

LIFE AT THE SEM

March 2020

Ryan and Kari Maser

PRAYER REQUESTS

- For Zion Lutheran, Pierce, and Christ Lutheran, Norfolk, and their continued outreach and ministry.
- For those affected by the coronavirus (COVID-19), including health workers, parents, teachers, and leaders.
- For Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, as they continue the search process for a new president, and for 2nd and 4th year students awaiting Call Day.

A CHANGE IN LIFE

How life changes in a hurry! It is just plain unreal to think that as recent as two weeks ago, life was a “normal” routine: regular daycare hours and teaching for Kari, and my steady schedule of teaching, preaching, visiting, and being at group meetings and events at church. We could go anywhere we pleased, eat inside at restaurants, and not think twice about opening the door of a public restroom. We had plans to attend events in our community and host family members.

But all of that changed, suddenly. Based on what we have heard from family and friends across the country, this is a common situation that we as a nation find ourselves in. Schools across America have been shut down, public establishments and events have been temporarily closed or postponed, and millions of people have gone into self-quarantine. The coronavirus (COVID-19) is spreading as chaos and fear build: will there be enough room in our hospitals? Are there enough daily essentials to go around? How will we handle being at home by ourselves?

Perhaps this is all beginning to sound like a broken record. Maybe you are tired of hearing about all of the hype that is present on our media, in our culture, in our communities. Is there an end in sight, we might begin to wonder?

While we could spend our time speculating on the “what ifs,” let’s instead turn to what God in His Word says about those times when we are faced with calamity and fear. Psalm 27 was written by David, the lowly shepherd boy who defeated

the Philistine by the name of Goliath. By the power of God, David became the second king of Israel, and a mighty king for that matter. He was known for conquering several of the nation-states that surrounded Israel. But this did not mean he was perfect; David certainly had his flaws: lust, pride, and other weaknesses.

While I encourage you to read all of Psalm 27 (it is a fairly short read!), I would like to focus on the first three verses, which read: “The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When evildoers assail me to eat up my flesh, my adversaries and foes, it is they who stumble and fall. Though an army encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war arise against me, yet I will be confident.”

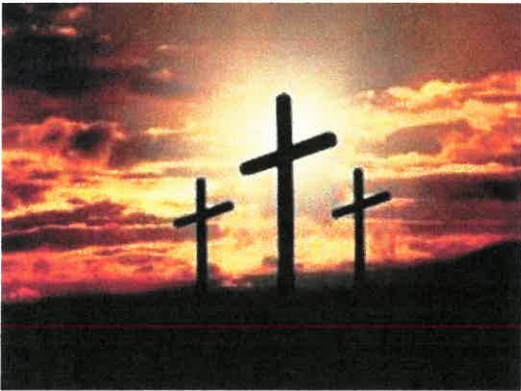
Here, in these first three verses, David is talking about those very moments when he was in battle. When the enemy surrounded him, seeking to destroy him, what did David do? Did he freak out? Was he afraid of what was surrounding him? It doesn’t appear so: “...though war arise against me, yet **I will be confident.**” Where does your confidence lie? Is it in yourself? Is it in the media reports we hear concerning the spread of COVID-19? Or is it in the LORD, the same God that David found refuge in?

Our God promises to hear us, for the sake of His Son Jesus. God is greater than anything you and I face in our lifetimes, even the events that have recently unfolded. Because of Jesus, God comforts us in our affliction so that we can comfort others who are living in their afflictions (see 2 Corinthians 1:3-5). With David, and all who have gone before us in faith, let us in confidence “wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!” (Psalm 27:14).

SO WHAT NOW?

As of today (March 20th), Kari and I are still adjusting to our “new” schedules of being away from our students and many of our parishioners. Both of our schools are currently closed until the end of March, although that could possibly change as two community-based cases of COVID-19 have been discovered in the Omaha area. Kari’s daycare is currently transitioning to follow the mandate of 10 people/kids or less per room. All church activities have been cancelled for the remainder of the month, too. I have been limited to office work and developing a YouTube channel for Zion Lutheran, where we are posting sermons and an abbreviated order of worship. You can follow this link to watch and be nourished with God’s Word: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOV_yFRkY7rZjAHjT-X2Fbw Please join us in praying for our shut-ins, those with compromised immune systems, the homebound in our community, all medical doctors and healthcare workers, and all others deeply affected during this time.

Aside from the daily changes and transitions, we give thanks to God for the gift of technology that allows us to stay in touch with family and friends. We also rejoice to see our brothers and sisters in Christ who find creative ways to share God’s Word and the life-saving Gospel. While this is not ideal and we certainly miss what we were doing before, we do appreciate the extra free time to relax, catch up on our reading lists, and work ahead on various things. We pray this letter finds you all well, healthy, and confident in the Lord our God!



Finally, thank you for the prayers, messages, and support. While there are changes happening outside of our control, we are grateful for all that you do to encourage us in the work God has called us to do! We walk by faith and not by sight (2 Corinthians 5:7).

Remaining confident in our LORD,

Ryan and Kari