

CALVARY CURRENT

Special Edition for April 1-15

Church News

1. **Stay home and pray:** During the coronavirus pandemic, we keep social distancing and stay at home. While we are at home, let's come closer to God in prayers.
2. **Calvary Virtual Church, Sundays 11am** (the virtual door opens at 10:30am)
Option 1: CalvaryUMCnc.org -> Church News: Click the Virtual Church
Option 2: Call at 980-498-3895 and put conference ID: 479 439 471#
3. **Prayer Updates**
Ray – is still at Novant Health Main, is stable but not much energy
For those who are affected by the pandemic – lost their loved ones, lost their jobs, had reduced working hours, closed their businesses
For medical professionals who work hard in the frontline to fight the virus
For our national and local governmental leaders for wisdom and strength
4. **Support Calvary with your generosity**
 - Mail your offerings to church: 512 West Blvd. Charlotte, NC 28203
 - Use “bill pays” at your online banking
 - Conference Online Giving at <https://www.wnccumc.org/online-donations-to-churches>
(Calvary UMC, Charlotte / Metro District / Pastor Jae Lee / Your Email)

“Weak Enough to Believe!” (Matthew 21:8-11; 26:69-75)

(Palm Sunday Sermon by Rev. Jae Lee)

Dear Calvary Church, may the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ welcome and greet you in this very challenging time. I pray that all of you are doing well and healthy in body and spirit!

In the past couple of weeks, we have had ups and downs. We have a dear friend who is in the hospital with pneumonia. Two of our members are released from coronavirus by the Health Department. With this unexpected coronavirus, I have realized how weak, how vulnerable, how ignorant, and how incapable we human beings are.

I would like to share a message of the Lord based on our weakness, the weakness of the crowds who once welcomed Jesus at the triumphant entrance to Jerusalem but easily betrayed him, and the weakness of Peter who even failed to hide his Galilean accent when he denied Jesus three times. However, our weakness can be an opportunity to believe and come closer to God!

In Matthew 21:8-11, we can observe that Jesus' entering the Jerusalem was a phenomenal event with a big crowd. Some of them went ahead of Jesus, spreading the palm branches or their own garments on the street, and others followed Jesus behind and sang the joyful song. The whole city of Jerusalem was in turmoil. People opened their windows and came out to see the parade of Jesus and the crowd. "What is going on here? Who is this man?" The crowds answered them, "This is the prophet Jesus from Nazareth in Galilee."

We don't know exactly who the crowds were. At least from the Scripture, however, we can guess that in somehow the crowds met Jesus in different circumstances: Maybe, some of them were in the seashore of Galilee when Jesus proclaimed the Beatitudes on the mount; some of them might receive the food when Jesus blessed the five loaves and two fish and fed more than five thousand people; some of them might be eyewitnesses when Jesus healed the sick and casted out the demon; some of them might have hope in Jesus for their nation's liberation from the oppression of the Roman Empire. We can only imagine that in somehow the crowds encountered Jesus in their different life contexts. That's why they were excited to welcome Jesus to Jerusalem and spread out their clothes and the branches and introduced Jesus to the residents of Jerusalem who didn't know Jesus yet.

However, a week later, their hope turned into disappointment, doubt, and betrayal. Their welcoming *Hosannas* became their angry voices to crucify Jesus on the cross. Again, we don't know why the crowds have changed their attitude toward Jesus. We can imagine that the crowds might be naïve enough to trust their religious leaders who accused Jesus or they may have received bribes or were simply manipulated. Whatever reason they had, the crowds showed their weakness and failed to continue believing in Jesus!

Moreover, the story of Matthew 26:69-75 is even shocking to us because it describes Peter's painful denial against Jesus. When Jesus was arrested by the soldiers and the high priest, Peter followed them and stayed in the courtyard of the high priest because he wanted to know what's going on. Then Peter denied Jesus three times. Peter truly believed Jesus as the Son of God and proclaimed his faith not only with his words but with his actions. Peter was the last one who would betray him... but even Peter denied Jesus when he failed to hide his Galilean accent in front of Jerusalem residents. He even cursed and swore an oath, "I do not know the man!"

Dear church, when we have fears, we become weak and lose our mind. With the sudden attack of the coronavirus, the whole world undergoes a painful time. In particular, our nation seems to have been seriously impacted from the virus. Out of fears, we shrink ourselves from each other, we distance from our loved ones, and we have lost our southern hospitality, hugs, kisses, and sweet greetings.

