

The Humble King, Jesus, brings the “new normal”! (John 12:15)

By Rev. Ed Weber

Palm Sunday - April 5, 2020

Grace, mercy and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the humble King. Amen

Our text for Palm Sunday is from the Gospel of John, chapter 12 verse 15.

“Fear not, daughter of Zion; Behold, your King is coming, Sitting on a donkey’s colt.” John 12:15

Here ends our text.

I. Man’s “new normal” of the Covid-19 Pandemic is nothing new since Adam’s fall

Novelle Coronavirus – that’s the name of it...literally the “new” virus. Usually, when we think of something new, we think of something good... a new car, a new house, a new outfit, a new set of golf clubs...But this novelle thing doesn’t bring new happiness to anyone it touches...Just the opposite...panic, fear, hardship, sadness, death. Certainly nothing new here, but we are experiencing them anew, unfortunately!

What it has brought is a “new normal”. Back in December no one had ever had to face it. And because it’s new, no one had any antibodies. No protection. Well, viruses are nothing new, but this new strain is. It’s changed the world in a way that we have never seen in our lifetimes and never thought possible as we ushered in the new year of 2020 just 3 months ago.

What is this “new normal” for you like now? Wow...where to begin? 6 ft. of distancing, no sports, concerts...no driving in your vehicle with more than 2 people, checkpoints...no going anywhere unless it’s to the grocery store or the doctor...and when you get there you’re greeted by someone handing you a sanitizer wipe, a shopping cart that has already been wiped down, and barren shelves, especially in the paper products section. And now when you go anywhere...the “new normal” recommendation from the CDC is to wear a mask...if you can find or make one.

Can we just get back to normal!!! What does “getting back to normal” mean for you? What is that like? One young man I saw make a comment on Facebook. He said that I just want to go back to the place that makes me happiest in life. I was hoping to see a picture of church. Well, I guess I shouldn’t have gotten my hopes up too high. The young man showed a picture of a soccer field.

Yes, we miss the good things that God gives us to enjoy...sports, live music, eating out in a restaurant as a group, going to a movie together, travelling, going to a backyard BBQ. But most of all, for a Christian, we miss going to church together to worship God together...to receive the Lord’s Supper with other believers...to study God’s Word together... comfort, encourage, and enjoy fellowship other Christians.

All these things are no longer part of our “normal” daily life. It makes us pause for a moment during this now - protracted shelter-at-home time - to not take for granted the blessings that God

so richly gives to us. It makes us appreciate them even more, and thank God even more, for the little things in life that are now not part of *our* “new normal”.

II. Jesus, the King, brings His “New Normal” to all sinners on a humble donkey

Though we can’t go out to raise our palms together today in worship of the King, He comes to us! He always has. Always does. Palm Sunday reminds us that the King comes, seeking us, whose “new normal” ever since the Fall of Adam and Eve has ALWAYS been a sin-filled world and life.

In these past 3 weeks, we’ve come to realize again, that this world is definitely not stable or healthy. It is filled with sadness, suffering and death. In a moment, your life can be turned upside down, and everything can be taken away from you very quickly including the people you love.

That’s really our “normal” life. Nothing new about that! It’s really always been our “old normal”. We’ve just tried our best to hide the ugliness of it and keep it at a “safe distance” from us as much as possible.

And, as we ride the up and the down of the bell curve of sickness and death, there is Good News of the “new normal” of Palm Sunday.

The good news for you this day is that even in the ups and downs of this sin-filled life, there is a constant steady, comforting humble King who comes to you over and over again to lift you up and tell you that you’re not alone...our Good Shepherd Jesus is with you!

Jesus comes with the “new normal” that not only makes this world tolerable, but joyful and full of thanksgiving in all circumstances!

He brings the “new normal” that conquers all the darkness, sin and death itself. **“Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”** He comes to save us from our ugly “old normal lives” that walk in this vale of tears leading to an eternity of condemnation.

How would Jesus bring the “new normal” to this world? By being born in a humble manger, and by riding humbly on a donkey to His death.

To establish His “new normal”, His new Kingdom of grace and mercy, Jesus didn’t go to the Roman government and pass a 2 Trillion dollar CARE Act. He didn’t throw the whole power of the government at the problem to correct our “sinful normal”.

In fact, Jesus *gave up* His power...all of it! Didn’t use it! He humbly rides into Jerusalem and allows Himself to be captured, beaten, judged, ridiculed and killed. That’s Jesus’ CARE Act for the world!

