St. Michael’s Church
CHARLESTON, SC

SUNDAY, MARCH 22, 2020

“JESUS LIVES, HEALS, SAVES AND LOVES
THIS IS OUR FINEST HOUR”

ROMANS 5:12-21
MATTHEW 9:1-7

PREACHER: THE REV. AL ZADIG, JR.

HELP US LORD TO BE SO CONNECTED TO YOU THAT WE MIGHT BECOME YOUR DISCIPLES AND THE SERVANTS OF OTHERS.

TAKE OUR LIPS AND SPEAK THROUGH THEM,
OUR MINDS AND THINK THROUGH THEM,
AND TAKE OUR HEARTS, AND SET THEM ON FIRE.

Seven days… and life seems forever changed. Just a week ago, hundreds of you gathered here for worship and we had two beautiful baptisms.

Seven days later……………………..Crickets.

Everything has changed, in our:
• Homes
• workplaces
• and ministry

+++ Each day this week I’ve gone on a late afternoon bike ride on my wife’s aqua blue second hand bike just riding the downtown streets. Each day fewer and fewer people are out. Fewer and fewer stores and restaurants are open. With each day I’ve had a growing sense of deep mourning over those who have become ill and died, as well as a grief over those who are now suddenly jobless.
• Waiters and Waitresses
• Bar tenders
• Tour Guides
• Market sellers
• Hotel staff
• Retailers
Then of course I think of doctors, nurses, police and some who are working overtime, exhausted and to be honest, wary of getting it as well! And we’re left with:

**God: What are **YOU** saying through all of this?** God what **ARE** you saying?

Today I want to tell you three of the things I believe He’s saying to us.

The First is this: **God Saying:**

- I may not cause all
- *Trials*
- *Viruses*
- *And tribulations-

**But I will never waste them…**

As terrible and terrifying as the Coronavirus is, there is no doubt that God is not wasting it.

- Families are coming together like they never have been...
- Dinners are being put on Dining room tables again
- Puzzles are being put together...
- Neighbors are depending on each other
- Church leaders are now taking church to the world instead of waiting for the world to come to the church!
- In fact...
- So many of life’s distractions to faith have disappeared:
  - Forget travel lacrosse and baseball on Sabbath Sundays, there's no baseball and lacrosse period!
  - Sports in general ended as we know it...
  - Even a certain quarterback is no longer a Patriot...
- God has redeemed Sundays! Almost like He’s given us a forced time out.
- And then there is the Christian Church in China, exploding in growth through this time
- Safe to say, God is saying: I don’t cause all tribulations, but I will never waste them...

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Second: God is saying: **Fear Not, I’m Lord…Fear Not, Jesus is Lord…even over the Coronavirus..**

That phrase **fear not**, is mentioned in one form or another over 365 times in Scripture, one reminder for each day of the year……Jesus is sovereign even over the virus. So…What am I hearing?

1. God will not waste this pain
2. He IS sovereign! Jesus is still in control.

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The third thing I’m hearing from God comes in the form of a question. A haunting question from God that has been keeping me up at night. It first came up at our Theology over coffee class last week and it’s this: God Asking our world: “Will my people ever be as wary and anxious over undealt with sin that leads to eternal death as they are over the unchecked corona-virus?”

In other words, will my people be as:

- worried
- as anxious
- about where they’re going in the next life, as they are just surviving this one?

This haunting question is where I want to go deeper with you today. You know, the Coronavirus can be summed up in three words:

- Global
- Contagious
- Deadly
Just like another virus found in the Bible. A little three letter word that is so powerful, so dangerous that its mentioned over 400 times in Scripture. Paul even dedicates 16 chapters of his most important book to it, Romans, Paul’s greatest book focuses on this three letter-word-virus called: Sin.

What is sin? Sin can be defined as our actions that break God’s instructions and will. Actions like:

- Idolatry
- Adultery
- Murder
- Lust
- Gossip
- Pride
- Materialism..
- Selfishness

It’s all sin, there is no hierarchy. This virus of sin has three things in common with the Coronavirus we are dealing with now. Both are:

- Global
- Contagious
- Deadly

Paul says as much in our Gospel Project reading from Romans 5 assigned for today. First. Romans 5 explains that the virus of sin is Global. Paul is following good Jewish doctrine when he says in Romans 5:12: “The Virus of sin came into the world through Adam.”

Adam is person 0. His decision to disobey God and eat of that tree way back in Genesis produced:

- Disobedience-Globally
- Broken bodies-Globally
- Pain-Globally
- Virus's-Globally
- And death.

His sin brought brokenness into the world including every physical virus known to humanity---As well as our proneness to disobey God. There are two proofs of this.

- Consider sin is the one thing we don't need to teach our children!
- And WE prove it in our lives by the sins we commit each day!

Paul says…All have sinned, all have a sinful nature.

It’s why that hymn..  
Come thou Font of Every Blessing.. is so powerful…

“Prone to wander Lord I feel it,  
Prone to leave the God I love...  
Take my heart Lord, take and seal it..  
Seal it for thy courts above.”

So we all have the virus of sin….it is global.

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Secondly, the Coronavirus and our sin is taken extremely seriously because both are so contagious. The life of one affects many. Paul continues in Romans 5:12:

- Just as through one man-
- Sin entered into the world
- And death through Sin...
- Thus death spread to all humans.
Just think for a minute. How in the world did the virus get from China to Camden South Carolina where we read that no who had it in Camden had been travelling! How does sin go from Adam and Eve all the way to our children thousands of years later? Like the virus, sin just continues to spread. So, Sin and the virus, both Global and full of contagion.

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But finally, the most powerful similarity between the virus of sin and the Coronavirus is that both are deadly. In the case of the coronavirus, the death rate is approximately 1%. In the case of the virus of sin, the death rate with no intervention is 100%.

