

**"For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.
On the third day he rose again"**

"On the third day he rose again from the dead." These are very familiar words to us. We recite them quite often in worship as part of the Apostle's Creed. So often that sometimes I don't even hear what they say, that Jesus rose from the dead. Those are powerful words. Death was not the last word for Jesus. Death could not hold him. That is why we celebrate Easter. That is why we worship on Sunday because it was the third day after his crucifixion. Death does not have the last word for those who believe in this good news.

As I watch the news concerning the coronavirus it is the numbers that I focus on. I watch to see how many people are infected by the virus and how many have died. Why? This virus could affect my life, my family and people that I know.

But in the meantime, I still live my life. I get up, eat breakfast and go to work. On most days, going to work means going to my makeshift office at home; although, some days I go to one of my church offices. I don't see many people but I spend a lot time on the phone; which I have found to be a great joy. What I am finding out is that I am not alone. Many people are staying home, but some have to leave home and go to work and I pray for their safety too.

But in the meantime, I worry about our future and what will all happen. It is a scary time physically, mentally, socially, and spiritually. As your pastor what do I say or do? Sometimes answers come from unique places and people like my sister who lives in Texas. Her pastor used the following quote from Dr. Martin Luther in one of his sermons.

"Sixteenth century Reformer Martin Luther wrote almost 500 years ago about responding to pandemics. When Luther was confronted by questions about how to respond to The Black Death Plague, he responded in words that should serve to inform our approach to the pandemic crisis our nation and the world is now facing today.

"In a letter to Rev. Dr. John Hess, found in Luther's Works, Volume 43 p. 132, as 'Whether one may flee from a Deadly Plague,' Luther writes:

"I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then **I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance inflict and pollute others and so cause their death as a result of my negligence.** If God should wish to take me, he will surely find me and I have done what he has expected of me and so I am not responsible for either my own death or the death of others. If my neighbor needs me however I shall not avoid place or person but will go freely as stated above. See this is such a God-fearing faith because it is neither brash no foolhardy and does not tempt God."

Luther did not hide from the pandemic, nor did he it take lightly. He did what was appropriate for the situation but did not forget the people around him. Nor was he afraid of death in living. To live is to give of our time and our gifts for others. It is not to be foolish with our lives but to take life very seriously. I may not be out and about visiting people at this time but I am here for you. Call me if you need to and if I we need to get together we will do it with all the recommended precautions. I neither want to get sick or cause others to become sick.

Let us remember this Easter that Jesus arose again. In faith new life happens. It will happen for us too. There may be some hard days ahead but we will get through this. Let's do it together. Let us not forget to continue to love each other. Keep your hearts open to all around you and do it as Luther did. Keep the faith. Pastor Jeff