



## Zion Evangelical Lutheran Church

March 13, 2020

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The following message was received today by Zion from Bishop James Dunlop of the Lower Susquehanna Synod, ELCA, concerning the coronavirus:

*As the potential health risks posed by the COVID-19 virus are becoming more apparent by the hours, medical, public health, and governmental officials are advising extreme caution in order to slow down the spread the coronavirus and keep as many people as possible healthy and safe.*

*Following the advice of experts, and in an abundance of caution, **our synod is recommending that congregations suspend worship and other public activities for two weeks, effective immediately.***

*Suspending worship and public activities may seem like a dramatic step, but it may be the best option given what we know about the COVID-19 virus – and especially what we do not yet know. By virtue of the age and underlying health conditions of many of our parishioners and rostered ministers, they fall in the category most vulnerable to the infection and its severe consequences. We do not know how many lives we may save by suspending worship, but even one life would be worth the measure.*

The decision to suspend worship and public activities at Zion was confirmed by members of Zion's Council. Therefore, worship and public activities will be suspended for two weeks, effective immediately.

During the time of suspended worship and public activities, we will maintain contact with the congregation through telephone and electronic media, remain informed through authoritative outlets such as governmental and public health agencies, and make the best decisions for Zion and our local community.

We ask you to continue to pray for our leaders, those diligently working to find ways to stop the spread of this virus, and for our congregation, nation, and world. We also ask you to continue to maintain financial support of Zion by mailing in contributions or using online banking naming Zion Lutheran Church at 85 E. Brandt Blvd., Landisville, PA 17538.

This virus will eventually run its course, but while it is a problem, we need to be careful, thoughtful, and prayerful in caring for the people to whom God has called us to serve. And may we all draw comfort from the words of Jesus, "Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

During Zion's time of suspended worship and public activities, the church office will be closed; however, the staff will be available through email, text, and telephone. The contact numbers and email addresses are as follows:

Pastor Caruana	(717) 471-3232	pastorcaruana@comcast.net
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As we move forward during this time filled with uncertainties, let us pray.

*Gracious God, be with us in these days when gathering together as often as we would like is not possible. When we must be apart for reasons of safety, we trust that you surround us with your sheltering wings. Encourage us in connecting as we are able, reaching out to our neighbors in need, and being persistent in prayer. We ask this in the name of Jesus, our constant companion. Amen.*

In health and peace ...

*Pastor Caruana, Interim Pastor*

*Adele King, Council President*

**AN IN-HOME  
SERVICE OF WORD & THANKSGIVING  
FOR THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT**



**THE THIRD SUNDAY IN LENT**  
*An In-Home Service of the Word & Thanksgiving*  
*March 15, 2020*



*The Woman at Jacob's Well*

*The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
the love of God,  
and the communion of the Holy Spirit  
be with you today and always.*

**PRAYER OF THE DAY**

Let us pray. Lord God, in the water of baptism you bring us to new birth to live as your children. Strengthen our faith in your promises, that by your Spirit, we may lift up your life to all the world through your Son Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. Amen.

† **THE WORD** †

*God speaks to us in Scriptures read, sung, and preached.*

**FIRST READING**

Genesis 12:1-4a

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him.

The Word of the Lord.  
Thanks be to God.

## PSALM 121

I lift up my eyes to the hills; from where is my help to come?

**My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth.**

The Lord will not let your foot be moved nor will the one who watches over you fall asleep.

**Behold, the keeper of Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.**

The Lord watches over you; the Lord is your shade at your right hand.

**The sun will not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.**

The Lord will preserve you from all evil and will keep your life.

**The Lord will watch over your going out and your coming in, from this time forth forevermore.**

## SECOND READING

Romans 4:1-5, 13-17

What then are we to say was gained by Abraham, our ancestor according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned to him as righteousness." Now to one who works, wages are not reckoned as a gift but as something due. But the one who without works trusts him who justifies the ungodly, such faith is reckoned as righteousness.

For the promise that he would inherit the world did not come to Abraham or to his descendants through the law but through the righteousness of faith. If it is the adherents of the law who are to be the heirs, faith is null and the promise is void. For the law brings wrath; but where there is no law, neither is there violation.

For this reason it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his descendants, not only to the adherents of the law but also to those who share the faith of Abraham (for he is the father of all of us, as it is written, "I have made you the father of many nations") —in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist.