I am not a scientist and I don't know when and how we can finish our war against the coronavirus. However, I know and believe that our weakness is an opportunity for us to

come closer to God. When we lose our human ways to save ourselves, when we truly realize our weakness, when we become weak enough that we cannot solve our problem by human knowledge and might, we get to turn toward God and ask God's help!

I don't want to criticize the crowds who changed their voices and attitudes toward Jesus. I won't blame Peter who denied Jesus three times because I also recognize my own weakness. When Peter denied Jesus three times and heard the cock's crow, he remembered what Jesus had said. That moment of *remembrance* was the opportunity for Peter to turn around and come to the Lord. Peter wept bitterly! The moment when Peter was weak enough to deny Jesus became a turning point to truly believe in Jesus.

We used to think in this 21st century we can do everything: There is nothing we humans cannot accomplish! Haven't we built a babel of arrogance, conceit, and even godly power? Didn't we think we can do everything without God's help?

When we realize our weakness, it is the right time for us to remember the love of God who created and blessed the world and gave us the power of stewardship to take care of the whole universe and become fruitful in the harmonious relationship with other creatures.

Dear church, let us humbly accept our weakness. Let us embrace our weakness and remember that the Lord still loves us as who we are. It is time for us to turn back to the love of God who created us and sustains us. When we become weak enough, we can truly believe in the Lord! Our weakness is not a shame, but an opportunity to turn toward God who touches our weakness, pain, and hurt and makes us healed and strong!

In this holy week, let us honestly look at our physical, spiritual, and social weaknesses and ask God's holy interruption in them. Our loving God will hug us and welcome us in the new and deeper relationship and give us strength to overcome our weakness!
In the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

A Prayer

Loving God, Your desire is for our wholeness and well being.
We hold in tenderness and prayer the collective suffering of our world at this time.
We grieve precious lives lost and vulnerable lives threatened.
We ache for ourselves and our neighbors, standing before an uncertain future.
We pray: may love, not fear, go viral.
Inspire our leaders to discern and choose wisely, aligned with the common good.
Help us to practice social distancing
and reveal to us new and creative ways to come together in spirit and in solidarity.
Call us to profound trust in your faithful presence,
You, the God who does not abandon. Amen.

From Xavier University, online resources

A Concise Guide for Church Today

Trust God: Viral disease is a fact of biological existence and part of creation. Keeping perspective and not panicking apply here, just as they do for all risks we face as creatures in a finite world. No matter how dire circumstances get, the Lord remains our refuge and strength, “an ever-present help in trouble” (Ps. 46:1).

Pray: We must pray for the sick and the scared, for public health officials, for doctors and nurses, for researchers, and for caregivers. As Christians, we believe prayer has power, so we seek help from the Lord.

Heal the Sick: A core calling for Christians is to care for the sick and dying (Matt. 10:8), at times at the risk of our own lives (John 15:13).

Stay Informed: The following is a reliable list of links for educational, planning, and coping tools.

- CDC on COVID-19 & CDC Resources for Community and Faith-Based Organizations.
- Managing Anxiety Around Coronavirus Coverage: The American Psychological Association created this resource to help manage anxiety around coverage of COVID-19.
- Addressing Mental Health Issues: This resource from the Mental Health and Psychosocial Support Network provides guidelines for addressing mental health issues that may arise, and offers advice for messaging, including among children, older adults, people with disabilities, and those in quarantine.

REFLECT CHRIST: “Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body. . . . Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? Can any one of you by worrying add a single hour to your life?” (Matthew 6:25–27)

An excerpt from Christianity Today

Flowering the Cross at Calvary



On Easter Sunday, there will be a wooden cross in front of our sanctuary. In order to share Easter hope with families, friends, and neighbors who are affected by the coronavirus, we invite you to bring flowers from your yard and put them on the cross. Please consider the guidelines:

1. For your safety, please wear gloves when you put flowers on the cross.
2. If another party is there, please wait in your car until they finish their flowering.
3. If you meet friends, please share your greetings at a distance.
4. You may take pictures with only your family or party.
5. Please keep social distancing while you are flowering the cross.
6. The cross will be there Easter Sunday through Wednesday, April 12 – 15th.