It was the only way to defeat the ever-escalating curve of sin that would never flatten out! To remove the virus of our sin, Jesus climbed Mount Calvary and paid for it all, paid for every person's wretched lives with His precious blood...your life and mine!

Jesus came to set things right once and for all, and establish His new Kingdom where there are no tears, suffering or sadness. But... to do this... Jesus would have to suffer it all. He would have to do something absolutely abnormal! The sinless Son of God would have to take on Himself the sins of the entire world!

“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” (2 Corinthians 5:21)

He would have to receive the suffering of every Covid-19 patient and bear all our infirmities since the Fall of Adam. He would have feel the abnormal distancing from all His closest friends who ran away in fear and denied Him, and even be supremely distanced from His Father who would abandon Him. **“My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” Matthew 27:46.** That was Jesus' “new normal” because...because ...He loves you!

Jesus said to Pilate...“My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.” John 18:36

Jesus doesn't want us to live in this world as it is forever, because it's **not** “normal”. Jesus kingdom is **not** of this world. But Jesus did fight for His servants so that they could join Him in His new kingdom! He gave His life for the world so that He could establish the “new normal”!

The earth shook! The curtain in the temple tore! Tombs were opened and the dead came alive! And it was done. It was finished! We will hear these words spoken on Good Friday. Jesus reconciled the world to Himself and saved us. Hosanna!

Romans 5 describes Jesus' “New normal for the world”!

8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. 10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

Paul goes on to describe what an absolute reversal this was from our old normal of death to our new normal of life in Jesus.

12 Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—

Yes, this describes our “old normal” ... the virus of sin spreading and spreading and spreading to all men and with it, death... to all men...

Then Paul tells us that Christ's "new normal" has been established...

15 But the free gift is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many.

Jesus rides into Jerusalem on a donkey to bring the free gift, the gift of grace, Jesus Himself, for all mankind! The unseen enemy, the invisible enemy, that Jesus defeats is more than Covid-19! Jesus defeats the offense that has caused Covid-19 and all our suffering...and that is sin itself! **"Fear not, daughter of Zion; Behold, your King is coming, Sitting on a donkey's colt."**

III. Jesus' "New Normal" comes to you also!

This is the Good News that Jesus brings to all who would believe in Him. He seeks you to give you this gift. Right now!

Maybe you feel isolated right now, cut off from friends and the life that you were living much differently 3 weeks ago. Maybe you wonder why God allowed this to happen. If you're hearing this message right now, it's because Jesus has never forgotten about you. He's using this time of world upheaval to especially remind you that He seeks you and loved you so much that He rode into Jerusalem for you. And He died for you. And to make sure there were no doubts that He has established this "new normal" for you, He rose again on the third day... for you!

This gift of forgiveness and eternal life He gives to you by faith, for **"faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God. (Romans 10:17)** Listen to more of what Paul says about faith in this chapter beginning at verse 8.

"The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): 9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame."

Not put to shame! What a great "new normal" this is that Jesus has won for you!

Last week we heard Jesus tell Martha, **"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. 26 And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?" John 11:25-26**

Again, dear listener, do you believe this? To say, "Yes, Lord I believe this" by the power of the Holy Spirit, is to receive the "new normal" of the sure hope of your resurrection and eternal life!

Hosanna! Lord, I believe ... that "my kingdom is not of this world" either. But it's with You, Jesus, now and eternally!

IV. Now live the “New Normal”, raising your palms of faith by the Spirit’s power!

Living this “new normal” is raising our palms in praise for all that Jesus has done for you wherever you are! Though even getting on the road, like those first Palm Sunday people, has become more restrictive, we can praise Him at home and live the “new normal” of a clear conscience of sins forgiven and the sure hope of eternal life. Hosanna to Jesus the King!

And we can do much at home to share this Good News to others about Jesus’ stimulus plan of salvation!

During this economic crisis, our government will be sending out stimulus checks. We thank God, of course, for this means of daily bread. God can use governments for good and makes His rain fall on the righteous and unrighteous. (Matthew 5:45)

But, there’s a stimulus check that’s much more important than this! It’s written for every sinner in the world. Jesus’ stimulus plan doesn’t come in the mail, or as a deposit into your bank account. It is a check written in the blood of Jesus that says is “paid in full”! Your debt of sin is cancelled!! And the Holy Spirit deposits it into your heart through faith. Your “new normal” is a life free from condemnation! (Romans 8:1) It’s our joy now, as Palm wavers, to share the Good News of Jesus’ stimulus plan of salvation to the world!

