

Lent 4 2020

John 6:1–15

St. John Lutheran Church, Palmer, KS

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

Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?”⁶ He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do.

When Jesus took the Israelites out of Egypt and into the desert with not much to live on, He himself knew what he would do. When a large crowd came to Jesus in the wilderness and only a boy had some bread and fish, Jesus himself knew what he would do.

When the virus first began infecting people in China, before it was even detected, Jesus himself knew what he would do. When it spread and came to the US, Jesus himself know what he would do.

When the schools closed, business shut down, and markets crashed, Jesus himself knew what he would do.

Dear saints: Jesus knows what he is going to do.

Nobody knows what to do this week. Nobody knows what the weeks ahead will look like or how long it will take to get through this. No pastor I know is confident in what he is doing. We are all trying to keep people safe and keep them in the Word and comfort of God. You are all trying to keep your families, farms, business, and communities going but also keep them safe. There is little I can tell you about what this week will bring. I cannot tell you that we will be spared the worst of it or that it will turn out to not be that big of a deal. I pray that is all true.

But I can tell you this. And this is the one thing I know more than I know anything under the heavens: Jesus knows what he is going to do.

The Lord tests us. That’s not a cliché. It’s a fact. Jesus said this to test Philip. Sometimes the Lord sends us a simple question, sometimes he sends us worse. But he who tests you loves you and has a plan. He knows what he is doing and has it under control.

This is the hardest part. We are not in control. Philip failed the test. He immediately looked to what he and the disciples could do, how much money it would take, where they could

find a store in the wilderness to buy what they needed. If Walmart has no bread, Lord, what are we to do? If our denarii and dollars are swallowed up, Lord, how can we buy what we need.

Don't feel bad, Philip. If only you knew how much we are like you. We are failures too. We only believe what we can see. We only trust what we can control. We look to the markets and our pocketbooks first. It's only real if we can see it. Maybe tests will help, but what are they for so many? Maybe a vaccine can get out in time. And we should pray for these things. God may spare us a true disaster and send relief. But there is more, Philip. There is more with you than what your eyes see. O my soul, do you not see the Son of Man standing with you, with power to direct, control and save?

You can't see God, and you certainly can't control him. But he is real. More real and lasting than a virus. His Word is real. It endures. It gives eternal life. Put your confidence there. Trust in the Lord.

Philip failed the test. I failed. You failed. But Jesus doesn't fail. He doesn't chastise Philip or cast him away. He simply takes care of it. He says: "*Have the people sit down.*"

That's the hardest part, sitting down. Doing nothing. Letting God be God and acknowledging that we are not in control of our lives. Jesus has told us to sit down, stay inside, keep working as best we can but keep socially distant. For many of us, this is one of the biggest "Be still and know that I am God" moments we have ever faced.

He is God. He knows suffering, and death, and want, and loneliness, and the cross. He is not cruel. He suffered. He bled. He died. For you. He rose. He ascended. He is coming again. For you.

He is Lord over the grave and has prepared for you a room. He's got this. He's got you. Jesus himself knows what he is going to do. Come what may, He loves you and defends you. He fed Philip and he will feed you too.

The Lord knows that we need this right now. I wish it wasn't so. I wish there was another way. Let this cup pass, dear Father, yet not my will but Thine be done. The Lord knows that this will keep us close to him and safe from eternal death and hell. Would you rather be spared misery in this life and go to hell, or take the bitter medicine God sends now and live in eternal joy? God does not make mistakes. The CDC can miscalculate. Our leaders can get the math wrong. But God does not miscalculate and he does not gamble with the salvation of his chosen children. He will turn this for good for you. You are called according to his purpose.

Dads, pray with your families. If you find it awkward, do it anyway, they need you. Moms, you too. Let the older and wiser among us encourage the younger. You have seen hard times before the Lord's deliverance. Remind us of that.

I'm just a phone call away. If you want a visit, we'll work something out. We'll hold services as we can, however we can. If there are chances to come, come and be refreshed. If you can't, stay home. If you want to but are just too scared, stay home. Don't feel pressured. Let us not judge one another harshly in these strange times but walk in love.

I've heard your dinner prayers. You confess the Lord's mercy endures forever. It endures even now. You confess that God is Good. Amen. God *is* good. Christ is risen. Death is a liar. Heaven is ours. Our life is hidden with God in Christ, and this life, at its best or its worst, is temporary. The best is yet to come.

O Jesus, you yourself know what you will do. Do it, we pray, and give us courage and joy until we see you at the last! Come soon, Lord Jesus. Amen.

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