

4/20/2020

Dear Living Word Brothers and Sisters,

Our "little flock" continues to survive and thrive in spite of the Covid 19 crisis. We continue to provide pastoral care and contact with volunteers assisting me with phone visits, and just "checking up" on as many of our church family as we can. As soon as our governor's guidelines permit, we'll be opening up the sanctuary again for those wishing to worship with "social distancing" while continuing parking lot and streaming facebook worship, but we will REALLY open up with our "Easter II: The Resurrection of the Church", complete with Easter Breakfast and Resurrecting the Alleluias someday soon. The church council will determine and communicate that scheduling.

Here's some reminders and helps from the sermon for this week:

1. Please prayer over and reread John 20:19-31. Ask the Lord plant His Word into your heart as you reread the text.
2. We noted Sunday that the first verses actually describe a context and situation that is a little too close for comfort in some ways -- it describes a worried little bunch of Jesus' followers "sheltering in place" and in fear! Sound familiar?? But there was good news coming for them and for us in the next few words of the text.
3. Vs. 20 astounds us with the resurrected Jesus miraculously appearing in their midst! His first words? PEACE be with you"....and that is exactly what both those disciples and we today need to hear don't we? God's peace is not just an absence of strife or struggle, it is MUCH deeper -- it is God's presence embedded deep within us, providing that "hiding place" and well of comfort EVEN AS a hurricane of problems can swirl around us. Get there ! GO there! Begin and end everyday this week with a few minutes with the Lord asking Him to bring HIS peace into that day.
4. It's okay to doubt. WHAT? you say?? What about having faith etc? The reality is that until we are in Heaven we will still have those moments of weakness and questioning. It's okay. God is our heavenly FATHER and He understands when His "little kids" are not always perfect. St. Thomas, doubted , but then believed. So much so that he was the most widely traveled of all the apostles, ending his life being martyred, murdered, by Hindu priests in India precisely because they were threatened by so many of the locals becoming followers of Jesus through his mission work. There are still 30 million Christians in India today.
5. Soooooo, every day this week, live in God's peace (not as the world gives) asking for it at the beginning and ending of every day. Also live in God's grace and forgiveness when we weaken and doubt because of the "hurricane of difficulties" swirling around us now. Remember the last words of the text "...that by believing you may have life in His name..."!!

Here's a little devotional treat for you this week:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EpNHAqwl4xM>

May the Lord bless, keep, and protect you and all your loved ones this week -- every day.

Pastor

Rev. Michael W. Birnbaum