



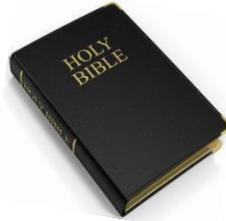
Linway Church In Touch

Staying In Touch Without Touch

April 1, 2020



MESSAGE FROM THE PASTOR



Dear Friends,

Greetings! It is time again to be in touch without actually physically touching one another. We continue to be restricted in our activities due to the Corona Virus, and we are requested to practice *social separation or distancing*. How are you doing? As I write this, the most recent announcement I have heard is that the *shelter in place* declaration is to last through April 30th. While it seems so strange not being able to gather for worship in the Sanctuary, it looks like we will not be able to do that for some weeks yet.

This coming Lord's Day, April 5th, is Palm Sunday. Many of us will miss not gathering before worship to enjoy the Deacons' Palm Sunday Breakfast. I invite you to hold that thought until next year. We will also miss the *Children's Parade of Palms* during the traditional 11 a.m. service. Hold on to that thought as well. Please remember that it is out of an abundance of caution that requires us to **not** gather for holy worship until the pandemic has subsided. The celebration of Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem will continue as we take time to remember its importance. That being said, I am asking once again that you take time, find time, and make time for your own private or family devotional worship. It is the best we can do under the circumstance.

In an effort to assist, you let me first share with you the Scripture readings designated for this coming Sunday, April 5th, Palm Sunday:

- Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29
- Epistle: Philippians 2: 5-11
- Gospel: Matthew 21:1-11

As before, I encourage you to read one or all of the Scripture texts. I was planning on giving a message based on the Epistle lesson of Philippians 2:5-11. Have you ever thought about the name *Jesus*? In my years of being a parish pastor it would be my observation that most folks don't think about the name Jesus. They simply take it for granted that it is the name given to our Lord and Savior at his birth. That part is true. While it was the name given to him at his birth in Bethlehem by his earthly father, Joseph, there is more to it.

Have you ever thought *what's in a name*? There are books and resources that list and seek to give a meaning to names. Some expectant parents comb such books looking for just the right name for their soon to be born baby. Sometimes the importance of family names is so strong that children carry on a family member's name. Sometimes people seek an unusual name, not commonly known. Trust me when I say that this can give teachers and the rest of us difficulty in knowing how to pronounce such names.

In her book, *The Baby Name Wizard*, Laura Wattenberg notes that the name given to a child reflects more on the parent than the child. She wrote: *the name doesn't belong to you. You make the decision because your child can't do it for himself or herself, but what you choose does say a lot about your personality.* So, what would that indicate about Jesus' name?

The origin of Him being named Jesus goes back earlier to the time when Joseph found out that Mary was with child. In the first chapter of the gospel according to Matthew, we are told: *Joseph, being a just man and unwilling to put her to shame, resolved to divorce her quietly. But as he considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not fear to take Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit; she will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins."* (Matthew 1:19-22).

The name Jesus comes from the heavenly Father himself. It actually was a common or popular Jewish name. It is not the name itself that was extraordinary. It was who gave it and what it means. And it was the Apostle Paul who made this abundantly clear. What was so special about **this Jesus**? Why should *every knee bend in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess Jesus Christ as Lord* as Paul wrote? **This Jesus** *did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant.* This is what makes him unique, one of a kind. This Jesus is the new Adam, the one who succeeds at exactly the point at which the first Adam failed. His Mission, given by the heavenly Father, *is to save his people.*

When Jesus enters Jerusalem, he is on the Mission from his heavenly Father. It was an exciting time of great expectation. Who could have anticipated the events to come during what we now call "Holy Week"? The Good News is that we know the full story. The great truth is that God will make a way when there seems to be no way. While Moses gave God's people God's Law, it was Jesus Christ who gave God's people God's grace and truth. This is not anything we humans could do for ourselves. It is a divine gift; an act of pure love. God was not obligated but chose to reestablish a right relationship with those who will receive his gift of forgiveness and everlasting life.

Once again, I am asking you to intentionally read one or more of the above Scripture texts, to think of its meaning in and for your life. I also ask you to pray for the sick, the poor, and those in need. Expand your prayer to include those providing medical assistance to all whose health is impaired and not just those afflicted by this pandemic. Pray for our elected leaders at all levels of government that their decisions will aid our community, state, and country in providing assistance to those in need, not only medically but economically. Please know that you are in my thoughts and prayers. I will be writing to you again next week. In the meantime, keep the faith. God bless you.

Grace and Peace to You and Yours,

Eric E. Dennis, Pastor

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