

SERMON FOR MARCH 22, 2020
TEXT: JOHN 9: 1-41 ESP. V. 3
THEME: WHAT IS GOD DOING?

In the name of Jesus:

These are unprecedented times! Our society has never experienced anything like this. Tragedy can strike so quickly. We are going on with our own lives, minding our own business, and then in a blink of an eye the world, as we know it, and our lives, are changed. We should not be surprised though as to what is happening, after all our Lord promised that there will be trials and tribulations. And this Pandemic is certainly a trial, but Jesus says that we can be of good cheer for He has overcome the world.

Some may ask why this Pandemic, or to the point, why is God allowing this to happen. We know that the Bible says in Lamentations 3 that God doesn't willing afflict from His heart or grieve the children of men. So why this? And why now?

Let's be honest, we as individuals and as a world have forgotten about God. We have despised God and His Word. How? By placing as our priorities the things of the world. And now look what has happened. The sports we hold so dear are on hold for a while; there is no March Madness or opening day for baseball. The confidence we

place in our savings accounts or retirement plans have all taken a hit with the plunge of the markets. We have chased the almighty dollar and the things of the world and have neglected God's Word. It has been more important to attend sporting events, athletic camps, working to earn a living, making money and spending money for our pleasure and all this is to our detriment. But all of this is symptomatic of a bigger issue; God has taken a back seat. And all of the things that we have placed as a priority in our lives now don't seem all that important now, do they? God has taken them away and what are we left with?

All that is left is God and His assurance that He loves us in Jesus Christ. How do we know? Look to the cross. That is why Jesus came down from heaven, to live among us, in the midst of our hurt and pain. He came to taste and suffer what we are going through, yet without sin. He did this for you! On the cross He suffered hell for you so that you might know that nothing will ever separate you from the love of God. And that includes the corona virus. Not even the corona virus can separate you from God's love for you in Jesus Christ.

So what should we do in times such as these? Repent. Recognize that each of us have not loved God with all of our heart, soul, mind and

strength. Turn to Christ; trust in Christ, for forgiveness and help in your time of need.

But you are asking the question why? Why did this happen? Well, that is the same question that plagued the disciples of Jesus in our Gospel lesson for today. Jesus passed by and saw a man born blind. His disciples asked Jesus who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind? And Jesus' answer to them applies to all of us today: "It was not that this man sinned or his parents, but that the works of God might be displayed in him." (v 3)

We are wrong to think that God is sending this or allowing this to take place to punish us, because God punished Jesus instead of us. This is what it means; He who knew no sin became sin for us! Jesus was treated as a sinner, the chief of sinners, so that we might know God loves us. And He does!

You see, you and I and the world has a bigger problem than the corona virus. While the corona virus is spreading all over the globe, and the mortality rate from this virus is alarming, there is a bigger, more powerful virus that causes more damage. It is the virus or poison of sin. No matter what we do to try to deal with sin, no matter what answer or remedy we come up with, we fall short of a cure. The wages of sin is

death. The soul that sins will most certainly die. The death rate of people who are sinners is 100%. But God provides healing.

In your Baptism God has washed away your sins. In your Baptism He has placed you in Christ. You are a new creation! The sins that you have committed and will commit are nailed to the cross. God casts your sins away as far as the east is from the west. He looks at you and He doesn't see your sins. He sees Jesus. And He loves you.

So that is why we can turn to the Lord during this time. We repent, we confess our sins and turn to the Lord, for He is faithful and just and forgives our sins and cleanses us from all unrighteousness. We trust in His promise for forgiveness. We have it, by faith. And now, for today and into the future, we trust in the mercy of God who is our ever-present Help in times of trouble.

God invites you to cast your anxieties and cares upon Him, for He cares for you. Just as Jesus sought out this blind man, He seeks you out as well. He has called you by name in your Baptism and He says come to me you who are burdened and heavy laden and I will give you rest. Learn of Jesus, for He will provide rest for your life and your soul.

Luther understood what we are going through today. He suffered much in his life but he always looked to Jesus. He wrote that wonderful

hymn, “A Mighty Fortress is our God.” In that hymn there is a stanza that says: “And take they our life, goods, fame, child and wife, let all these be gone, they yet have nothing won, the kingdom ours remains” God has made you a member of His kingdom. You belong to Him, and nothing will ever separate you from His love.

What does that mean for you and me today? We can go forward in our lives, not in a panic, wondering where we will get the next roll of toilet paper from, but in confident faith that God will provide for our every need. That is His promise and God does not lie. Don’t be anxious about tomorrow. Cast your cares on Jesus, for He cares for you.

And in doing so you and I are called to live for Him. We live for Him by loving God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength, and by loving our neighbor as ourselves.

Martin Luther has wise words for us during these uncertain times of this pestilence. In 1527 the bubonic plague swept through Wittenberg Germany, where Luther served as a pastor and professor. Luther, along with his own Pastor Bugenhagen, stayed in Wittenberg to minister to the sick and those who were afraid. Luther and other Christians were captivated by the Word of God and were conscience bound to serve their neighbors in need. Others asked him if it was right

for a Christian to flee from a deadly plague. Luther's answer is not a simple answer, but an answer that is well nuanced. He wrote to his fellow pastors these words, and they apply to all of us today:

“Now if a deadly epidemic strikes, we should stay where we are, make our preparations, and take courage in the fact that we are mutually bound together so that we cannot desert one another or flee from one another and we can be sure that God's punishment has come upon us, not only to chastise us for our sins but also to test our faith and love... we must patiently submit and serve our neighbor, risking our lives in this manner as St. John teaches, “If Christ laid down his life for us, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren” [1 John 3:16]...It is even more shameful for a person to pay no heed to his own body and to fail to protect it against the plague the best he is able, and then to infect and poison others who might have remained alive if he had taken care of his body as he should have.”

(full text at <https://blogs.lcms.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Plague-blogLW.pdf>)

Luther's advice is wise: Trust in Jesus, for He has purchased and won you from sin, death, and the devil. You belong to Him. And so as His children, we live not for ourselves but for others, in whatever

situation God calls us; using our reason, good sense, and medical knowledge to avoid harming our own bodies and those of our neighbors.

Finally, I want to direct you to our web address: redeemerlancaster.org for other devotional materials. Please continue to remember and give to the Lord and His work, here at Redeemer, and through the other social agencies that are in need at this time, including the Food Pantries and Homeless Shelters. The Red Cross is in need of blood donations, so if you are able please donate. As you show love to your neighbor in these times, the works of God are displayed and He receives the glory. Just like Jesus said in the healing of the man who was born blind. The Lord bless and keep you. Amen