

SPECIAL SUNDAY EDITION

Bermudian Church of the Brethren

WEDNESDAY's WORD – a midweek thought from Pastor Larry M. Dentler

to share a word of inspiration ... encouragement ... challenge ... a smile ... in the middle of your week

March 15, in the year of our Lord 2020 – #827 **NATIONAL DAY of PRAYER**

WHOSE CROWN?

It's early Sunday morning and I'm at Church alone. Our Bermudian Executive Committee made the difficult decision, like so many churches, to not have us gather for services today. The decision was made with the thought, "If we are going to error, let us error on the side of caution." This Corona Virus... this COVID-19... has sure wrecked havoc with us! There are so many voices trying to "educate" us. Some voices say, "*It's just like any other flu.*" Well, with all due respect, we know that that's not true. Others would have us filled with panic and hysteria, fleeing into our bunkers and hoarding toilet paper. That hardly seems appropriate either! While the symptoms for those who come down with this virus may be similar to other flu bugs, it's the contagion level of this that is so very different! With folks being contagious for sometimes weeks before they actually show symptoms. And we know that in our wonderful Church Family that our dear older ones, and weak ones, will be here if the doors are open. We love our Church Family! We look forward to hugs and shared greetings! Hence this "social distancing" keeping crowds from gathering so the unsuspecting person who feels fine but has the virus won't be spreading it to many including those for whom getting the virus is most dangerous, those with weak immune systems, chronic disease, weakened health. This "social distancing" tactic isn't new. It has been used very successfully in some of our large flu epidemics in the past. It's proven to reduce hospital admissions. And so even though we hate it... the Church is quiet today. It is the right thing to do today... the Christian thing... the loving thing... the responsible thing.

PRAYING FOR YOU

I'll walk among the pews of our lonely church this morning and pray for each of you. I know where you sit! Though we are physically not together today, our hearts & lives are intertwined.

CORONA

Strange name for this virus. "*Corona*" means "*crown*" in Latin, and is so named because when the virus is viewed under a microscope it has these strange protrusions that resemble the points of a crown. What a name then for this "bug" that has caused such hysteria. Have you tried to buy a roll of toilet paper!?!? It certainly raises for me a very important question. Whose crown are we honoring today.

SATAN WEARS A CROWN

Our Enemy is referred to by the Lord as "***The Prince of this world.***" (John 14:30) so he has a crown! He's royalty! He has great power. He is the "***Father of lies.***" (John 8:44) In this time he wants you to be afraid, depressed, panicked. He wants you to doubt your Lord. He wants to shake your faith. He wants to make you angry, unkind, self-centered. He wants you to feel hopeless. If this virus wears a "*corona*" it is Satan's crown! I refuse to honor Satan's crown!

JESUS WORE A CROWN OF THORNS

It is the Lenten season and we remember our Lord's suffering. Some of us wear a crown of thorns necklace that I gave to folks several years ago during Lent. Jesus' crown of thorns represents the intersection of this sinful life and our sinless Savior. The world hated Him. Satan wanted to be rid of Him. He suffered and bled paying a sin debt penalty that each of us deserved. We look upon (and perhaps wear) a crown of thorns during this season. But it is not the crown we honor!

OUR CROWNS

The Bible speaks of five (5) crowns that God gives to His children. The **Imperishable Crown** (1 Corinthians 9:24-25). The **Crown of Rejoicing** (1 Thessalonians 2:19). The **Crown of Righteousness** (2 Timothy 4:8), The **Crown of Glory** (1 Peter 5:4). The **Crown of Life** (Revelation 2:10). These are our rewards for faithful, obedient Christian living. We don't earn our salvation... Christ paid for that fully, completely. But we do gather these "crowns" as rewards in Heaven. But we don't glory in these crowns! In fact, like the elders in Revelation 4, when we stand before our Lord in Heaven, we will cast our crowns at His feet in absolute worship!

THE KING'S CROWN

As Jesus stood condemned to die before Pilate, the Governor asked Him, "**So you are a king?**" And Jesus' answer rings thru the ages! ***"You say correctly that I am a king for this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth everyone who is of the truth hears My voice."*** (John 18:37)

Jesus is the King of kings and Lord of Lords. This virus has not surprised Him! This virus is not out of His control! This virus causes Him no fear! All the universe is subject to His reign! **THIS** is the crown I honor today! **THIS** is the crown I trust! **THIS** is the crown in which I find my hope and my comfort! The Bible teaches that Christ does not willingly let suffering come into our lives, but that everything that Satan would inflict upon humanity must pass through Christ's nail scarred hands. So, this Corona is not something Christ has inflicted us with ... but He has allowed it. Could it be? That He is reaching out to us? That He is calling us to Himself? That He is seeking a great revival... of believers turning back to deeper faith in Him? That this is a great reaching out to the lost? That this is a time for the Church and for believers to shine for the Lord?

Interestingly, at the time of the construction of the Jerusalem Temple, the King of kings spoke to the people of Israel words that may be critically important for us to hear today.

"I may shut the sky so that there is no rain, or command grasshoppers to devour the countryside, or send an epidemic among my people. However, if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves, pray, search for me, and turn from their evil ways, then I will hear their prayer from heaven, forgive their sins, and heal their country."

2 Chronicles 7:13-14 GW

So, as we honor the One who wears the Corona! Here is some practical counsel:

1. Do limit physical contact. Let's each do our part. Use some common sense. Don't be arrogant. Good hygiene practices.
2. Don't panic. The King is in control!
3. Be prayerful, lifting up especially: our Church Family, those in the medical field, & first responders & nursing home caregivers, those who catch the virus, families/businesses impacted by the economic limitations, those with poor health, leaders charged with making decisions, those who find themselves wracked with fear, those who don't know King Jesus.
4. Be mindful of persons who are alone. Make sure they are OK. Reassure. Write letters, make phone calls, send emails, Facebook message... help them not to feel so alone.
5. Be in the Word. You may well have some extra time on your hands. What a perfect opportunity to spend significant time in the Word.
6. Trust your King! He's got this! No matter what the course ahead holds, the Lord loves you, holds you, is with you.

Let's sing this morning,

Crown Him with many crowns, the Lamb upon His throne. Hark! How the heavenly anthem drowns, All music but its own! Awake my soul and sing, Of Him who died for thee, And hail Him as the matchless King, Through all eternity.

Crown Him the Lord of love! Behold His hands and side, Rich wounds, yet visible above, In beauty glorified. All hail redeemer, hail! For Thou hast died for me. Thy praise and glory shall not fail, Throughout eternity.

Crown Him the Lord of Life! Who triumphed o'er the grave, Who rose victorious in the strife, For those He came to save. His glories now we sing, Who died and rose on high, Who died eternal life to bring, And lives that death may die.

Crown Him the Lord of Heaven! One with the Father known, One with the Spirit through Him given, From yonder glorious throne. To Thee be endless praise, For Thou for us hast died. Be Thou O Lord, through endless days, Adored and magnified!

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Crowning Christ As My King!

Blessings to you & yours! Be safe! Be well! Pastor Larry <><

All meetings/gatherings for this week are cancelled. We will continue to monitor things carefully and your Church Board will make decisions and communicate thru the Phone Tree, website, email, Facebook.