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Our Saviour Lutheran Church
The Resurrection of Our Lord
April 12, 2020

Let us pray...May the words of my mouth and the meditations of our hearts be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, for you are our strength and you are most certainly our redeemer. Amen.

Sisters and brothers in Christ, it started in a place very far from here.

And then it began to spread.

From person to person it began to spread.

And the rate of spread became exponential.

The spread multiplied quickly in different hotspots across the globe.

To where today, it is in most every corner of the world.

PAUSE

Now, sisters and brothers, it may sound like I am not talking about the coronavirus, which began in a place very far from here called Wuhan Province in China.

And it may sound like I am talking about the coronavirus that is spread from person to person.

And it may sound like I am talking about the coronavirus, the rate of spread of which has become exponential.

And it may sound like I am talking about the coronavirus which now blankets every corner of the world, except the continent of Antarctica, we are told.

It may sound like I am talking about the coronavirus.

But this is not the contagion I am talking about.

No, I am not talking about the coronavirus.

I am talking about different contagion altogether.

I am talking about something else that has infected people's lives.

I am talking about an altogether different kind of transmittable, communicable, airborne infection.

No, this contagion of which I speak is not the coronavirus.

It is different. Even though it, too, is life-altering. Even though, it, too, is life-changing.

And this contagion has been around for a while, but is still novel to many people.

PAUSE

But this contagion does not cause sickness, it does not cause illness, nor respiratory distress.

No, this is not a virus, nor some other kind of microbe.

No, this contagion is not some pathogen that is being monitored by the CDC.

It is not a contagion which requires the stockpiling of ventilators, n95 masks, and other PPE, personal protection equipment.

No, this infection is not harmful, that we need worry that it will cause death.

No, this is an entirely different kind of contagion.

No, quite the opposite of causing death, this contagion redeems life.

It is a contagion that instills hope in the face of fear.

It is a contagion that brings comfort in the midst of pain and suffering.

It is a contagion that restores the promise of salvation in the lives of people experiencing loss and grief.

It is a contagion that sets the world aright, when the world becomes upended, as it has as of late.

This contagion that infects the world over is nothing other than the Good News of Christ's death and resurrection.

PAUSE

And it started in a place far from here.

It started in the environs of Jerusalem in the Holy Land.

It started at a tomb, in a Garden.

That detail makes us pause, doesn't it?

The Good News about resurrection life starts in a Garden.

God's creation in Genesis, the life of the world also started in a Garden.

Hmm. God likes to work with gardens, so it would seem.

And perhaps that is a nod to us in this season of spring, that to work in our garden is to draw closer to God.

That aside, the Good News of Christ's resurrection starts in a garden and then it begins to spread.

And it spread from person to person, it became airborne in the words people shared about the resurrected Lord.

The infection became airborne in the words people share, but there was no need for social distancing with respect to this contagion.

There was no need for staying at home.

There was no need for masks.

In antiquity, in the infancy of the church, one person boldly approached another and said, "Did you hear? Did you hear the Good News of Christ Jesus, the Lord? Jesus Christ is risen from the dead."

"Did you hear?"

And then a person, then many persons, and then even more persons, were changed.

Now in no way am I suggesting by this example of the early church, no way am I giving us license to ignore the order to keep our distance right now.

We need to do that. We have to do that to keep ourselves and others safe and healthy.

But nonetheless, God's Word about the resurrection can still go airborne even now from person to person.

God's hope in Christ can still be expressed, can still be broadcasted over telephone wires, fiber optic cables, and satellite signals.

God's grace can still be communicated, can still be transmitted...

We can still tell others about the Good News via email, via the phone, via FaceTime.

We can still say, "Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!"

We can still transmit the contagion.

We need to transmit the contagion, what we call the “Good News.”

And that sisters and brothers... that is the contagion of which we are speaking.

It is the contagion... “Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!”

PAUSE

At the dawn of that first Easter morning, that is what the angels said to the women at the tomb.

You are looking for Jesus, who was crucified.

