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Rev. Dr. John Rickert, Pastor

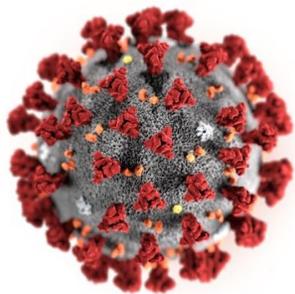
## **OUR REDEEMER'S VOICE** **April 2020**

### **Coronavirus, Blame and Easter**

Recently our Sunday Gospel lesson was John 9:1–41. I chose to give a message based on the Old Testament lesson for the day, but the Gospel lesson has, I believe, an important message as we face the coronavirus, especially as we approach Easter.

One day, as Jesus and his disciples were traveling, they passed by a man who had been born blind. There is something about sinful nature that makes us want to assign blame. I guess it is a way of deflecting our own guilt. So Adam blamed Eve. Eve blamed the serpent. In the story from John 9, the disciples asked, "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Later in the story we learn what the scribes and Pharisees thought as they said to the man, "You were born in utter sin, and would you teach us?" After this insult, they cast the formerly blind man out of the worship life of the community.

Jesus' response to the question is to say, no one is to blame for this specific ailment. In fact, this blindness becomes an opportunity for the works of God to be displayed. Jesus then goes on and heals the man.



As we face the coronavirus, many will begin to wonder whose fault it is. In a general way, sin is the source of all suffering, including illnesses, in the world. Because we are all sinners, we are at fault. So, from a theological perspective, blaming some area like China makes little sense. The Chinese are not worse sinners than the rest of us. All have sinned and all bear the blame.

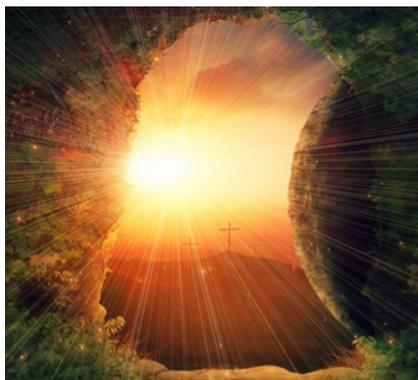
On another occasion, Jesus was approached about a current atrocity that Pilate had perpetrated. He had murdered some Galileans and mingled their blood with the sacrifices (Luke 13:1-5). What had these Galileans done, as they clearly were worse sinner than all the others. Jesus said they were no worse than everyone else. Jesus sites yet another current event where

18 people were killed when a tower collapsed. Were they worse sinners than those who survived? Jesus again says, no. But such events are to be seen as a general call to repentance. All have sinned and all need to repent.

All such events remind us that our lives in this corrupted world will come to an end. As we travel through time, the wise person prepares for the inevitable end. We are well prepared when we repent of our sin and trust in Jesus. And that brings us to Easter.

The great news about Easter is that it means the problem of sin has been met and overcome by Jesus. We no longer carry the burden of our guilt. Jesus bore that burden on the cross. He carried it to his grave. And he left it in the grave. By grace through faith in Jesus, we stand before the Father guiltless, free from sin. So, while this coronavirus is certainly a call to repentance, it is also a call to trust in Christ, who has met the dilemma of sin and solved it in our favor. While we may not be able to meet in worship this Easter, let us still rejoice and be glad. Christ has risen! And in his resurrection we have our freedom from guilt proclaimed. Amen!

Blessing in Christ,  
Pastor





## Digging In The Nicene Creed Second Article, Part 11

*And [I believe] in one Lord Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of His Father before all worlds, **God of God**, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father, by whom all things were made; who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven and was incarnate by the Holy Spirit of the virgin Mary and was made man; and was crucified also for us under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried. And the third day He rose again according to the Scriptures and ascended into heaven and sits at the right hand of the Father. And He will come again with glory to judge both the living and the dead, whose kingdom will have no end.*

Last month we concluded what we are going to say about the phrase “begotten of His Father before all worlds.” This month we turn to the words “God of God.” There are a whole host of Bible verses that this statement is based on. A few are:

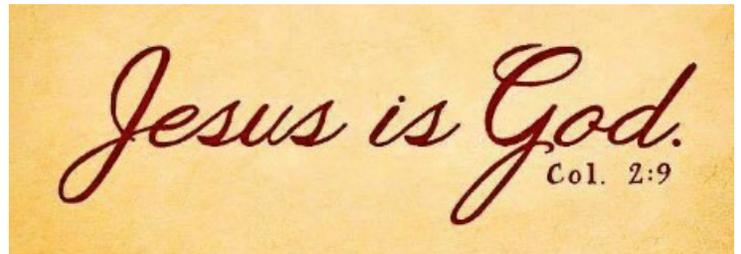
*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. (John 1:1-2)*

