

April 27, 2020 – Monday of the Third Week of Easter

Dearest Saints in Jesus Christ, the Risen Lord,

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the firstfruits from the grave (1 Corinthians 15:20).

There are many reasons that the current plague is awful. The most obvious is that people are ill and many are dying. Some are facing other complications that have become life-altering, oftentimes due to the blood-clotting now known to accompany the COVID-19 sickness. But, even if you yourself are not sick or do not have close family who are ill, the virus has no doubt affected your life. Maybe your job is affected. Maybe you no longer have a job. Maybe the food or other grocery item you regularly buy has not been in stock at the store for weeks. Maybe you wear a mask when you go out (or go to work). Certainly, you should be social distancing and washing your hands. Whatever you are experiencing, your normal way of life is nowhere in sight.

Everyone has been affected in one way or another. But, I wanted to highlight two ways in particular that we have been affected, because these reasons get at the heart of what it is to live as Christians. The first reason is that we are not able to gather together. We have not had a corporate worship service since March 15. We have not celebrated the Lord's Supper together since March 1. It is so very difficult, particularly because of how the Church is described in the Scriptures, as the *body of Christ*. Not being able to gather together seems impossible, because we are one body in Jesus. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews even encourages his hearers, *[Do not neglect] to meet together, as is the habit of some, but [encourage] one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near (10:25)*. Yet, because of our concern for our neighbor and the restrictions of the authorities, what once seemed unthinkable has become a (temporary) reality.

But, Christians, take heart! Despite our inability to gather for corporate worship, the body of Christ endures. We are a people who transcend time and space. This is true because of our membership in the body of Christ. *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8)*. Despite the social distancing, despite the restrictions on gatherings, despite the inability even to shake hands or hug those we love, none of it can destroy the body of Christ. What does Paul write? *I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord (Romans 8:38-39)*. *Nothing* – not even a pandemic – can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. And be assured, we *will* be able to meet together again, whether sooner or later.

Which brings us to the second reason. The pandemic has made it so that we have to wait continually. We have to wait longer for packages to arrive (a 'first-world' problem in most instances). We have to wait for our grocery stores to restock the items we need (has anyone seen yeast on the shelves in the past four or five weeks??). We have to wait for our governmental officials and medical professionals to update us on the numbers of infections and what it all means for how we should live our lives. Most of all, we have to wait for life to return to 'normal' (whatever that is).

Children of God, do not despair! We have *always* been people of the promise. God called Abram when he was 75 years old and promised him descendants that would become a great nation (Genesis 12:2). Yet, Abram had to wait *twenty-four years* until God fulfilled his promise through the birth of his son, Isaac. Joseph, Abraham's great-grandson, was favored by God. But, he was sold into slavery by his brothers and later spent time in prison. It was *years* before God released Joseph and gave him his full favor once again. The people of Israel were in Egypt *430 years* before God brought them back out of Egypt toward the Promised Land (and they spent another *40 years* wandering in the wilderness because of their unbelief!). Perhaps the worst period of waiting, even if it wasn't the longest, was the three days Jesus was in the tomb. Imagine what his disciples thought! They confessed him as the Christ, yet he was dead! But, after a period of time when all seemed lost, God raised Jesus from the dead and declared victory of sin, death, and the power of the devil. Christ is risen indeed! Alleluia!

The truth is, being a Christian means being a people who wait. We are a people who hope. Paul writes, *For in this hope [the resurrection of the body!!!] we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what he sees? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience* (Romans 8:24-25). No one can simply tell you to "be patient." It doesn't work that way. Patience is a fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22). So, it is something that we ask for in our weakness (Romans 8:26). It is something that comes to us through continued prayer and meditation on God's Word. Dear Christians, remain in the Word! Dear people of God, lift up your prayers to the Lord of heaven and earth! He will hear you. He will answer you. And he will give you patience and peace.

Do not despair. Whether the time drags on or there is some miraculous recovery, we will remain a people of hope. But, this hope is not like the hope of the world. It is a sure and certain hope. Christ *will* come again. And when he does, he *will* bring the fulfillment of his promises. There will be no more loneliness, no more waiting, no more pain, no more sickness, and no more death. So, we pray, just as always, *Come soon, Lord Jesus!*

In Hope,  
Pastor Squire