

Good Morning, and welcome to all who are 'called Christians', followers of Jesus Christ .

My name is Peter Mostert. I am joined by my wife, Leslye our interpreter. Our elders; Doug, Hershel and Larry have planned this time together knowing that Jesus is in our presence.

This is a good time to worship God and be united together in spirit. We join others around the world in unusual conditions. While most are at home we are not alone. God promised to be with us; to never leave us. God, our Father, had also promised to hear our prayers and to answer them—the Holy Spirit helps us to pray—we are reminded of the prayer offered by Jesus who prayed often, especially in difficult times.

This is also a good time to remember our families and spiritual brothers and sisters who are just a phone call away—when my father became older and more isolated, he saw prayer as his calling. He had memorized a long list of people who he prayed for several times a day. We were recently asked to pray and fast. I am reminded that Jesus began His earthly ministry with 40 days of fasting and prayer while alone in the wilderness; but not without the Holy Spirit who led Him there and God, our Father listening.

Let's begin with the prayer Jesus taught His disciples in Matthew's gospel (6:8b-13). The apostle John took Jesus' words to heart and wrote of our confidence before God (I John 5:14-15).

Matthew 6:8b-13 'Your Father knows what you need before you ask Him...pray in this way: Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us of our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever. Amen.'

I John 5:14-15 'And this is the confidence we have before God, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And, if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked of Him.'

Christianity is known for Jesus Christ's willingness to love and save people. While Jesus called on people to 'cast their cares on Him' Christians also gain strength and endurance from their trials and tribulations. Jesus acknowledged this by saying, 'in this world you will have tribulations', but went on to say, 'have good cheer because I have overcome the world' (John 16:33).

Christianity is a living example of courage and bravery—we are called for such a time as this. Many, in the name of Jesus, have endured great challenges. While we ask for God to bless us, expecting our needs to be taken care of, faithful followers of God learn and know how to get through difficult times. Throughout the Bible, we read of those faithful to God who experienced challenges—we hold these as heroes of the faith who rise up and meet whatever comes their way and, we note their actions with grace and acceptance.

Christianity consists of those in the kingdom of heaven who 'do not have a spirit of fear but power, love and self control' knowing that 'God will supply our needs' (II Timothy 1:7). The apostle Paul stated that he learned how to get by in difficult times and noted how he depended on and appreciated the family of God who prayed for and encouraged him.

1. Our Church is a community of fellow believers—churchgoers are a family consisting of people who need and love each other. God created the church for good reason. Christ is head of the church. People are social beings who thrive on family. Our families are important to us as are social groups that include the church—our church family is there with encouragement and support in times of distress. We need each other's company and take great effort to reassure one another.

Paul encouraged the church in Colossae saying we 'admonish every man teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present every man complete in Christ' (Colossians 1:9-10, 28-29). The church is blessed to have elders; loving shepherds who are given charge over the church along with teachers and ministers.

2. Our Government is also a God given institution designed to care for people in varied circumstances. Paul encourages Christians to respect the government and those in power as they care for our wellbeing. We in the USA are blessed to have a government and health system that is responsive to its people and endeavors to do what is right for all its citizens.

Paul encourages Christians to 'be in subjection to the governing authorities—for there is no authority except from God' (Romans 13:1). In doing so, Christians also recognize the work of the Holy Spirit who helps our weakness... knowing that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love Him' (Romans 8:26-28). Let's be counted as faithful to God and a comfort to others.

Coronavirus is a world-wide pandemic affecting us all. Steps that have been taken for our safety is an opportunity for us to spend time with God, and to reflect on the many blessings of God, and our church and country. 1) Let's take courage knowing that tribulations bring about perseverance, character and hope (Romans 5:3-5)—Paul says to rejoice in these times. James also says to rejoice in trials knowing that the testing of our faith produces endurance (James 1:2-3). 2) Let's not forget to thank God for all who serve the church and country in these times, putting their own lives at risk.

Final Thought

It is our custom to partake of the Communion; Lord's Supper on the first day of the week. The supper of unleavened bread and wine (grape juice) serves as a reminder of Jesus ultimate sacrifice: the bread reminds us of His unbroken body and the wine reminds us of His sinless blood. I encourage you to read I Corinthians 11:23-26 as a reminder of His coming again.

We are encouraged to take the Lord's Supper at home, and read the scriptures with our family, and this morning let me urge you to read and study a favorite chapter from Jesus and the apostles. You may consider John 14, and Ephesians 1.

Let's remember to pray continually and to ask God for His guidance and thanks for what He has done for Layne during her surgery – may the Lord watch over you and your loved ones – God bless you, the church and country.