



Good Shepherd Lutheran Church & School
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Midweek Devotion

March 26, 2020

“Same Old Story”
Rev. David K. Groth
March 26, 2020

“There is nothing new under the sun” (Eccl. 1:10).

*Every day, Everywhere, By Everyone,...sharing
the grace of the Good Shepherd.*

Collect: Almighty God, by Your great goodness mercifully look upon Your people that we may be governed and preserved evermore in body and soul; through Jesus Christ, Your Son, our Lord, who lives and reigns with You and the Holy Spirit, one God, now and forever. **Amen**

Remember how 9/11 seemed to change everything? Before 9/11, few of us had heard of al-Qaeda or Osama bin Laden and Isis didn't exist. 9/11 brought on the longest-running war in U.S. history, in Afghanistan of all places. And air travel? Think of all the new security measures. 9/11 introduced us to full body scans at the airport. I remember a cartoon that showed a fellow coming through the scanner, and the TSA agent says, "You're clear to go, but you might want to have that gall bladder checked out."

Just as 9/11 introduced many changes, I suspect the coronavirus will do the same. I think countries and individuals will become more proactive in the future, rather than reactive. The U.S. may want to rely less on China for pharmaceuticals and other critical goods in case of a major disruption. Individuals will prioritize that emergency savings fund that could carry them for a few months should they lose their income. And households will forevermore maintain a goodly supply of tp and paper towels, hand sanitizers and paper masks. This pandemic will change things.

Just think of how things have changed in just the last ten days. A week ago feels like three weeks ago.

And yet, in another way, nothing has changed. It's the same old story. Ecclesiastes chapter 1, "What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which one can say, 'look! This is something new'? It was here already, long ago; it was here before our time" (vv. 10-11). In other words, though this is the first time any of us has experienced a pandemic, they've been frequent occurrences throughout history.

Ever since the fall of man in Eden, the creation just isn't working the way God designed it to. It's sputtering and wheezing. The whole creation groans, Paul says. Right now it groans under pressure from the coronavirus. But it's also been groaning from disappearing species and global warming and old diseases we thought we had licked coming back for another go around. That is, this new coronavirus is part of the same old story.

I heard a child psychologist on NPR bemoaning the fact that he can no longer promise his young children that they are and will always be safe. What was he thinking in the first place? No parent down through the centuries could make such a promise. This is the fallen world we live in, imperfect and inherently dangerous. We do our children no favors trying to raise them with delusions of perpetual safety and security. Rather, they need to know that we still need God. They need to know there is and will always be lots of reasons for trust and faith in God, because there are lots of things outside our control. And they also need to know that God is with them, loves them dearly, and is with us as we meddle our way through these rapid changes.

None of us really knows what we're doing right now. How could we? The rules of the game are changing so fast. We're just trying to adjust on the fly as best we can.

But God knows what he's doing. And God knows the good things he will work through this pandemic. He does have good things in mind, you know. And God knows the plans he has for you as an individual, plans not to harm you but to prosper you, plans to give you hope and a future.

I know . . . it feels like everything has changed . . . in just ten days. But in another way, nothing has changed. Christ Jesus is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. His love and grace remain unchanging, his mercy too. His Word is still the two-edged sword it always has been. Baptism still saves through the forgiveness of sins it gives, and you are still his baptized people.

The coronavirus has changed everything, but in another sense, it changes nothing, because nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.