

Numbers 16:46-50 New International Version

⁴⁶ Then Moses said to Aaron, "Take your censer and put incense in it, along with burning coals from the altar, and hurry to the assembly to make atonement for them. Wrath has come out from the LORD; the plague has started." ⁴⁷ So Aaron did as Moses said, and ran into the midst of the assembly. The plague had already started among the people, but Aaron offered the incense and made atonement for them. ⁴⁸ He stood between the living and the dead, and the plague stopped. ⁴⁹ But 14,700 people died from the plague, in addition to those who had died because of Korah. ⁵⁰ Then Aaron returned to Moses at the entrance to the tent of meeting, for the plague had stopped. ^[a]

Coronavirus and Christ Text: Numbers 16:46-50

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,

Greetings friends who find comfort from these words, be still, and know that I am God, Psalm 46:10

Can you guess what I am going to be talking about today? Not too hard. CV. COVID 19. Hard to believe hey.

God is in the middle of this COVID 19 plague. It goes ahead of him and follows after him. Does God want us to suffer? CV because we are sinners. God never tells us we will not suffer here. We live with a sinful body and in a sinful world. We don't have a perfect immune system. What do we expect would happen?

Quote from CS Lewis: God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our consciences, and shouts in our pain. His megaphone to a deaf world. We need God to shout at us. To bring us to our knees to help us realize we are weak sinners and how much we need his

mercy. Suffering makes me pray, confess my sins more seriously, and want to have the end of suffering in heaven.

Look. Restaurants closed. Stock market crashing. Pro sports cancelled. Schools closed. Jobs lost. Gloom and doom. From a spiritual perspective no. Might we now look at our morality with more serious thinking. I am human. I need to be ready to die. Tears us away from relying on our pocketbook for security. A lady 62 years old at Valley City is being baptized due to COVID. This is what God wants.

Text: Korah's rebellion: Numbers 16:46-50

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God used a plague to defend Moses and Aaron. He used them to call all to repentance. 14700 people died. As a consequence of their rebellion. Korah and his sons rebelled against Moses and Aaron in this story because they thought they were using their power in an unacceptable way. So, there was a rebellion.

Interesting to see how the plague was stopped. Aaron took some incense and put it on the altar. He took some fire from the altar and ran in the middle of the people. He was not afraid of it. Aaron made atonement a payment for the people. But he took the offering and ran in the middle of the people.

Our nation-has how many abortions a day. CV has us in a craze but does not hold a candle to these killings in abortion. Sin is publicly celebrated and it used to be shameful Response to suffering? To repent. To be sorry for our sins and turn in faith to Jesus for forgiveness of our sins. SUFFERING IS A WAY GOD DIGS INTO OUR SOUL.

God uses plagues like COVID 19 to either to save his people or call his people to repentance. There will be some who will not worship during this plague no matter what happens. How many Christians throughout the centuries have risked their lives to meet in secret, knowing they would be arrested or put in jail? Now more than ever we need to go back to God's Word. We need to hear him say: CAST ALL YOUR CARES ON HIM; FOR HE CARES FOR YOU. 1Peter 5:7 CAST YOUR CARES ON THE LORD AND HE WILL SUSTAIN YOU, HE WILL NEVER LET THE RIGHTEOUS FALL. Psalm 55:22

We need the medicines and the doctors and the nurses God gives us. WE take precautions as we gather together. But above all we turn to the Lord for strength and comfort in the middle of this trial to find strength from him.

He is calling on us to be Aaron's in this world. We have a sacrifice to bring to the world. The sacrifice of Jesus, His death is the only remedy for every death. Sometimes this takes risk and sacrifice.

Reread the Text: Numbers 16 Read the text again.

Scene with Aaron. People were dying. He ran in the middle of the crowd-in the middle of this plague. A repulsive scene. All those on his left were dead. All those on his right were alive. With clear action he stood between life and death. A little bit of incense from a fire stopped it all. God used Aaron to end the plague.

Fire and incense here show what Jesus has done for us. Jesus did not run from repulsive people like the soldiers who wanted to kill him. He faced it courageously and boldly in order to make payment for our sin. He ran into the crowd knowing they would kill him. This was the only way he could save the crowd. He came back alive!

He comes to us in the age of CV and he touches us. Thru the Waters of our Baptism. Thru His supper. With him touching us we need not fear any plague. The worst that could happen? We will die. But this virus cannot take our soul. He is still with us in this suffering. With Word and Sacrament. Even though isolated somewhat and to keep our distance for safety-he does not, He does touch us.

In 1920 the president of Wisconsin Lutheran Seminary went to visit a student in the hospital who had the flu. 2 days later President Schaller died from the flu. Some might say this was a careless sacrifice for him. But where is he? In heaven awaiting the resurrection. Did he lose? He died as a consequence of sacrifice he made.

If God is in this plague which he is we respond in 2 ways: we can blame him or we can beg for his mercy. We can try to hide in fear or see him in the middle of it all. He promises to be with us always: when sick and when in good health. In crisis and chaos and in peace. A contagious peace I must say. Always. Amen

Readings for this week: Hosea 5:15-6:3

Romans 8:1-10

Matthew 20:17-28