The Word of the Lord.

**Thanks be to God.**

## GOSPEL READING

John 4:5-42

So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water." Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband.

What you have said is true!” The woman said to him, “Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem.” Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ). “When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us.” Jesus said to her, “I am he, the one who is speaking to you.”

Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, “What do you want?” or, “Why are you speaking with her?” Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, “Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?” They left the city and were on their way to him. Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, “Rabbi, eat something.” But he said to them, “I have food to eat that you do not know about.” So the disciples said to one another, “Surely no one has brought him something to eat?” Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. Do you not say, ‘Four months more, then comes the harvest’? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, ‘One sows and another reaps.’ I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor.” Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman’s testimony, “He told me everything I have ever done.” So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, “It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world.”

The Gospel of the Lord.  
**Praise to you, O Christ.**

## **SERMON**

by Pastor Barbara Caruana

There was an article in a magazine I picked up in the doctor’s office entitled “*In Times of Stress, Just Call on Rover.*” In the article it said, “When it comes to times of stress, the most reassuring companion isn’t your spouse or a friend – it’s your dog.

A study has found that people who were under stress showed the least amount of tension when accompanied by their dog. The stress levels were highest when the people were with their spouses or significant others.

Karen Allen, a research scientist at State University of New York at Buffalo’s Medical School said, “I think dogs are non-evaluative, and they love us. This statement caught my attention not because of my intense love for my precious miniature schnauzer, but because of what it said about how dogs love us ... and of the benefits that kind of love has.

There’s something very Biblical in the statement made by Karen Allen that non-evaluative, non-judgmental love reduces tension.

In fact the scriptures testify that this kind of non-evaluative, non-judgmental love does more than reduce tension. It gives life ... it gives hope ... it gives assurance ... to all who receive it.

Non-judgmental, accepting, all embracing love is the essence of the Gospel message: It lies behind statements like, “Do not judge others lest you be judged ... for the judgment you give will be the judgment you receive” ... and it’s at the root of what happens whenever we find Jesus being criticized by the scribes and Pharisees for the company he kept.

Jesus accepts and embraces those that others find undesirable. He loves those who seem unlovable to others and to themselves.

I must admit I’m not much of a gardener, but one thing I do know is that every plant needs water to grow. And I also know this: the plants that are in the driest soil ... the ones that are struggling the hardest and beginning to wither ... the ones whose leaves are beginning to curl and look worse than the rest ... need more water than those who are in damp ground and whose leaves are rich and full of moisture. And, I also know that dry plants respond better to water than they do to added heat – that they thrust down their roots to where they can find water or turn their leaves over so they have a better chance of receiving it ... and when they receive it, they change. They begin to look better; they begin to grow; and after a while, they produce the fruit that they’ve been designed to produce.

You and I are the plants in God’s garden ... placed here for a reason and a purpose. Some of us are awfully dry and some of us aren’t. But each one of us, whether we’re dry or moist at this very moment, needs the living water that Jesus says he has come to give: That water which wells up to eternal life; that water which overflows and brings life to other plants nearby.

Personally, I give thanks to God today for his love ... for that love shown by Christ ... that love which is poured out for me, and all you, when I feel like I’m withering and far from perfect.

I give thanks for God’s love which has given me hope, a peace that at one time I could only long for, and an assurance that, at one time, I thought I would never see at work in my life.

In giving thanks before you today, I do what thousands, even millions of people have done before me. I do what the woman at the well did after first encountering Jesus: I point to the one who’s the Savior promised from long ago; I point to the one who has accepted me as I am ... the one who calls me sister and doesn’t hold my human failings against me ... the one who encourages me and challenges me and never, even when I argue with him, rejects or condemns me. And best of all, Jesus accepts all of you, and encourages you, challenges you and never rejects or condemns you.

That’s what Jesus did with the woman at the well. He accepted her. He accepted her even though she was a Samaritan and an enemy to his people. He spoke to her of God even though she was a woman and not thought worthy of being spoken to.

He offered her his blessing, even though she debated with him and questioned his statements.

He regarded her as a dear sister, and gives her the same title of endearment he gave Mary when he calls her “woman” and asks her to believe in his words about how the time is coming when true worshippers will worship the Father in Spirit and in Truth.

And that’s why she sang his praises to her village -- because of his acceptance and his love.

