

WITH ALL THESE DEATHS

As of 6:20 p.m. on Tuesday, April 7, 2020, a total of 381 people in Canada had died as a result of COVID-19. As of Wednesday, April 8, 2020, I found out I knew one of these 381 people. Her first name was Linda and she was a parishioner at the Presbyterian Church in Petrolia where I ministered from 2001-2007. Her family does not know how she became infected by the virus. She had not travelled outside of Canada and had taken precautions as we all have been told to do. What was particularly hard for Linda's family was not being with her while she was in hospital. When it came time to say their goodbyes, the family had to do so by phone as a nurse held it to Linda's ear so she could hear. Linda's death is just one of 381 in Canada to date. Sadly, there will be more deaths before this is all over. There will be more stories and more sad endings like Linda's.

It is hard to be upbeat and positive with all the death we are bombarded with each day during this pandemic. Normally we do not want to focus on death in order to lift our spirits during times like this. There is one person's death we do want to focus on this week and in the days and weeks to come: JESUS' DEATH ON THE CROSS.

With this being Holy Week Jesus' death on the cross naturally draws our attention. On Good Friday, Christians gather to acknowledge Jesus' death on the cross and how our sins were forgiven through His sacrifice. There would be no "Good" to that Friday if Jesus had died for nothing and we still were not forgiven by God. We would also not call that Friday "Good" if Jesus had not raised back to life that Sunday morning.

As we are surrounded by news of deaths related to COVID-19 each day it is so important that we stay focused this week and, in the weeks, ahead on what Jesus' death and resurrection means for us:

- It means we are in a right relationship with the Father again as a result of our belief in Jesus.
- It means we don't have to fear death even though we hear about it every day right now.
- It means we can believe in the power of God to help us overcome through this.
- It means that God will make something good happen out of all this just as He did on that Friday, we now call Good.
- It means just as He provided the perfect sacrifice to secure our need for forgiveness, He will hold nothing back in providing for our needs right now.
- It means that families like Linda's, who have lost a loved one due to COVID-19, know that because of their loved one's belief in Jesus, they are now safe, secure with the Lord right now in heaven. And as long as their families believe in Christ, they will meet them again one day in heaven.

With all the news about COVID-19 related deaths it might be easy for us to take a break from focusing on Jesus' death this Good Friday. We might say to ourselves I've heard enough about death right now and I don't want to hear about it more. Don't make this mistake. Focus on Jesus' death and resurrection in these days ahead. By doing so we will find the strength and hope we need to get through today, tomorrow and each day until this pandemic is over.

God Bless

Pastor Dean