*No one has ever seen God; the only God, who is at the Father's side, he has made him known. (John 1:18)*

*Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and I am here. I came not of my own accord, but he sent me. (John 8:42)*

*Thomas answered him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28)*

*Great indeed, we confess, is the mystery of godliness:  
He was manifested in the flesh,  
vindicated by the Spirit,  
Seen by angels,  
Proclaimed among the nations,  
believed on in the world,  
taken up in glory. (1Timothy 3:16)*



*For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily. (Colossians 2:9)*

The main point here is that Christ is not some secondary God. God is one (Deuteronomy 6:4). There is no other God except this one God (Deuteronomy 32:39). Therefore, while Christ is a different “person” from the Father, he is still of the same divine “essence” as the Father, one with the Father and the Holy Spirit, the one God. This unity in Divine essence is reflected more often in the Old Testament than is easily recognized in English translations. An extremely common name for God in the Old Testament is Elohim. When this name is used in referring to the one true God, the verbs are always singular. However, the word Elohim is actually a plural noun. So, for example, Deuteronomy 6:4, in an English translation, reads:

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD [Yahweh] our God [Elohim], the LORD [Yahweh] is one.”

However, a literal, wooden, translation would read:

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our Gods, the LORD is one.”



Because God has three “persons,” the Hebrew uses “Gods” [Elohim]. Because he is one divine essence, the Hebrew uses a singular verb, “is.” It is bad English, and would probably confuse people, not to mention the grammar checkers in our word processors, if we used a wooden translation. So, the standard translations are good enough. They accent the oneness of God.

Jesus Christ, who is God according to his divine nature, cannot be a junior god, for there is no such thing as a junior god. He can't be a god in the sense of the Olympian gods, for there are no such things as the Olympian gods. He can't be god in the sense of a demi-god. There are no such things as a demigod. He certainly isn't a god in title only, like how we might call someone a “guitar god” or a “Rock and Roll god.” These people are not

gods in any real sense of the word. They are simply talented.

Next month we will look at a few ways the Church Fathers approached this "God of God" truth. Until then, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Corinthians 13:14). Amen.



It seems this COVID-19 has turned everything upside down. I'm sure that we will be feeling the impact long after the actual disease has been conquered, as the world economy struggles to rebound. But what does it mean for Our Redeemer?

- ◆ First, at our last congregational meeting (just before everything went wild), we decided to follow the lead of the governor of Delaware in reference to whether or not to hold worship services. Just this past March 23, the governor extended the restriction of non-essential meetings until Friday, May 15.
- ◆ We will plan for our next in-the-church-building worship service to be Sunday, May 17 (Sixth Sunday of Easter). Worship will be at 10:00 AM.
- ◆ We have been, and will continue to, post a video worship service, which can be found on our churches' blog and Facebook pages.
- ◆ Copies of worship material, including the sermon, will be sent to members who do not have internet access.
- ◆ Kitty is seeking to master the information to enable our council to meet virtually. Until then, the council continues to remain in contact via emails.
- ◆ Kitty and I are seeking to improve our online presence. To that end, we have ordered a new camera and external microphone, which should make live streaming possible, and hopefully improve sound quality for whatever medium we are using. The camera can make a live Sunday service possible for those with computers and internet access.
- ◆ We are researching the possibility of doing conference calls with our homebound. Not only will this allow pastor to "visit" them, but also allow them to visit with each other.
- ◆ Our newsletter will still be made available online. Printed copies will continue to be sent to members who do not have internet access.
- ◆ We continue to need to pay our bills, which means we continue to need people to send in their offerings. Laurel, our financial secretary, would prefer that the offering checks be sent straight to her, made out to Our Redeemer Lutheran Church (or ORLC). If you do not have her address, then you can send the offering to the church office and we will see to it that Laurel receives them. Of course, you can contact the church office and we can verbally give you Laurel's address. The council is looking into an online giving format, but it takes time, and even more so with businesses on skeleton crews.
- ◆ We will seek to maintain regular church office hours (Monday through Thursday, 9:00 AM to 2:00 PM). We can do this because there are only the two of us here.
- ◆ All this information is subject to change as the situation is still quite fluid. For example, we are planning to re-open the building for worship May 17. However, we don't know what the governor is going to decide. He may lift the restrictions earlier. He may extend them. Be sure to keep current by visiting our church's Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/Our-Redeemer-Lutheran-Church-599546680073796/>) and website (<http://ourredeemernewark.org/>).
- ◆ Finally, I'm planning to look into an online Bible study. At this point in time, it is only an idea. As we get other elements of our online life settled, though, I'd like to go in this direction. Keep safe. Keep in the word. Keep in prayer. Keep in touch.

