do not be afraid."

Pastor Randy

WANDERINGS AND WONDERINGS

“One thing I do know, that though I was blind, now I see.” John 9:25



This verse comes from the story in John’s gospel about a blind man ... blind from birth...whom Jesus

does not judge but heals and leads him to believe. It is a story about gaining sight...more than just the physical gift of sight...a spiritual gift of sight. This man comes to see God at work in his world and life, before he even realizes that it is God before him doing this. He sees ... he believes ... he trusts ... in Jesus... then he learns who Jesus is ... who it is walking and working through him.

I long for that sight right now ... for that kind of trust ... knowing God is walking alongside us ...



working through us ... right now ... in the midst of these unprecedented days that we are facing.

I’m like everyone else (so I believe at least everyone else is

experiencing similar feelings) – I am overwhelmed. I do not get overwhelmed easy. I don’t know exactly what to do next. I am always faced with deadlines, and rarely don’t know what to do next. I am expecting things of myself, of which I have no experience, and no training, and struggling to make sense of, for my sake and for the sake of other. Kind of lost.



I going to mix sight analogies (in italics) from the story here, so be careful that I don’t get you lost. I kind of wonder if the blind man from John’s story didn’t feel like this, when Jesus healed him. Excited... and scared. And wondering, “What am I supposed to do now?”

He didn’t even know who healed him. He didn’t know why he was healed. He couldn’t figure out why everyone was angry with for being healed. He didn’t know But that did not stop him from moving forward.

But he now could see! Not just trees and people. He could see God at work...in his life...in the life of

others...in his world. He could see what others could not.

“Jesus said, “I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind.”

John 9:39

I want us to have that kind of sight ... to see God working in the midst of our chaos, in our hardships, in our illnesses and potential illnesses that may come.



Sight that sees God working amongst us. Sight that sees God and Kingdom opportunities everywhere we look. Sight that sees our neighbor, like God sees our neighbor. Sight that calls us into action as the children of God that God baptized us to be. I want to see like God sees in midst of what is now going on. *(I, as you, have already begun to see these things amongst us.)*

I’m overwhelmed. I’m confused. I’m scared.



But do not mistake that for a lack of faith ... nor a lack of trust ... nor a lack of courage ... as we go forward, even as we stumble a bit. Do not mistake those feelings to be doubt nor even questioning God in any way, even after we have stubbed our toe in the darkness. I know who is with us ... I know who is leading us ... I know who will give us sight ... not just to see God’s hand at work, but to be God’s hands at work.

Let us get our feet on the ground and be the people God called us to be. We might not know what tomorrow will bring (these past couple of weeks prove that), but we know who is already there. Our faith and confidence is in that God. Not in the things of this world, but in God.



Wanderings and Wonderings,
Pastor Bill Peters