

March 19, 2020

Dear Friends in Christ of Harmony,

Peace be with you! I am writing this letter to you as a means of communication and encouragement to you in this challenge we are engaged in.

Our Lord said once, "In the world you will have tribulation" – and this virus has brought tribulation to us! Jesus also said this: "Be of good cheer, I've overcome the world." Of these words we are encouraged.

In doing our part to slow down and stop the spread of this virus, we have suspended our worship and scheduled meetings together. We're practicing "social distancing". We will not stop communication with each other however.

Through our web site capabilities, e-mail and phone, we will continue to share information, direction and hopefully when we can start meeting together again. Each week I will send out a letter such as this to update you on congregational information and news, devotions, sermon meditation on ongoing Lenten texts as scheduled.

Please do not hesitate to call me, your council president or council members if you have any questions or concerns. My phone number is 701/412-6953.

Until next posting of this letter, words from our Lord Jesus: "Do Not Fear, Only Believe" and these words from Proverbs 3:5-6: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and leave not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, He will direct your paths."

Until next time --- Blessings in Christ,

Pastor Bill Ahlfeldt

March 23, 2020

To the Members of Harmony,

Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Risen Lord Jesus. I hope and pray in Christ that all is well by you and yours.

Many at Harmony are working with me in so many ways of setting up an overall means of communication to our congregations. For now here's a sermon and meditation concerning these times, for all Christians everywhere.

In the last few days I have heard so many reactions, encouragements, plans, hopes, dreams and instructions of how to cope and stay safe from this virus that threatens us all. Here are some snippets.

One sermon says not to fear, only believe

Encouragement to not fear- look to facts

Our president and government are working hard on many fronts to win this fight against this virus

I heard a sermon on God's provision and grace -our hope is in Him- And so it is!

Be sure we practice "Social Distance" Wow! This Sure is Fun!

Through it all, this Sermon came in my Spirit- this sermon spoke of how the people of God, known as Israel, thought the Old Testament had to be awakened to return in obedience and fellowship with their God, to seek and do His will.

One sermon continued- Is.55:8 “My thoughts are not like your thoughts nor my ways like your ways.” What are God’s ways concerning this pandemic? The sermon spoke, “If my people who are called by my name will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land”
2Chronicles 7:15

The sermon spoke again- Joel 2:13 “Rend your hearts and not your garments, return to the Lord your God for He is Gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and He will relent of sending calamity.”

I wonder from God’s seeing eye and word if He is sending us a message of the way out of this Virus? The sermon continues; My word is little used or not used at all. In some cases, listened to and some not.

Many of my creation are lost in fear, anxiety, depression, turning to drugs, alcohol or suicide. There is a famine of God’s word as many chart their own course in life. Many of these ways cannot and will not help. For some live as though God were dead- We know He is not. He’s waiting—

We have become over time more and more secular and signs have begun to appear.

The sermon calls to Christians everywhere, these words of hope; “If you hold to my teaching you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.” John 8:31-32

The sermon calls us to this hope; “But you are a chosen nation, people belonging to God that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light. Once you were no people but now you are people of God. Once you had not received mercy but now you have received mercy.” Peter 2:8

The sermon closed with plans from God to his Creation and to His People—

Return to Me

Perhaps when other ways and means have been tried and failed- God’s way may be the only way—

The Sermon Closed

Return to Me

My Spirit Rejoiced

Pastor W.N. Ahlfeldt

March 26, 2020

To the Folks of Harmony:

- May the peace of our Risen Lord be with you! Christ’s Peace is beyond all human understanding, it is a peace not of this world yet is perfect Peace. A Peace with a Message: God is with us. Christ is with His loved ones always. Be Encouraged.
- I heard this truth today that, “Thanksgiving given to God brings more blest outcomes than fear.” Thanksgiving in 1Thessalonians 5:16, “Be Joyful always, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.
- I miss our worshipping together. I continue these communications with phone calls. “They say absence makes the heart grow fonder.”
- Our overall theme this Lent has been from Hebrews 10:22; “Let us draw near to God with a

sincere heart__”

- Throughout the weeks we have focused on those who in one way or another have drawn near to God, many with that gift of sincere faith with sincere hearts. I recall; Blind Bartimaeus, Zacchaeus, Nicodemus, the Good Samaritan, this last Sunday the scripture focused on the man born blind.

We recall Jesus’ disciples in John 9:1-41 ”asked what the blind man’s blind condition was, because of sin or not? Jesus says not his or his parents’ sin, but that God’s might may be displayed in life. Pharisees were present and confronted the blind man and Jesus about this “healing miracle”.

There were some real pointed words given. Those teachers of Israel ignored the miracle and verbally attacked Jesus and the blind man who now sees! This paragraph is instructive, vs. 30-34 of Chapter 9. The teachers questioned where Jesus came from?

The blind man responds: “Now that is remarkable! You don’t know where He has come from, yet He opened my eyes. We know that God does not listen to sinners. He listens to the Godly man who does His will. Nobody has ever heard of opening the eyes of a blind man. If this man were not from God He could do nothing.” The Pharisees reply to the blind man’s heartfelt praise of God and Jesus - to the blind man they accuse, “you were steeped in sin at birth, how dare you lecture us, and they threw the blind man out”.

The contrast between the Pharisees and the Blind Man who now sees is instructive. The insincere Pharisees were truly blind to who Jesus was/is and the Blind Man’s sincere witness of and to Jesus showed clearly how he could now see!

- The text for last Wednesday was from Luke 17:11-19. Ten Lepers cry out to Jesus for healing; “Jesus Master have mercy on us, have pity on us”. Seeing and hearing the lepers, Jesus says, “go show yourselves to the priests”. They were being healed. Nine were healed and never came back in thanksgiving to Jesus, but one did, he praised God in a loud voice, throwing himself at Jesus’ feet, thanking Jesus! Jesus responds, were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine? Was no one found to return and give thanks to God except this foreigner? This samaritan? Jesus said to the lone cleansed leper “Rise and go, your faith has made you well!” 10 were cleansed one returned, he was cleansed and found salvation in and through Jesus. Praise God!

(note: the lesson, the one cleansed leper’s heart was full of praise and sincere thankfulness and faith! He found saving grace in Jesus. The other nine got what they wanted and missed what they needed)

- This Sunday March 29 the text is from John 11:1-45. The text speaks of the Raising of Jesus’ friend Lazarus, brother of Mary and Martha. Word came to Jesus of Lazarus’ death. Jesus says Lazarus only sleeps, Jesus waits 4 days and arrives late. Lazarus is entombed. Jesus calls for the stone in front of the burial cave to be removed. He calls “Lazarus come out!” (having given thanks to God before the miracle). Mary and Martha, Lazarus and all present experienced the action and will of God as you and I, His children of Faith, have. “Take the grave clothes off and let him go”. The apostle John, remembering Jesus’ words, blesses us. “I am the Resurrection and the Life. He who believes in me tho he were dead yet shall he live and whoever lives and believes in me will never die - Do you believe this?” We have this hope in Christ.

Sincere hearts, faithful trust in Christ, thankful hearts even before the miracles brings amazing Grace .

- I’m praying for our Holy Week and Easter services, please pray for this with me.

- Until we meet: “Trust in the Lord with all your heart and leave not to your own understanding- in all your ways acknowledge Him. He will make your paths straight” Proverbs 3:5-6

The words of Christ; “Don’t fear, only Believe”
In Christ,
Pastor Bill Ahlfeldt

“Let us draw near to God with a sincere heart”