Blessings in Christ,  
Pastor

## Deliver Us — Jesus Sets Us Free

Now when Jesus heard this, He withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by Himself. But when the crowds heard it, they followed Him on foot from the towns. When He went ashore He saw a great crowd, and He had compassion on them and healed their sick. (Matthew 14:13-14)

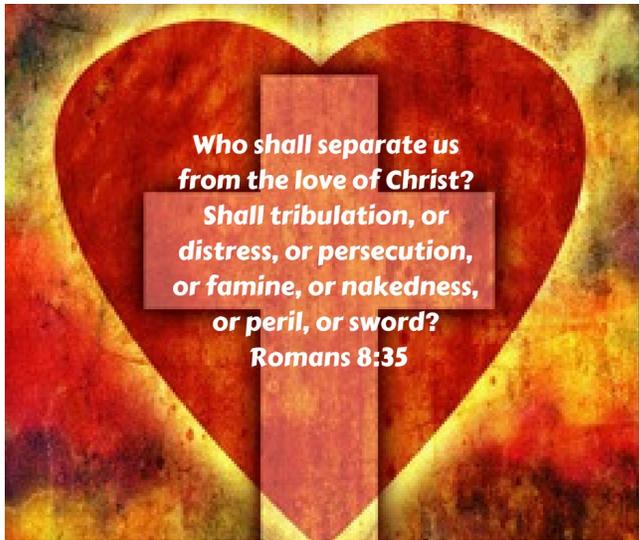


There is a cost to freedom, and sometimes we aren't the ones who pay it. We are used to thinking of Jesus as the only sufferer in the story of His Passion—and obviously He is the main person, the One we should love and honor and glorify.

But others paid a price, too, and Jesus knew that would happen—and it grieved Him. In this case it was His cousin, John the Baptist. God sent John to prepare the way for Jesus, and John did this with all his heart—preaching, teaching, and baptizing, always pointing the people to Jesus, who was coming.

But then King Herod got angry with John for criticizing him, and he threw him in jail. That was hard on John, and probably hard on Jesus as well, especially after John appeared to be having second thoughts about Him (Matthew 11). And then came the final blow, when Herod had John killed. "Now when Jesus heard this, He withdrew from there in a boat to a desolate place by Himself." He wanted to be alone to grieve.

But the crowds wouldn't even let Him do that. People followed Him, their minds on their own troubles, and Jesus would not turn them away. He healed them and taught them. This is how much He loved them, and how much He loves us—that He is willing to pay the price of grief so that we could be rescued from the power of evil. And even more than that, He is willing to put His own human needs aside to care for us.



He loves you with this same love even today. He is aware of your needs. As Paul puts it, "*Christ Jesus is the One who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?*" (Romans 8:34-35)

**A Comment:** It is our nature to fear the unknown and even here today we have fears. In this case the virus is a concern that we all take to heart. But we have the same today, but not just the health issue but those we have lost this past month. Our Lord promises His blessing and love in all the events of our lives. We must trust that He will free us of our fears and console our losses. The Spirit of our

loving God is with us each day and makes us free.

Arlen D. Besel – Ambassador

## April — Holy Week & Easter:

April begins with Palm Sunday reminding us of Jesus' glorious entry to Jerusalem with the laud of the people. However, that turned quickly to a rejection led by the leaders of the Sanhedrin.

Our Old Testament starts with Isaiah 50 and its words of the sins of Israel compared to the obedience of the *Servant*. This look in Isaiah continues with the reminder of God's wrath on the impenitent and the *Servant's* suffering and glory.

During the Easter period, in lieu of Old Testament readings, the chosen lessens look at the Acts of the Apostles. We learn of the actions to keep the Apostles from spreading the news of Jesus' resurrection and their refusal to be silenced. In fact, Peter addresses the multitude with a description of their role in Jesus' death and God's plan to save them.

## THROUGH THE WORSHIP WINDOW



The New Testament tells us about Jesus' institution of Communion on Maundy Thursday, followed by recounting the crucifixion on Friday. Easter brings us to His glorious resurrection and the reminder of our need to share the Good News with everyone.

John picks up the commentary with a record of the appearances of Jesus to His disciples and to a large multitude following His resurrection from the dead.



Luke tells us about Jesus' appearance to the 2 disciples on the road to Emmaus, also after His resurrection. In this event, He reminds them of the many Old Testament references to His life, death, and resurrection. They were led to understand and finally recognize Him and could joyfully share this with the other Disciples.

