

Palmarum 2020

Phil. 2

St. John Lutheran Church, Palmer, KS

In the Name of the Father, and of the ☩ Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

*Christ Jesus “humbled himself by becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”*

Imagine with me that an easy cure for COVID could be created today. It would work as a vaccine to keep people from getting sick. It would also cure people overnight if they were already sick. The antibodies in this cure would work so well that no one need die. It would be a cure for all people.

Now, all that is required to make this cure, would be for one person to volunteer to become infected. But for this cure to work, our volunteer would have to be so pumped full of coronavirus that he would die for certain. In fact, if it didn't kill the volunteer, the cure wouldn't work for the rest of us.

We call this week “holy” because it is the week our salvation was won. God let his only Son volunteer to give his life for ours because it was the only way.

Jesus Christ, God's Son, our Brother, volunteered. He volunteered to be the cure for a deadly disease. We are still trying to figure out the death rate for COVID19. Whatever it turns out to be, it won't even come close to the death rate for the virus called sin. This sin-virus infects every person from Adam and Eve, both in our bodies and in our souls. It is not a pretend virus. Like all viruses, it is hard to see, until the symptoms appear. But we know that we all have this sin-virus because we all must die. Indeed, this sin-virus has a 100% mortality rate, as it says: “The wages of sin is death.” Yes. The symptoms of sin is death. Coronavirus can kill, but sin kills eternally. There was only one way to make a cure for eternal death: The blood of Jesus, God's Son, which cleanses us from all sin.

Our blood brother Jesus, God come into our flesh, rode into Jerusalem on a couple of donkeys, but it might as well have been a hearse. He was riding to his death. It was the Father's loving and all-merciful will to crush him instead of us. And Jesus, God's Son, volunteered. Only he could do it. He was obedient unto death. Only this was not a clean death in a hospital with pain medicine, but death on a cross. This was not a death like any other death of the body, but a death under the full wrath of God for all the sins of all the world.

The crowds shout Hosanna, which means, "Save us now! Save us, please!" But do they know what they are really asking? Do we? There is a death worse than bodily death, and there is a wrath more terrible than that of angry Jews and heartless Gentiles.

God's wrath against sin is unbearable. He will not tolerate that virus in his realm and kingdom. Our government had to close the borders to stop the influx of a little bug. How much less will the Holy God allow sin to enter his kingdom! Our factories have had to make ventilators, tests, and masks to help save many. How much more must the Holy God do to eradicate the virus of our sin once and for all!

For the cure to be complete, Jesus had to take it all. The entire sin-virus from Adam and Even down to you and me. Every last sin. Every last drop. For us men, and for our salvation, **Jesus had to be so pumped full of our sins that he himself BECAME SIN.** In that moment the wrath of God and the just punishment we deserved was poured out in full. The virus was burned in the incinerating fire of God's Holy wrath.

I am not overstating this. God the Holy Spirit declares this in 2 Cor. 5: "For our sake [God] made him **to be sin** who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." That is what Jesus faced as he rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. That is what our Hosannas required him to do. That is why we sing our Hosannas every time we receive that saving blood in Holy Communion. And that is why we can go to our own deaths and the deaths of fellow believers in peace.

Because on Easter we see that the cure worked. Jesus was raised from the dead. He did not die eternally but lives and reigns to all eternity. So will you.

I know that COVID19 has made us all think about life and death more often than we usually do. What would happen if there was a community outbreak here? or in your family? I know that sometimes you are scared. I know that trying make a living in this economy is not as easy and certain as it was just one month ago. None of us knows what the future holds. But here's the good news: You don't have to be the hero. Jesus Christ, God's Son, your brother, has already volunteered. He already took away the worst disease there is. Everything else is just a temporary inconvenience. Though the effects of sin still linger in your fallen flesh, it is defeated. The cure has been administered. You'll feel better soon. You too shall rise with Christ and live with him in his sinless kingdom for all eternity.

Let us not hide our fears but name them, confess them, repent and be forgiven. Then, forgiven in Christ and cared-for by our Father, we can gain a wider perspective. There is a fate

worse than death. There is a disease worse than anything coronavirus can do. Christ volunteered. He did what no one else could do. He humbled himself unto death.

Will we have the humility to die when the Lord calls us home? Can we let go of what we think we are owed in this life so that we can receive the higher good God died to give us in the next life? We can because God, who gave up his Son for us, does not let his Christians go in death. He stays with them. He strengthens them. He does in them what they are too weak to do, and cures them to live with him in his kingdom in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness, just as Christ is risen from the dead, lives and reigns to all eternity. This is most certainly true.

*Come soon, Lord Jesus.*

The peace of God, which passes all understanding, keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.