It wasn’t just because he knew her past. It wasn’t just because he could tell her things that no stranger should know that she spoke of Jesus to her friends and neighbors.

It was because in knowing her ... in know her nationality, her gender, her religious attitudes, and the mixed history of her marriages, he none-the-less treats her as if she was an equal, worthy of affection ... and worthy of love.

That's what it's all about.

When we treat others as we would like to be treated ... when we can talk to kings and to beggars and show no preference to either one ... when we can debate with sinners and with saints and have both feel we respect them ... when we can open our homes to both friends and strangers, and have both feel welcomed ... when we can encounter people and not judge them ... not put them down or patronize them ... then we *know* something of God's love ... then we *show* something of God's love (and we can do that whether or not we have a dog!)

And to that I boldly, willingly, and without hesitation say, "Thanks be to God for loving all of us. Amen."

### **APOSTLES' CREED**

I believe in God, the Father almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

I believe in Jesus Christ, God's only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; he descended into hell. On the third day he rose again. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again to judge the living and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

### **PRAYERS**

Gracious God, like a deer that longs for running streams, our souls yearns for the love that comes from you ... the love that wells up in us like streams of living water and brings life to us and to those around us. Help us to open our lives to you ... to put down our roots in your word, and to turn our hands both upward and outward so we may receive and give your blessing to others.

As Jesus welcomed an outcast woman and spoke with her without judgement, drawing her closer to you, help us to accept and deal with the outcasts in our world today. Grant that we may be a people who in speaking truth don't condemn those of and to whom we speak. Help us to bring one another and all who thirst to the living water you desire to give them.

Within our house of worship, loving God, where we are refreshed by your living word and water, we turn our prayers toward the hunger and thirst of the wider world. We pray for our fearful world that has been infected by the coronavirus and all who are diligently working under stressful conditions to discover way to control, cure, and/or eliminate this dreaded disease. Send a refreshing calm, that only you can bring to victims, researchers, and health organizations.

Help us to understand who we are in relationship to Christ and to possess an identity with you so we can survive the wilderness of our lives and bask in your incredible promise that we are your beloved children with hearts filled with love and devotion for you.

Compassionate Lord, there are many other concerns on our hearts at this time – concerns for those who are close to us, for those who are facing the destruction caused by the Nashville tornado, those we don't know but are struggling to survive life, and those who are on our hearts and minds. Help us to reach out in mission in ways we have not considered in the past.



Healing God, today we especially remember those on Zion's prayer list who are in need of healing, comfort, peace, strength, safety, and protection: those who are involved in organization that reach out to those in need, and those we name in our hearts. May your living water bring healing and wholeness to each of them.

Holy God, we give thanks for the fellowship of those whose journey is over, those who hunger and thirst no more, and all who have been refreshed and restored in your kingdom. We pray that we may share with them in the fullness of the life which is eternal.

Hear us according to your steadfast love, O God, and in your great compassion bring us to resurrection and rebirth in Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

† **THE THANKSGIVING** †  
*God feeds us with the presence of Jesus Christ.*

### **THANKSGIVING FOR THE WORD**

Praise and thanks to you, holy God, for by your Word you made all things: you spoke light into darkness, called forth beauty from chaos, and brought life into being. For your Word of life, O God, we give you thanks and praise.

By your Word you called your people Israel to tell of your wonderful gifts: freedom from captivity, water on the desert journey, a pathway home from exile, and wisdom for life. For your Word of life, O God, we give you thanks and praise.

Through Jesus, your Word made flesh, you speak to us and call us to witness: forgiveness through the cross, life to those entombed by death, and the way of your self-giving love. For your Word of life, O God, we give you thanks and praise.

Send your Spirit of truth, O God; rekindle your gifts within us: renew our faith, increase our hope, and deepen our love, for the sake of a world in need. Faithful to your Word, O God, draw near to all who call on you; through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord, to whom, with you and the Holy Spirit, be honor and glory forever. Amen.

### **THE LORD'S PRAYER**

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread; and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever and ever. Amen.

### **MISSION**

Go forth into the world to serve God with gladness; be of good courage; hold fast to that which is good; give to no one evil for evil; strengthen the fainthearted; support the weak; help the afflicted; honor all people; love and serve the Lord by connecting with God; connecting with others; and connecting others with God. Thanks be to God.