Last week, I lamented that while we constantly hear about the rising numbers of death, and the coming apex, we don’t hear on the news anyone talking about life after death. But God heard our pleas. God provided a witness on the news of Jesus’ resurrection! The Samaritan Purse, arrived in New York to set up a makeshift hospital in Central Park. And, the charity’s leader, Franklin Graham, son of Billy Graham, told the Good News on the Neil Cavuto show ... that Jesus did die for all people and rose again on the third day! He’s with us especially now! Yes, we see God’s good purpose of reaching out to the world... to people who wouldn’t “normally” hear this message!

And you know what? Each of us can do the same. You can share a Bible Passage with another! Make this your “new normal”! Make this part of your daily life now that will carry on after the Coronavirus epidemic is over!

And that’s the way that Jesus seeks the lost and establishes His “new normal” in their lives...through palm branch wavers like you and me and Franklin Graham. So get the Good News out about Jesus’ stimulus plan of forgiveness for all!

In the midst of this war... in this world against the invisible enemy of the Covid-19, God gives you the opportunity to go to battle for Him. For there is a greater war against the invisible three-headed enemy of sin, death and the devil that every person is fighting. By ourselves, we fail. But, the humble King, Jesus, entered Jerusalem and conquered this enemy! He establishes His reign of mercy and forgiveness! Share the Good News of this “new normal”! Wave your palm of faith!

Yes, though we are worshipping God in our own homes, and not in our church home, Immanuel. We always remember the meaning of “Immanuel” – “God with us”. It doesn’t matter where the His people are, the church,...God is with His people. He is with us! God is strengthening each of you even more through His word in your own homes with your own families for even greater purposes.

Have you shared something, forwarded something, passed something along that had given you spiritual comfort? Have you picked up the phone and called someone that you hadn't talked to in a while? Have you shared a Bible verse with someone over the phone? Have you said a prayer with someone over the phone? Cannot these new circumstances in which we're living in right now, also be used by God for the good of extending His kingdom? Most definitely!! Wave your palms of faith!

V. Our Lenten Journey is nearing the proof of God's "New Normal" – Easter!

Six weeks ago, we began the Lenten season in the Garden of Eden – in *man's* "new normal". We heard God describe to Adam and Eve what it would be like because of sin – pain in childbirth, working by sweat of brow, returning dust to dust, that is, death. Yes, that's our "old normal", our "old Adam".

But God did something amazing here in Genesis chapter 3. He promised to overcome our "old normal" with *His* "new normal".

God proclaims His "new normal" for all sinners **that "The Seed of the Woman, will bruise the head of the serpent, Satan" (Genesis 3:15)**. This was the first announcement of the "new normal", of the coming of Jesus and His **new** Kingdom of grace! Paul would write later in Galatians 4:4-6 how this prophecy was fulfilled and what it means for you!

4 "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, 5 to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. 6 And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" 7 Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ."

That, my friends in Christ, is the "new normal" that we live with each and every day, with Covid-19 or without it. You are sons and daughters because the Holy Spirit has brought Jesus' Kingdom of grace into your hearts by faith. Your Father is your "Abba"! Your Daddy!

You can call Him Daddy, because Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey and went to the cross for you! He rose again! And that means that it's all true! You are heirs of God! What's His is yours. His peace is your peace right now! His Kingdom of glory is your Kingdom of glory, right now!

Yes, six weeks ago we began the Lenten journey. Oh, it seems like so long ago. Today, we celebrate Jesus, the humble King, our King, coming into the city of Jerusalem to die and bruise the serpent's head. He came to establish the "new normal" – our "new normal" of salvation and eternal life as heirs of God! With Daddy on your side, is there anything to fear today? Fear not, daughter of Zion! Tomorrow? Fear not, daughter of Zion! Next week? Fear not, daughter of Zion!

How do we know this true? Well, Holy week doesn't end at the cross. That's not the end of the story. You know what happened three days after Good Friday. Next Sunday, Easter Sunday, still sheltered-in-place in our homes, we will rejoice to hear the Good News, "He is risen! He is not here!"

And so, next Sunday, we will see the disciples, sheltering -in-place, more like, locked-in- place, after the death of Jesus, in fear, feeling alone, despairing, to abruptly experience the "new normal" when Jesus enters the room, shows them His nail pierced hands, and proclaims "the

new normal” to fearful sinners – **“Peace be with you”** (John 20:19). I can’t wait to celebrate Easter! How about you, heir of God? We celebrate Jesus’ “new normal” for us! Amen.

“The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.” (Galatians 4:7)