Again, Romans 5 Verse 12: “As through one man.sin entered the world, death through sin…” Paul backs this up in chapter 6 verse 23: “The consequence of sin is death”…And not just a physical death, but eternal death…eternal separation from God.

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And this is what is critical to understand. You see, Death itself is the direct consequence of sin, death was not part of the original human plan, had Adam not sinned, we would be immortal! We were supposed to live forever! Which takes me back to the burning question. How is it that our culture is so wary of a virus that could kill the earthly body but not wary of undone with sin that affects our forever eternal lives?

Sin and the Coronavirus:

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<tr>
<th>Global</th>
<th>Contagious</th>
<th>Deadly</th>
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However... And that my friends, is my favorite Gospel Word...there are few words sweeter Gospel word than However...

**We have** the cure for sin and death. While right now there is no cure for the coronavirus, Paul goes on in Romans 5 to give the cure for the virus of sin. Listen to how the Message version of Romans 5:18 puts it:

- Just as one person did it wrong and got us into all this trouble with sin and death
- Another person got it right and got us out of it,
- And more than just getting us out of it
- He got us into life!

While
- Adam said no to God and put many people in the wrong
- Jesus the new Adam said yes to God
- and put all who believe in Him in the right!

Just as ONE trespass in Adam brings condemnation and death to us all, the result of one act of Righteousness (Jesus dying for our sin on the cross) brings eternal life for all who put their trust in Jesus. Put YET another way: Jesus IN dying for us reverses the process of sin begun by Adam’s disobedience, meaning Jesus gives us a new start. It’s why the name Jesus means rescuer!

This cure comes with an amazing size effect, a side effect we all want. The Side Effect of the deepest peace and contentment we could ever long for. **Peace**, the most beautiful anti-anxiety medication we could have, a remedy found not over the counter, but over Scripture. It’s why Jesus has been called the second Adam!

- Where the first Adam failed
  - Jesus rescues!
- The reign of death
  - Is replaced by the reign of life!
In Jesus we have the perfect Spiritual Infusion to repair our broken DNA to save our lives now and forever. **Meaning Jesus:**

- Lives
- Heals
- Saves
- Loves
- Liberates
- Elevates
- Educates
- Compensates
- Motivates
- Regenerates
- And Activates!

Warren Wiersbe, that prolific Christian author and teacher writes: “When God looks on the human race, he sees two men, Adam and Christ. Every human being is either: “In Adam” and lost…or in Christ and saved. There is no middle ground. If we do nothing, we have death through Adam…but if we come to Jesus in faith, we have life eternally.

We have the cure! Romans 10:9: If we confess with our mouths that Jesus is Lord and believe in our heart that He was raised from the dead we will never ever die. All who call on Jesus WILL BE Saved!

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Again that begs the question. Why is it then that so many in our culture are so anxiety ridden about this finite life we have on earth, but seemingly couldn’t care about infinite eternity? In fact, take this one step further. Imagine with me for a moment, weeks from now, when prayerfully a press conference is given to announce: WE HAVE THE CURE!!! People would flock to clinics and hospitals for the healing vaccination! Now imagine it a different way…the cure is given but no one by that time seems to care…acting as if there was no hope! Hard to imagine, but it seems that’s what’s happening in our culture now with Jesus and the cure for all eternity..

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My friends, during this crazy time, I need you, all of us to spread this cure, this hope we have in Jesus, to spread that non-anxious peace filled presence, a presence that says: “No matter what happens, I’m in peace, I know I am eternally healed because of what Jesus has done for me…”

Which means my friends, the time we’re in right now should be our finest hour!

- We hold the cure for eternity….
- We’ve got to proclaim this cure in:
  - thought, word and deed!
- In this--Our finest hour---

Where you and I with the courage of the Holy Spirit love our neighbor by inviting them to receive this cure for our deadly virus of sin. Reminding them that Sin like the Coronavirus is

- Global
- Highly Contagious
- And Gone undealt with, is deadly
- But that in Jesus we have the cure.
Finally,

You can even tell your neighbor the true story of John D-Rockefeller. Rockefeller was a philanthropist of the 19th century and had one son, John Jr. John Jr was destined to inherit his father’s vast fortune. But John Sr wanted his son to know what the life of a working man was all about, and to achieve that goal sends his son out to work laboriously in the oil fields alongside the day workers.

John Jr. does this for two years, working on oil rigs during Long hot hours often Saturated in oil… Over those two years, the days always concluded with libations and stories. On One of those days, John was asked: “So, how do you like working among the ‘commoners…?’”

John Jr. replies: “I love it, its been one of the best times of my life. “The man who asks the question replies with an edge of sarcasm:

- THAT'S BECAUSE YOU KNOW YOU'RE NOT STAYING..
- YOU KNOW THERE IS SOMETHING BETTER OUT THERE WAITING FOR YOU WHEN THIS IS ALL OVER.
- YOU WOULD LOOK AT THINGS DIFFERENTLY
- IF YOU THOUGHT THAT WORKING THESE OIL FIELDS WAS ALL THERE WAS FOR YOU.

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That’s IT!!!!!

My friends! That’s our story!
- WE LOOK AT THINGS DIFFERENTLY
- BECAUSE WE KNOW
- THERE IS SOMETHING BETTER WAITING FOR US WHEN THIS IS ALL OVER.

THAT’S WHY THIS IS OUR FINEST HOUR!

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What do I hear God Saying?
1. He will never waste a hurt
2. Fear Not, Jesus is Lord even over this Virus
3. We have the cure for death AND TO LOVE OUR NEIGHBOR, WE MUST GIVE THE CURE.

Let us pray.