A Comment: Our journey through the Easter season is the retelling of all of the stories we have come to remember. It is a reminder that although these events are familiar to us we should look to them for inspiration to renew in our lives the vivid memory of God's love and Jesus' provision of salvation. That is the great gift of this Easter season.

Arlen D. Besel- Worship

### From Rev. Don Schaefer, SED Mission Engagement Facilitator

1 John 4:18 "There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear"

"Don't be afraid", well-meaning people say to us. Having a fearful heart however is part of the human experience. It paralyzes, makes us hesitant, and stifles joy. Fear clouds our days and haunts our nights. While we are never free of fear completely, we can learn to live with it without being overcome by it.

With the increased connectivity between people in our crowded and busy world, the coronavirus brings fear to all of us. It is subtle in its approach making us feel uneasy. While it is important to exercise due caution, it is equally important to not let fear darken our hearts. Our faith here is our strong ally.

Christians are not naive, nor are we wishful thinkers. Instead we find our courage in the gospel we profess. Some of the first words surrounding both the birth of Christ and His resurrection are the encouragement to not be afraid. Jesus backed up his words with his loving willingness to go the cross.

God's deep love for us in Christ means that God is present in our lives. We are bold to believe that love can overcome our deepest fears. Through Christ, we know who we are, why we are here and where we are going. That identity as beloved child of God provides a courage to stand against our fears.

It is Christ's "perfect love" that can cast out our deepest fears. Please live in that "joyful awareness" so that fears live in your shadows instead of controlling your heart. Thanks be to God!



Autumn Auction - Since we are all quarantined due to COVID19, why not use your time wisely by putting your talents to produce things for our fall LWML auction? What are your hobbies? Have you been blessed with the talent to crochet, knit, quilt, paint, woodworking, sculpt, make jewelry, up-cycle, photography, bake or decorate cakes? The auction proceeds will help fund our missionary Kate Phillips. Unique gently used items will also be considered for the auction. More information to come...  
Marybeth Cooley

### April Birthdays

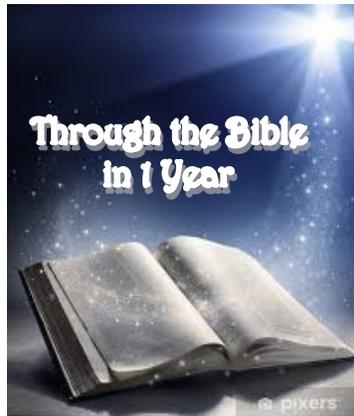
3 Dan Cooley  
14 Brian Kruelle  
21 Andrew Steltz



If we missed your special day, please call or email the church office with your info so we can celebrate with you! (302) 737-6176; secretary.orlcde@outlook.com

## APRIL BIBLE READINGS

- 1** Isaiah 25:1-9  
Romans 1-3
- 2** Psalm 114  
Romans 4-6
- 3** Psalm 115  
Romans 7-9
- 4** Psalm 116  
Romans 10-13
- 5** Psalm 117  
Romans 14-16
- 6** Psalm 118  
1 Corinthians 1-3
- 7** Psalm 119:1-8  
1 Corinthians 4-6
- 8** Psalm 119:9-16  
1 Corinthians 7-9
- 9** Psalm 119:17-24  
1 Corinthians 10-11
- 10** Psalm 119:25-32  
1 Corinthians 12-14
- 11** Psalm 119:33-40  
1 Corinthians 15-16
- 12** Psalm 119:41-48  
2 Corinthians 1-4
- 13** Psalm 119:49-56  
2 Corinthians 5-7
- 14** Psalm 119:57-64  
2 Corinthians 8-10
- 15** Psalm 119:65-72  
2 Corinthians 11-13



- 16** Psalm 99  
Deuteronomy 25-27
- 17** Psalm 100  
Deuteronomy 28-30
- 18** Psalm 101  
Deuteronomy 31-34
- 19** Psalm 102  
Luke 1
- 20** Psalm 103  
Luke 2-3
- 21** Psalm 104  
Luke 4-5
- 22** Psalm 105  
Luke 6-7
- 23** Psalm 106  
Luke 8-9
- 24** Psalm 107  
Luke 10-11
- 25** Psalm 108  
Luke 12-13
- 26** Psalm 109  
Luke 14-15
- 27** Psalm 110  
Luke 16-17
- 28** Psalm 111  
Luke 18-19
- 29** Psalm 112  
Luke 20-21
- 30** Psalm 113  
Luke 22
- 31** Isaiah 64:1-9  
Luke 23-24