

April 9, 2020

Dear Church Family,

Our Governor has extended the stay-at-home order until April 24th, which for some is discouraging. However, what is of great encouragement is that we still serve the living Savior Jesus Christ! I have heard many of you through phone calls and emails state that *“Easter is going to be different this year.”* In the sense of gathering with people in a church building, yes it will be. For the believer, Easter celebration has not changed, will not change and is the same as it is every day of our life.

We worship our God in spirit and in truth (John 4:23-24)! When Jesus Christ died on the cross in our place, for our sins, the curtain of the temple separating the holy place from God’s people was torn in two from top to bottom signifying the New Covenant. Worship is not about gathering for a worship service in a building. Worship is not done with blood or grain sacrifices. Worship is not keeping a set of laws for righteousness. Jesus Christ is our righteousness!

***“For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin,
so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”***
2 Corinthians 5:21(ESV)

So many in our world are cowering in fear over the spread of a virus that has killed thousands and may kill many more before it’s over. Numbers of individuals and families are being impacted by the economic downfall that has happened amidst this worldwide event. Fears of an exponential growth of abuse, domestic violence and crime can overwhelm one’s mind. The media drones on hour after hour leading people to ask; "How much longer can we take this? Will we make it through? Is there light at the end of the tunnel?"

Brothers and Sisters in Christ, stop and reflect on these words of Christ to His disciples just hours before going to the cross to suffer, shed His blood and die in our place, to redeem us and purchase us as His own:

***“I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace.
In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.”***
John 16:33 (ESV)

Believers should not be surprised by the trials, struggles and suffering in this world but sometimes we naturally we are. We must cling to the truth of God’s Word in that we will be delivered from this fallen world. The Christian has been saved, sanctified and will be glorified one day before the presence of the Lord God Almighty! The rest of the world, who have no hope in Jesus as their Savior, should be afraid. They should be fearful of death because it comes for them as it does for us. Death is a 100% guaranteed for everyone. The difference for the Christian is that physical death opens the door for our entry into eternal life in the very presence of God in heaven. Death for the unbeliever ends in eternal death and separation from God their creator.

Therefore do not fear for your Lord and Savior is not on the cross. Do not tremble at the news, rumors or decisions by governmental leaders because Jesus is alive. Do not live in terror, alarm or panic because Jesus who is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords has you in His hand! Your Heavenly Father cannot lose you to any trouble in this world or even Satan because you are one of His adopted children purchased with the blood of Christ. Reflect on these words of Jesus:

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish, and no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. I and the Father are one.” John 10:27–30 (ESV)

Church family I love you and miss seeing you in person. I miss hearing you lift your voices in praise to our God. I miss your smiles and encouraging words to one another. I want to point out that this break from gathering together has shown the true colors of unity in the body of Christ. The love that is being poured out as you call, text and email one another. Your willingness to go shopping and provide meals for others shows your God's caring spirit alive in you. The greater commitment to praying for one another and the things that you are learning in your studying of the Word of God, brings great joy to my heart.

Would you please pray and ask our Heavenly Father to continue to meet the various needs of the body of Christ. Thank you for your continued financial giving! Your generosity to give an offering during this time to the church is helping meet the needs of the pastors, church staff and church member benevolence. If you are in need, please let us know so we can help.

May the Lord use this time to build His church with exponential spiritual growth. Join me in praying that the Holy Spirit is convicting the world of sin and calling people to Jesus through His church preaching the gospel online around the world. Today is the day to contact that friend, neighbor or co-worker and ask them if they have Jesus. Now is the time to share the gospel with them and the great act of love, that Jesus has done by giving up His life for us. Contact those people after reading this and if the door is not open to share the gospel, invite them to watch our Easter service online.

On Friday I pray that you are able to join us live at 5pm online. Pastor Shaun will be teaching about the cross & death of Christ and my wife Kelly and I will be leading in song. We will take communion in our homes together. If you don't have any juice or bread I want to encourage you to still take communion by reflecting and remembering the cross as Jesus said this was the purpose for taking it. Sunday we have a live Easter service online and the sermon is entitled, Death Is Defeated (Luke 24:1-12).

I conclude by reminding you, Easter may seem different this year but it is not! The tomb is empty and our hearts are filled with the very presence of our God. Therefore rejoice, sing and proclaim the news that Jesus is alive! Today and for all eternity.

He is Risen! He is Risen Indeed!

Pastor Paul Taylor

