

May
2020

www.lutheransforlife.org

**SPECIAL EDITION****Life Has Changed**

by Rev. Jeff Duncan, Mission & Ministry Director

Life as we know it has changed! The novel coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2), the cause of the disease COVID-19, has our lives in confusion, hysteria, and despair. Or does it?

The devil rejoices when Christians are separated from the gifts of God in Word and Sacrament. Governing authorities take precautions. The public welfare is considered, and policies are dictated. In Nebraska, the directive limits gathering in public events to 10 or fewer souls. How is the Church—your local church—going to continue? The norm of our weekly worship life is disrupted. Fear and uncertainty abound. Clergy, boards of elders, and church councils are sent scrambling for quick decisions. Strategies are discussed, alternatives are weighed, and announcements are published. The Word of the Lord shall endure!

In reality, life as we know it has not changed at all!

From the sin of Adam and Eve came the entrance of death into the Garden. For a time, it appeared the Serpent had won. Out of the despair of falling into sin and judgment came a promise.

“I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15).

God Himself has delivered on this promise. Salvation has come in a Son, conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary.

“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons” (Galatians 4:4-5).

Now we have received the gift of adoption into His Life at the cross of our redemption. Sins are forgiven as the Lord suffered the full wrath of the Father’s judgment, drinking it down to the dregs. Dying, He lives! Resurrected to new life, He redeems us from sin, death, and the power of the devil. Raised in glory to the right hand of God, He bestows the power to become sons of the Father in our Baptisms.

“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life. For if we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his” (Romans 6:3-5).

This is the life that we continue to live today, despite the struggles and tribulations that life in a sin-filled world continues throwing at us daily.

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*Though devils all the world should fill, all eager to devour us,
We tremble not, we fear no ill; They shall not over-pow'r us.
This world's prince may still Scowl fierce as he will, He can harm us none.
He's judged; the deed is done; One little word can fell him.
(LSB 656, "A Mighty Fortress Is Our God," vs. 3)*

Life, salvation, redemption, forgiveness, restoration, justification, sanctification, heaven—all little words that fell the devil. The greatest is “Jesus”! For He will save His people from their sins! This is the promise given so long ago and delivered to all believers. At the sound of Jesus’ voice calling us from the grave, we shall rise to the newness of life—created, redeemed, and called by God to be with Him forever in His heavenly reward.

Precautions and careful actions are indeed warranted. As Christians, we seek to serve our Lord by caring for the least of these. First, we care for our brothers and sisters in Christ. Then, we care by reaching out with Christ’s love and forgiveness to the world that awaits to hear His Word and believe. SARS-CoV-2 and the COVID-19 disease are serious. But life as we know it has not changed. It is still found only in the One Who gives us life—our Lord Jesus Christ.

For a time, prudent measures call us out of the comfort of our regular routine. A large Sunday Bible class followed by vibrant, choir-filled voices of worship and orderly procession to the Lord’s Supper may be curtailed momentarily. A temporary refrain indeed, but life goes on! The Word endures in your reading and family devotions. Your Baptism remains God’s gracious gift of adoption, never fading as you cling to the promises God spoke over you in His name.

Most likely, your pastor, the board of elders, the church council, as well as all your leadership and mission groups covet your prayers and continuing support. Remember the tithes and offerings. Even as you may not regularly attend due to required compliance with community guidelines and restrictions, the cost of maintaining buildings and supporting your shepherd(s) do not change. Ministries like Lutherans For Life will continue providing their service, even as conferences and workshops are being canceled or postponed. Is it time to renew an annual membership that has possibly lapsed in ongoing support of the great work LFL remains vigilant to complete?

Your neighbor needs not only your prayers, but maybe your help too. Look for ways to safely deliver groceries or medicines. Or is it possible to do light-duty cleaning or laundry for your elderly members? A call for conversation, a card of remembrance and prayer, an offer to drive them to a doctor’s appointment if needed—these are all ways to look after those vulnerable to this virus and disease. Look for ways you can share to be a brother or a sister in Christ in these trying times.

Jesus said, **“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). Sin continues to disrupt, and the effects of the fallen world continue to cause suffering. The devil continues to tempt us away from faith and trust in the work of God as we see this turmoil increasing. And Christ Jesus continues to deliver His followers out of all this world’s doom, gloom, and disease! Life—as we know it in Jesus—has not changed! Take heart, dear Christians! In Jesus there remains a peace beyond any worldly understanding. He has already overcome it all, for YOU!

May you remain strong and healthy in Christ Who sustains your peace, now and forever!

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