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Our Saviour Lutheran Church  
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Easter 5

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, what will it look like on the other side?

What will it look like on the other side?

Will there be clouds, and angels with halos?

Will there be harp music, and a heavenly chorus singing "alleluia's"?

Will there be pearly white gates with St. Peter manning the entrance?

Will there be an old man with a long white beard sitting on a throne?

What will it look like on the other side?

PAUSE

And Jesus said to his disciples, "In my father's house there are many dwelling places. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, so that where I am, there you may also be."

The other side, according to Jesus...

The other side is comprised of a mansion.

It is an estate.

It is a manor, a palace, a chateau.

The other side is comprised of a great house with many rooms.

The other side consists of many dwelling places under one roof, where God's people will live eternally.

PAUSE

Now, don't get me wrong, but this vision of the other side doesn't sound at all appealing right now.

No, this vision of the other side doesn't do it for me right now...

No, this vision is a hard to swallow.

For the idea of being in a house, even God's house, for even one more day, let alone for all eternity...

No, the idea of being in a house, after being told for how many weeks now that we are to "limit travel and stay at home..."

No, the idea of being in a house, when we have been directed by the powers-that-be to "Stay safe. Stay well. Stay home."

No, the idea of being in a heavenly house just doesn't quite do it, does it?

What will it look like on the other side?

It looks like a house. And if that is the case, we are not in any hurry to get to other side.

PAUSE

This question is most perplexing.

What will it look like on the other side?

It is perplexing from a futuristic and eternal perspective, yes.

But it is also a perplexing question with respect to the present.

It is perplexing to think about this question in light of the coronavirus outbreak.

What will it look like on the other side?

What will life look like after the coronavirus, after the pandemic?

We would all like to know the answer to that question.

What will it look like on the other side?

But I am not even sure that that is the right question.

I'm not even sure we can talk about this pandemic as if it will be in our rearview mirror.

Probably a more accurate question for us to consider is "What is life going to look like as we live into this new reality?"

What is life going to look like because the global community has now experienced this outbreak?

Yes, what is life going to look like now with the ever-present possibility of another outbreak?

Indeed, we are maybe kidding ourselves so as to think that someday we will wake up and be able to go casually about our day as we once did.

We are maybe kidding ourselves so as to believe we can experience the same carefree life we once knew.

Our world has changed, and things are going to be different, at least for a long while yet anyway.

So, it is not so much a question of "what life will be like on the other side?"

“What will life be like *after* the coronavirus?”

But it is question about what life will be like now because the world has experienced this pandemic?

In other words, what does life look like as we live into this new reality, the new reality that I am calling the “pandemic –conscious world.”

Yes, I coined a new phrase there—the pandemic-conscious world.

I figure with all the new vocabulary going around, I can throw one more phrase into the mix.

We have had terms like “asymptomatic,” and “flattening the curve,” and “self-quarantine.”

We have had terms like “social distancing,” and “drive-thru testing,” and “herd immunity.”

So I am introducing the phrase the “pandemic-conscious world.”

We are living now in the “pandemic-conscious world.”

Yes, a whole vocabulary has emerged from this outbreak which should tell us something already about the change in consciousness we are experiencing as a human race.

Words change our way of thinking; words change our consciousness.

So, with that in mind, I am being so bold as to introduce just one phrase into the mix, the phrase the “pandemic-conscious world.”

And what I mean by this phrase is that our way of thinking as a people has been so transformed by this experience that we will see the world ever so differently from now on.

It is like the phrase “post-9/11,” whereby we speak about how we have changed ever so slightly as a society after that event.

But the “post 9/11” reality is much more limited.

For the most part, 9/11 changed only some of our air travel habits.

But this event, this pandemic, has had a much more pronounced effect on all of life.

So the question is “What is life going to be like now in a pandemic-conscious world?”

PAUSE

So no, it is NOT about seeing the world on the other side, after the coronavirus.

But instead, it is about seeing the world with a new consciousness.

Some people would describe this new consciousness as a new worldview, or as a new distinct conception of reality or as a new philosophy of life.

Some people would call it a new world order.

But it is all the same idea—it is a new consciousness.

PAUSE

But with all that said, what we can't forget...

...what we can't forget, sisters and brothers in Christ, is that we as Christian people, as followers of Christ...

...we already live with a new consciousness.

We already live with a new distinct conception of reality.

Even before this coronavirus outbreak, we as Christian people have already been living with a new philosophy of life.

We can't forget that.

We can't forget that as Christian people we already live with a new consciousness.

We already live with an improved worldview, with a new world order.

We as Christian people already live on the other side.

We live on the other side of the resurrection, and that has already transformed the way we see the world, pandemic or no pandemic, outbreak or no outbreak, coronavirus or no coronavirus.

We already live with a new consciousness.

But sometimes we do forget this truth.

Sometimes we get so consumed with what is happening in the world, that we lose sight of this truth.

And so sometimes we need to be reminded.

Just as Jesus was reminding his disciples in our gospel reading for today.

Jesus says, "Have I been with you all this time, and you still don't know me?"

"Have you still not grasped the worldview I am revealing to you?" says Jesus.

"Do you still not understand the new and improved consciousness I have made known to you?"

Jesus explains, "Do you not believe that I am in the father and the father is in me?"

“I am in the Father and Father is in me.”

This is the new consciousness of Christian faith.

Jesus tells us that to know God the Father, I mean to really know almighty God—to know what God is thinking.

To know the workings in God’s mind.

To know what’s going on inside God’s house up here.

To know the imagination inside God’s head, we need to look no further than to Jesus Christ.

I am in the Father and the Father is in me.

The new consciousness of the Christian faith is God-consciousness as revealed in Christ Jesus.

And that hasn’t changed since the dawn of Christianity.

It has not changed—it is the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow.

Things haven’t changed then for us Christians just because a pandemic has occurred.

Things haven’t changed then for us Christians just because there has been an outbreak of COVID-19 throughout the world.

We are still called to live this new consciousness, this God-consciousness revealed in Christ Jesus.

We are still called to love our neighbor, as Jesus revealed.

We are still called to be merciful toward our neighbor, as Jesus revealed.

We are still called to feed and clothe and to provide for our neighbor, as Jesus revealed.

We are still called to minister to our neighbor, to be “present” with our neighbor in need, even if being “present” means going on Zoom, or FaceTiming our neighbor.

We are still called to give of ourselves on behalf of our neighbor, as Jesus revealed.

Yes, the circumstances surrounding how we live out that God-consciousness may have been reconfigured in light of the pandemic, but our mission...our mission has not changed.

Nothing has changed on this score.

Our mission has not changed, maybe it has intensified, yes, because there is more suffering in the world right now.

There is more need in the world right now.

But really, sisters and brothers in Christ, nothing has changed for us as people who live out the mission of Christ, who live in that God-consciousness.

And that should be of great comfort to us.

What has changed for us Christians? Nothing.

The “pandemic-conscious world” is the still same world to you and me.

The Christian worldview has not changed; the Christian world order has not changed.

The Christian philosophy of life has not changed; the Christian conception of reality has not changed.

God-consciousness transcends the “pandemic-conscious world.”

We still live out the gospel in the world just the same because of the resurrected Christ.

So the question “What will it be like on the other side of the pandemic?” is a moot question for the Christian.

It will be like that which we are already doing...

...praising our Lord for the promise of new life in Christ Jesus...

It will be like that which we already doing, serving and loving our neighbor as Christ first loved us.

Thanks be to God. Amen.