

Ready and Not Afraid

"I think this might be my last Sunday, so I wanted to be sure to be in church." That's what Virginia Johnson told me a few different Sundays during the last year of her life. She had been part of our congregation for many years. Her husband, Howard, had gone to be with the Lord not long before. Virginia had suffered from Parkinson's for many years. Her body was weak. It wasn't easy for her to make it to church, even with help. Her spirit was still strong, however, as was her desire to worship the Lord on her last Sunday on earth.

I'd say hi to Virginia before the service began. Her voice had gotten very soft, so you had to get close to hear her. Then she'd tell me she was glad she was able to be in church because she expected it was going to be her last Sunday. She wasn't saying it with a sense of fear. Rather, her peace and her faith spoke loudly in her soft words.

Certainly not everybody would be at peace if they thought it was going to be their last week on earth. That has been made clear during this battle with the coronavirus. Many people are filled with fear and panic as they contemplate the possibility they might get a virus that could kill them. Actually a very small percentage of people die from the virus, but 100 percent of us will die from something, unless Jesus returns first. The Bible says we are "destined to die once, and after that to face judgment" (Hebrews 9:27).

God will most likely give wisdom to medical researchers who will discover a vaccine and treatment for the virus. But

there will be other things that will cause our bodies to stop working. Modern medicine can't stop every virus and it can't heal every disease. Jesus alone has the answer. "For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive"

(I Corinthians 15:22).

Jesus defeated death and rose to life again. It was her faith in the crucified and risen Lord Jesus that enabled Virginia to face, without fear, the reality that it might be her last Sunday. Christ took the punishment and judgment for our sins upon Himself when He died on the cross, and now He offers peace. "... the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5).

Knowing we may face the Lord soon doesn't scare us when we know Him as our Savior. Instead it inspires us to make good use of each day we are given. Virginia wasn't going to spend her last Sunday on earth trembling in fear. She wanted to spend it worshipping the Lord, declaring His praises, hearing His Word and being with God's people.

Jesus took the punishment of the cross so that we can be at peace with God and at peace about what is going to happen when we die. The Lord, who has conquered death, will watch over our lives, both now and for all eternity.

—Pastor Craig

Find Us Online

Our congregation has not been gathering in groups due to the possible spread of the coronavirus. It is for that reason we have not been having our regular worship services in our building. But God's church does not require a building. We are the church, united in Christ as we come together in fellowship, prayer and worship in any capacity. We are blessed to be living in a time of many options for reaching each other and our world. Stay connected as we post information, videos and stream services on our website www.bethanyfree.com, our YouTube Channel and our Facebook page.



Join us for worship as we live stream Sunday morning services at 11:00 a.m. on Facebook. These videos can be found on Bethany Free Lutheran Church's Facebook page and then click on videos. Devotional videos and videos of messages have also been posted to the congregation's YouTube channel. Just search for Bethany Free Lutheran, Astoria, Oregon on YouTube or click on the link provided on our website at www.bethanyfree.com.

Vespers Services

During this time when we're unable to meet together, we'll also live stream evening vespers services on Wednesdays at 7:00 p.m. Vespers Services are a time of singing, prayer, scripture readings and a brief message of encouragement based on the book of Psalms.

Online Resources

Stay in God's Word and find encouragement for families and individuals online. Explore Christian resources found both on our congregation's Facebook page and website at www.bethanyfree.com.

Drive-In Church

Load up the car with family and friends and drive to our church parking lot for "drive-in church" on Sunday evenings in at 6:00 p.m. Just find a spot to park in the church parking lot behind the building, in the overflow parking lot, or on the street nearby and turn your radio to 87.7 FM. Sing songs and spend time in prayer and in God's Word. Even though people are in their cars, it is also a chance to have some connection with others in our church family.



Vacation Bible School (VBS)

Vacation Bible School is being planned for June 29-July 3, 9 a.m.- noon, for kids 3-years-old to 6th grade. You're encouraged to mark your calendars and start praying for this special time of reaching kids with the good news of Jesus.



Family Bible Camp

Family Bible camp will be June 21-25 at Cedar Springs Camp, Lake Stevens, Wash. Camp is a great time for all members of the family to get away from the day-to-day routine and get into God's Word. Pastor Jason Holt, Director of AFLC Youth Ministries, will be the guest speaker at camp this year. You are invited to mark the dates and plan to come along.

We are Christ's Church

Live streamed worship services 11:00 am Sunday mornings!

Christian resources for families and individuals online!

Vespers services online each Wednesday!

Drive-in Church and more!

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