



What to Do with the Coronavirus?

As Christians?

As a Congregation?

In recent days, hearing the news, the warnings, and the growing numbers of those affected by the Coronavirus (COVID-19) has been inescapable.

The concerns surrounding the virus has prompted a shortage of several items in all our stores—either they're gone completely or the amount that can be purchased is limited (hand sanitizer, paper products, water).

A Balanced Perspective

Having been bombarded with many different reports and statistics concerning this pandemic, a balanced perspective is necessary. As is the case with so many things, one can go to extremes that are polar opposite and both too far. On the one hand, it would be foolish to ignore the virus completely, take no heed to the cautions, and the instructions to be diligent in staying home when sick, washing hands, etc. On the other hand, to panic and to be paralyzed with fear is also unnecessary and in the extreme.

We've all heard the report that "regular" flu, which we may underestimate, is more deadly than the Coronavirus has been thus far. Seasonal flu and Coronavirus are similar in the fact that both are most dangerous to those with pre-existing health conditions. The current lack of a vaccine and anti-viral treatments

for Coronavirus, coupled with its seemingly higher mortality rate, make it potentially more deadly. Yet, there are about fifteen known recoveries so far in the United States and more than 69,000 recoveries worldwide.

None of this diminishes the seriousness of the Coronavirus, but it does give some perspective to balance the dramatic and most-unsettling reports.

Child of God, Fear Not

Our faith in Christ Jesus does not immunize us from viruses, other sickness, disease, injury, or even death. It does immunize against eternal death, hopelessness, and fear.

When we pray in the Lord's Prayer, "Deliver us from evil," we are asking God to keep evil of body and soul away from us. *"No evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near your tent."* (Psalm 91:10)

If, according to God's gracious and wise will, He calls upon us to endure hardship, we pray that He will use those difficulties for our good and blessing—*"through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God."* (Acts 14:22) *"And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose."* (Romans 8:28)

We are also praying that in the end God take us from this world of sickness and sorrow to Himself in Heaven—*"The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom."* (2 Timothy 4:18)

A child of God's approach to the Coronavirus—and any other threat to our health and well-being—is to use the information and resources that God provides through doctors, scientists, and others to make informed decisions about our health. We have

every reason to be “smart” about such resources and use them to be good stewards of the body and life God has given us. To be cavalier and foolish about such things in the face of clear danger would be tempting God. The Devil tried to lure Jesus into such a foolhardy approach when he tempted Jesus to jump from the pinnacle of the temple. Jesus replied, *“It is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’”* (Matthew 4:7)

As we use the information at hand to reach decisions about our health and well-being—always and not just with the Coronavirus— we do so prayerfully, asking God to guide and bless those decisions. Beyond this, we pray for God’s mighty protective and healing hand, and then go forward in our calling as we are able, confident of the Lord’s blessing, and without fear.

Satan loves to promote fear and use it against us. He would love to see us seized by fear, led to doubt God and His love, and neglect God’s Word out of disinterest and busy-ness prompted by fear. The solution is just the opposite. The grace of God and the confidence we have in Christ Jesus as our physician of body and soul, immunizes us against fear. It gives peace to our hearts and minds even as disease, trouble, and hardship spread.

This does not mean that fear won’t still arise within us, but when it does, what we need is a booster shot—a booster shot provided through the Word of God and with burdens eased as we cast our cares upon Him in prayer (1 Peter 5:7).

“Perfect love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18). So when fear seeps into your mind and wells up within your heart, remember that God so loved you—with a perfect love—that He sent His only begotten Son that you might not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16). And God *“who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things?”* (Romans 8:32)

What We Are Doing?

Both the Federal and State government have encouraged public establishments (including churches) to take certain precautions to decrease the spread of the Coronavirus. Therefore, for the time being and for the immediate future, we will suspend handshaking before and after the services (greeters, pastor, etc.) in order to eliminate that as a means of spreading sickness.

Yesterday, the pews were all washed and disinfected. Periodically doing this as well as other cleaning measures will help to keep the spread of sickness in check.

We would like everyone to be especially conscious of containing any spread of sickness (staying home if sick, helping children contain sneezes, drippy noses, sticky fingers, etc.)

If you find yourself unable to attend worship regularly—either because of your sickness or out of caution due to your susceptibility and/or added risk with respiratory illness, there are ways we can still serve you with the gospel—sermons/services online, private visits, etc. Please call Pastor Rodebaugh to request any of these (or other) options.

*I lift up my eyes to the hills. From where does my help come?
My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth.
He will not let your foot be moved; he who keeps you will not slumber.
Behold, he who keeps Israel will neither slumber nor sleep.
The LORD is your keeper; the LORD is your shade on your right hand.
The sun shall not strike you by day, nor the moon by night.
The LORD will keep you from all evil; he will keep your life.
The LORD will keep your going out and your coming in from this time
forth and forevermore.*

Psalm 121