

Hello this is Pastor Woods from Grace Lutheran Church and this is The Daily Update for Monday, March 23, 2020.

Around our house the island in the middle of our kitchen is the place where our family catches up. It happens naturally. As some or all of us stand around the kitchen island we tend to talk about how work is going or how my son's in-laws are doing; we look at pictures of potential houses that my son and his wife may want to buy. We talk car breakdowns, what it took to fix the thing, ponder the rumors that certain stores may be selling toilet paper on certain days, and review upcoming appointments aren't happening right now. It's a place of information, casual conversation, and learning important things from one another.

Saturday I was forwarded a podcast (<https://crossexamined.org/> For Friday March 20, 2020 with Dan Eickenberger) that interviewed my former doctor, Doctor Dan Eickenberger who came out of his very recent retirement to help cover the huge demand for medical people needed during this Coronavirus season. Dr. Eickenberge has been someone I have trusted with my health and his reputation in our area is highly regarded so naturally I listened.

He talks about his experience with four patients that he has been treating as a volunteer at our hospital. His four patients all presented the same symptoms when they arrived at the hospital; fever, cough, short of breath, and weezing. One had parainfluenza type 4, one had meta-pneumonia, one had rhino virus, and one has coronavirus (forgive me if I don't have this quite right—not a doctor). Distinctions are made when testing is done that help distinguish who has what. Since we are in a season that is naturally prone to virus its hard to know who has what. This means any who present with these symptoms must be treated as a coronavirus patient. This means that masks gowns, gloves, and high precautions are taken. The problem that is bigger than virus is that such supplies are running short in hospitals throughout the country. Every person, every time, one enters into those rooms must dress in gowns, gloves, and masks even for a simple change of bed sheets.

Another interesting point of information is that the more tests that are completed the more cases of the virus are found. However, the higher number of known infections the lower the death rate drops. As of last Friday it was a rate of 1.05. It was also stated that much of our information is coming from third world countries with far less sufficient health care for the people in those countries. Our information is incomplete and big decisions are being made with insufficient information. What are we to believe then? How are we to respond to all of this?

What we do know is that Malaria Medications are showing very promising signs of being helpful to the more severe cases. Another positive is that we are on pace for one of the fastest developments of a vaccine. Twelve months as I have heard it is extraordinarily fast (Although we could use a vaccine for fear or panic). And still one more piece of good news I believe is that it is believed by Doctor Eichenberger that we will eventually build a kind of immunity through the normal passive exposures that we experience with things like flu and colds. More exposure in time means more immunity built up in our communities. It seems that our doctors are beginning to understand more than we did yesterday. Distinguishing the facts through filters of fear, sensationalism, and lots of other noise will be the challenge.

But such was the case long ago in Matthew 16:13-16 where Jesus asks the disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?" By this point in Jesus' ministry scriptures have many times described the land of Israel in an uproar about the news of a Rabbi who heals people. In Luke 7 after Jesus raises the widow's son at Nain we are told that "A sense of awe swept over all of them, and they glorified God. "A great prophet has appeared among us!" they

said. “God has visited His people!” News spread about Him throughout Judea and surrounding region. Mark 2 even describes four men tearing open a roof to lower a paralyzed friend down to Jesus because the house was too crowded to get in any other way. What they heard, felt, and believed was no doubt shaped by what people were saying about Jesus and motivated them to take extreme, creative action to help their friend. People who were sick traveled miles on what people were saying about Jesus. Was it hope or simply hysteria? We all know how rumor motivates people—just mention that a store will have TP at a certain place at a certain time and see what happens. So for deeper clarity Jesus asks, “Who do people say I am? The Disciples answer Some say, John the Baptist, others say Elijah, Jeremiah or one of the other prophets.”

There was so much information. There were so many reports. Many saw and experienced Jesus first hand but very few had an accurate picture of Jesus, especially Jesus’ enemies. They would never see anything good no matter the facts or the good that had been accomplished. Some say one thing. Some say another. What they heard and felt and wanted from Jesus varied greatly depending on what they thought about Jesus. Some just wanted healing. Some just wanted bread to eat. Some genuinely sought a Savior and believed—all different conclusions based the same intelligence.

The most important question we must ask is the question Jesus finally asks the disciples; “Who do you say I am?” Of course, we remember Simon answered; “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.” As Christians we understand the value of this answer.

Having lots of information and facts are at their best and most helpful when the right conclusion is reached. Otherwise all we have are interpretations driven by strong emotions of excitement or fear; All we have are the sensational reports of things that may or may not be accurate conclusions. For us we depend on the accuracy and truth of God’s Word and its center, Jesus.

Traditionally every year at Easter we hear of Easter Morning when news from the women reached the disciples. Remember their reaction? They thought the women were crazy. Because of their bias and emotions they were slow to believe their report in resurrected Jesus. We hear of Mary Magdalene mistaking Jesus for a gardener because of her sorrow even as Jesus stood right there. We hear of the Emmaus disciples who in their sadness for Good Friday take a whole day of travel walking with Jesus to realize that Jesus was with them the whole time teaching them. But when they understand they run back and spread the news to the disciples. Information takes time to filter through the discovery process, the emotions, and the human elements before it finally reaches its realization. But here it is. And this is the critical point we pray for: In time, in one form or another, the right conclusion is necessary for saving people’s lives. This is medically and spiritually true.

I encourage all of us to pray for the right information that may draw us to the right conclusions. Perhaps pray that our discovery in this will lead to a vaccine sooner than later. Pray for us all to gain wisdom through knowledge and experience so that in the long-term we are a more prepared health care, a more prepared nation. Pray for courage at home and for faith to trust the Lord especially in uncertain times. Finally, perhaps consider praying for a deeper gratitude for those who genuinely dedicate themselves to help all of us understand, learn, and finally succeed in overcoming the virus. Their talents, time, and work are a gift of the Lord.

And Now the Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make His face to shine upon you. The Lord look upon you with His favor and give you His peace.

Pastor Matthew Woods

John 3:30