



Emmanuel Lutheran Church
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712-657-3056

August 5, 2020

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Jesus says, **“Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid”** (John 14:27). Fear is a natural human feeling (it wasn’t initially because fear came with Sin). You might be afraid of snakes, Covid-19, or dying. You might be afraid of venturing too far from the safe confines of your home. We’re afraid of many things, but if your fears come true, won’t Jesus be your guide and protector? Jesus took on Sin, Satan, and Death for you, how could He not care for you in sickness or other frightening conditions?

It’s hard not to be afraid at times, I get it. But when fear overcomes faith in God’s promises, it’s a sin for which we must repent. As Saint Paul told Saint Timothy, **“God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control”** (2 Timothy 1:7). We have the spirit of power only because God has given it to us by giving us the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the guarantee that no matter what may batter your life, it’s not the end. It may be the end of life on this earth, but it will be the beginning of eternal life in Heaven!

This is why I’m telling you that it’s time. It’s time for you to come back to church to hear the Word of God and to receive the Lord’s Supper for the forgiveness of your sins. It’s time for you to rejoin the community of believers at Emmanuel. It’s time for your children to hear about Jesus once again. It’s time to stop living in fear. Some of you were watching the services on Facebook, which was good for a time. However, it’s not the same as being present with other believers, and now that we’re able to worship as a congregation, you need to come if you’re able.

It’s also time to come back to church if you’ve gotten out of the habit of going, either recently or long ago. Many of you have gone back to the social events and recreational activities you enjoy, and that’s great. I urge you to also make attending services a weekly priority. Satan is good at convincing you that you don’t need church but he’s lying! The Lord says to all Christians, **“Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near”** (Hebrews 10:24-25). God wants you in His house where He gives you all you need for a vibrant spiritual life.

Most importantly, it’s time to return to worship because faith starved of God’s Word and Sacraments will soon wither on the vine. Some of you haven’t been in church for five months or more, and I am worried about you. You need the gifts God has given you, especially in times of uncertainty. It’s time to hear your Lord’s call to gather so that you can strengthen,

encourage, and support each other, even as the Lord strengthens, encourages, and supports each of you.

Life is far from normal (and who knows when that will be), but you haven't stopped living your lives. You still shop for groceries, go the post office, and go to work. Please know that all the precautions being taken at Walmart, Lake View Foods, and other business are being taken at church. Emmanuel is cleaned weekly, the pews are disinfected, and we're still not shaking hands or giving hugs. The leadership of Emmanuel is doing all it can to keep you safe. If you are washing your hands and being careful, the chance of getting Covid-19 is slim, and even slimmer in church. If you want to wear a mask, do so, no one will give it a second thought.

Since the epidemic began, only 650 out of 4.66 million cases have been traced to churches, and one-third of those came from one church that refused to take precautions. Sac, Ida, Calhoun, and Carroll counties have had an infection rate of .7% (seven tenths of one percent) of their entire populations and currently only 73 people are sick in these four counties, almost all of whom belong to groups that almost always have complete recovery.

If you are in a high-risk group and can't venture out, call me (712-830-5017) and I will bring you communion. Otherwise, set aside your fear and any other reason you have for not attending service, and return to God's House. You need Christ. You need the gifts He has given you. You need to be where He gives you these gifts that have earthly and eternal benefits. He has given you His church, the church He purchased with His blood, and He tenderly invites you to return to it.

Finally, take these words of Saint John to heart: **"Greater is He (Christ) who is in you, than he (the devil) who is in the world"** (I John 4:4). Don't let the devil dictate to you! Instead look to Christ and trust in Him above all things because He is truly greater than all things.

It's time and I can't wait to see you.

In Christ's name,

Pastor

Starting Sunday August 9th at 10:30, there will be a second service for those who are still uncomfortable attending the 9:00 service or are in a high-risk group. It will be a shortened service with Holy Communion. Masks will be required, and attendance will be limited to 25 people to ensure comfortable distancing. If you wish to attend, you must call me (712-830-5017) by Saturday night to reserve your spot.