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The Zion Spirit



"Grounded in Christ: Sent to be a blessing"

March 19, 2020

This Week's Lesson – The Great Commandment

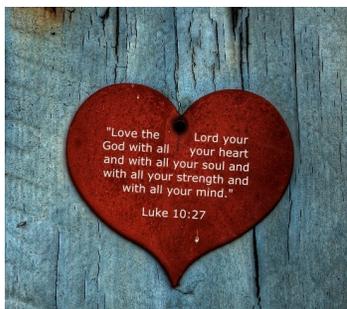
The Great Commandment says, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength." The second is this: "Love your neighbor as yourself." It is what Jesus said was the very heart of Jewish Law and the core of what God has been up to all along.

In times like these, people need love and are stressed because the usual ways are often no longer available. How do we stay away from people we care for in a time of crisis? It is against our instincts even if it is the caring and loving thing to do. We long to be with our friends, our families, and other people who matter to us.

Martin Luther said that love of neighbor is the core of the Christian life. Because we love God, we do what is best for our neighbor (who God loves) rather than what we want for ourselves. This means that while we may want to be with someone, our wants are not the point. Is it actually good for our neighbor to be with us? In most cases the answer will be "no."

We are blessed to live in a time when we have more options to connect with people without being physically in their presence than ever before. Call, email, text, send ecard, use snail mail to send a handwritten note, video chat, and more options are available. All of us have access to one or more of these.

Love may mean staying apart. But it doesn't mean being disconnected. Jesus reminds us that the heart of life is love. It starts with a God who loves us enough to come and die among us. It continues as the risen Christ works through us and inspires us to love as well.



Worship and Sunday School Schedule

During the shutdown there will be no meetings in Zion's building. This includes Sunday school and worship. However, we are working to have chances for worship and education.

Right now, there are three opportunities online each week.

◆ **Facebook Live Sundays at 9:30 AM**

During the shutdown we will have one worship service each week at 9:30. The staff will gather in the sanctuary and practice good social spacing as we use music, readings, a children's sermon and a sermon to provide for online worship. You can watch on Facebook Live on Zion's Facebook page. We will also be working to embed the video on our website as well, so hopefully everyone can watch – even without a Facebook account.

◆ **Sunday School for Kids at 10:30 AM**

After worship, kids and their families will be invited to use an online link to join a Zoom session from home. Dianha Ortega Ehreth will share a Bible story and offer some prompts for kids to do at home in response to the story. Then everyone will log off and kids will spend some time at home drawing, painting, playing with clay, etc. as they do something they think about as they heard the story. Then families can log back in and kids can show what they did and tell about it online with others.

◆ **Lent on Wednesdays at 7:00 PM**

Last week we did Lent online and used Responsive Prayer and discussed the Parable of the Sower. It went pretty well! This week's session will be based on the Parables of the Mustard Seed and the Yeast and comes from Matthew 13:31-33. We will send an email out on Tuesday reminding people of the session, including the link to join and the questions we will reflect on.

Memory Verse for this Week

We are blessed when we have scripture at our disposal, especially in a crisis. Memorizing some key verses can be a source of strength when we find ourselves struggling. Each week we will encourage you to try to memorize a new verse during this time. This week's verse is:

"I lift up my eyes to the hills— from where will my help come? My help comes from the LORD, who made heaven and earth." (Psalm 121:1-2)

**Staying Connected**

Use the phone: If you have people you see every week and catch up with when participating in church life, it may be weeks before we are able to regather as a community. But that doesn't mean relationships shouldn't continue. Pick up the phone and call someone. Catch up with how they are feeling, what is making them anxious, what is giving them life. Share with each other what you are doing to stay alert and connected to God through this – God is with us at home as well as when we gather in church together. A regular phone call can help someone who may feel lonely be more connected and feel love and care.

Email: The church will be using email as a core way to share information as well as links for online gatherings. If you know someone who is not getting these but who should, please let the church staff know and we will add to or update our email list. In addition, if you are reading this newsletter online and are not a part of our Eblasts and want to be, please email us at ZionElgin@yahoo.com and we will gladly add you to our list.

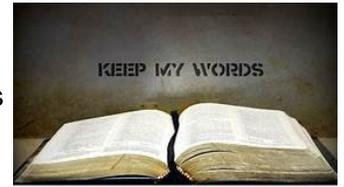
Technology concerns? If you are unsure how to use Zoom or another format we are using, please call us. We will do our best to help guide you in the process. We want to stay connected!

Sabbatical Sharing

Join us April 1st at 7pm to hear Pastor Dave and Deacon Marlene share highlights from their sabbatical. More information to come!

Making Time for God

One thing many of us often say is, "I am so busy!" In fact, many of us may have built busyness into our lives so much that we lack the ability to slow down, stay away from people for the sake of love, etc. If you are one of those people, please slow down!



This may also be a chance to re-order your time. If you have not been able to find 15 minutes a day to read scripture and/or a devotional and to pray, most of us cannot say that we don't have time now. While this is a crisis, it may also be a chance to reshape much of the busyness into a new pattern. Surely we agree that we live in a time where prayer is a need! Surely this is a time to be reminded daily that we live in the presence of a God who has come to us and is with us in all things.

So, if your Bible has been collecting dust, take it out and dust it off. Perhaps pick a Gospel and read through it over a series of days. Maybe the book of Acts will inspire you to see how the earliest followers of Jesus worked through challenging times and give us strength in our times as well. Paul's letter to the Philippians is an uplifting reminder of God's love. Any of these are good places to start.

We will be also developing some things to help you as you think of things to read and do to spend time with God and strengthen your relationship with God. Watch for emails and online helps to come your way in the days ahead.

Spanish Classes – Interested?

Interested in learning some basic Spanish? As we stay connected from home, one of the ways we can use this time is to learn something new. Learning some basic Spanish will help us be ready to provide better hospitality to our neighbors. Dianha Ortega-Ehreth will be offering **Intro to Spanish** classes, 20-minute sessions, twice a week. Each will include a chance to learn some new words and review.

Interested? Please email the church at ZionElgin@yahoo.com and we will see who is interested and if we can get started in the next couple of weeks. If you have a preference for 4pm or 7pm, please let us know.