He is not here. He has been raised.

Jesus is risen!

Jesus is risen! He is risen indeed!

And the women took that “Good News” they took that contagion, and those women conveyed it to the disciples.

The contagion went airborne.

And so, one person with this Good News infected those with whom they came in contact.

Person to person to person, and pretty soon the Good News is spreading.

And there was no way to stop it.

Exponentially the spread grew.

And soon enough it became a global phenomenon.

It is as if, when Jesus appeared to those women at the tomb...

It is as if, Jesus when he spoke to the women and said, “Go, and tell my brothers to go...”

If is as if, Jesus was speaking to the “Good News” itself, saying to that Good News, “Go.”

“Spread into the world. Infect the human race, take hold of people lives, and become a global phenomenon.”

Jesus says to the “Good News,” Go out in the world. Spread into the world.

And infect the world with hope and life, and salvation.

This is Easter message.

This is that which borne on the air, travels from person to person, landing on some new individual who then comes to faith in Christ.

Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!

This...this is the contagion that gives life.

This is the infectious Good News.

PAUSE

Yes, the devil may think that his power over the world is extensive and all-consuming.

He may think that he has all but won, because he has isolated humanity, because he has panicked God’s human creatures, because he has sown economic hardship into the lives of families.

The devil may think that he is triumphant, but I am here to tell you, sisters and brothers...

I am here to tell you, that because of Christ's death and resurrection, the devil is sorely mistaken.

Yes, the despair and hopelessness that the devil seeks to reap among God's human family through this coronavirus outbreak, is nothing compared to the hope and new life God is spreading through the contagion of God's Good News.

Indeed, because we are infected with the Easter news, we sing on this Easter day, that glorious hymn of the resurrection:

"Christ has triumphed. He is living. Sing, choirs of angels loud and clear! Repeat the song of glory here: Christ has triumphed! He is living! Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia."

PAUSE

And just as the coronavirus has transformed life, so that we are living life in a new norm, as they say...

Just as the coronavirus has transformed the way we go about life, so too does the "Good News" transform our way of life.

We live life differently because we have been infected with message, "Christ is risen!"

If we are not living differently, we have to ask ourselves if the Easter contagion has taken hold in us.

What are the symptoms of this Easter contagion?

The symptom of the Easter contagion is not a fever, but instead we are infected with a feverish desire to share God's mercy and forgiveness.

The symptom of the Easter contagion is not the loss of taste, but instead we are infected with a taste, an appetite for doing God's will in the world.

The symptom of the Easter contagion is not body aches, but instead we are infected with an aching to love our neighbor, aching to love our God, and an aching to love God's creation.

The symptom of the Easter contagion is not a shortness of breath, but instead we are infected with the breath of life, the Spirit of God, so that we are moved to care, to show compassion, and to be God's servants in the world.

Those are the symptoms of the Easter contagion.

Those are the ways our life is transformed, and the way we transform the lives of others.

It is not a disease we suffer as Christian people.

No, a "disease" literally means to be "separated from", that is what that prefix means: dis-" means.

To be separated from "ease." To be separated from "ease" is to experience "dis-ease."

To be separated from "peace," we might say.

But with the resurrected Christ, we experience "re-ease" if I may coin a word.

"Re-ease" is to experience "ease" again.

Not so much an easy life, where we are indifferent to cares, but a peaceful life such that we trust God to bless us in our ministry to a needy world.

Re-ease is to experience in life that kind of "peace" again.

PAUSE

And so sisters and brothers in Christ, we acknowledge that we are infected with a contagion and want to share this contagion: "Christ is risen! He is risen indeed!"

Indeed, we need to manifest the symptoms of the Easter contagion in the world around us.

For we have experienced “re-ease,” we have experienced peace again, because of the one who has conquered sin and death.

Christ has triumphed over the worst the devil can muster.

“Christ has triumphed. He is living. Sing, choirs of angels loud and clear! Repeat the song of glory here: Christ has triumphed! He is living! Alleluia. Alleluia. Alleluia.”