

INTRODUCTION: Welcome to this online gathering from the Germantown Church of God, in Cascade, MD. I am Pastor Mark Hosler, glad to be able to connect with you in this way. Over the past few months I have been turning to a promise found in the book of Isaiah, 26:3. I have encouraged folks to commit this to memory. I believe during this season that we are in in our nation, it is a helpful promise: ***“You will keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You”***

I want to share some information with you about our Church during this time. We will continue to suspend our public Worship services. We are following the guidance of the CDC and the mandates from our governor, Larry Hogan. We continue to urge folks to “shelter in place” and to avoid gatherings of more than 10 people. This is especially important to those who may be more vulnerable. Please understand that this virus can attack anyone, young and old, those who are in good health and those who are not. So, please take care of yourself, and do your part to protect others. If you have a need – groceries, prescriptions, Dr. visits – there are some folks who may be able to help you. Please call for help.

I do want to provide pastoral ministry to you during this time. I will be recording a midweek devotional for a time of pray together. That will usually be available on Thursday evenings. You can find that recording on the Church’s Facebook page. We will continue to provide this weekly recording with information and a message from the Bible. If you have prayer concerns, I will be glad to pray with you by phone. You can email me at mark@hoslers.com or call. To protect privacy, I will not include personal prayer concerns in our weekly online prayer gathering. I will pray and ask others to pray through our prayer chain. I do encourage you to continue to stay connected with friends and family. Call to check in with each other. We don’t know how long it will be necessary for us to suspend our Sunday morning worship gatherings, but we will continue to provide this opportunity for fellowship and study. So plan to watch the messages. Share the links with friends who may not have a Church family.

I’m sorry that we cannot at this time include music in these weekly recordings but I hope the messages will be helpful.

We have been consumed with talk and information about the corona virus, warnings to stay in, instructions about how to protect ourselves and others. But **we need to remember what season we are in in the life of the Church.** We are currently in the season of Lent. Lent is the 40 day season preceding Holy Week and Easter. In a few days we will be remembering the time of Jesus’ suffering, his death on the cross and His resurrection. As we think about what Jesus went through, this is a season for reflection, repentance and commitment to spiritual growth. I fear that **this season on the Church calendar has been pushed aside** and is not receiving the attention that we normally give to it. **So let’s come back** and give some attention to this season we are in. I want us to think about Jesus’ journey to the cross. Next Sunday is Palm Sunday, when Jesus triumphantly entered Jerusalem for the last week of His life before dying on the cross. Today, I would like to talk about Jesus decision to commit to this journey toward Jerusalem, knowing what awaited Him there

Read: Luke 9:51-62

Luke begins this paragraph by placing it on a timeline of Jesus’ life. He tells us that the time was approaching when Jesus would be taken up to heaven. That will take place after his arrival in

Jerusalem, his betrayal, crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and culminate in his ascension. The gospel writers are aware of the purpose for which Jesus came to earth. He came to offer Himself as a sacrifice for sins on the cross, but would be resurrected and return to heaven. Jesus is also aware of the timeline. He knew that the time was approaching for him to become the sacrifice for our sins. Earlier in this chapter he made this announcement to his followers, **9:22 – And he said, “The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.”**

It may seem a bit unusual to read that **Jesus resolutely set out for Jerusalem** knowing what awaited him there. The literal meaning of the phrase is this: **“Jesus set His face toward Jerusalem”**. I’ve always been intrigued by this word-picture. There is a look of determination on Jesus’ face. He is going to Jerusalem and He will not be turned aside. His face is set. The cross lies ahead for Jesus and He is determined to go to the cross.

Throughout His ministry, Jesus has repeatedly been tempted to accomplish His mission of being the Savior of the world without the cross. The devil tempted him in the wilderness at the beginning of his ministry. If he would bow down to the devil, He could be the ruler of the world. There were several occasions during his ministry when His followers wanted him to make him a king. And then there is the time when he announced the coming time of His suffering to His disciples. One of his disciples, Peter, took him aside and rebuked him for saying such things. Jesus in turn rebuked him with these stern words: **“Get behind me Satan.”** He has not given in to the temptations to avoid the cross. He was committed to the cross as God’s plan.

Now, we see again Jesus’ determination to go through with the plan to die on the cross as a sacrifice for sins. On the cross, He would take the sins of the world upon Himself, and receive God’s wrath against those sins. So Jesus set His face toward Jerusalem. He is determined to follow through and obey God. It is a mark of Jesus’ character to set aside Himself, His agenda and what would be good for Him in order to obey God, no matter how costly that would be. Embracing suffering is not something that people typically are drawn to. We would prefer to run from suffering and hardship.. We would prefer to be comfortable and pain free. But Jesus chose to set His face toward Jerusalem and accept the pain that was to come.

SO WHAT? Whenever we are studying the Bible, when we come to a passage of Scripture it is always helpful for us to ask this question: **SO WHAT?** What am I supposed to take from this? What does it mean for my life? **First of all,** it means that He was so determined to go to Jerusalem because it would provide a means of salvation for people. In setting His face toward Jerusalem, He is declaring that He loves people this much. **His love** for people was so great that He would go through with God’s plan even though it included rejection, betrayal and crucifixion. The writer of the book of Hebrews says this: **For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.** The joy that Jesus saw came from people being reconciled to God. Jesus desired to see people reconciled to God so much that He was willing to endure such suffering. Your eternal salvation was worth it to Jesus.

A second lesson that we take from Jesus decision to go to Jerusalem is that it shows us the way of discipleship. Following Jesus is a call to set aside our own agenda, and be willing to accomplish God’s will for our lives. On several occasions when Jesus was talking about what it meant to follow Him, He says that His followers must also be willing to take up their cross for His sake. Just as Jesus “set His face” to go to Jerusalem, he expects that His followers will be willing to sacrifice, to lay aside their agenda, to take up their cross, in order to follow Him.

A few weeks ago, while I was still in nursing home recovering from surgery, I was reading in the book of Isaiah. I came across this verse (Isaiah 50:7):

***Because the Sovereign LORD helps me,
I will not be disgraced.
Therefore have I set my face like flint,
and I know I will not be put to shame.***

Becoming a follower of Jesus may seem like an easy choice. We want the benefits and blessings that He offers. But we must also learn that to follow Him involves a commitment on our part. Just as Jesus “set His face” to follow God’s pathway for Him so we must be willing to “set our face like flint” in response to His love for us.

I have been talking in my sermons before we entered this time of Quarantine, about the process of growing spiritually. **What is involved in becoming spiritually mature.** I talked about the importance of spending time in the presence of Jesus, listening for His voice. I talked about the importance of practicing some disciplines – prayer, reading Scripture, observing times of silence and solitude. These disciplines position us in the presence of the Lord, and give space in our lives for God. I talked about the importance of confession and repentance. I believe that **this step of yielding**, giving up our agenda, is another step in the process of spiritual growth. When we choose to obey Him, we will make significant progress in our journey of becoming more like Jesus. ***In which direction is your face set today?***

Prayer