

What Has Not Changed

Psalm 46
I John 4:1-4

As we watch the Covid 19 virus go to work each day seems to bring a whole new reality. The rules all seem to change. Plans evaporate. Family visits do not happen. Work does not get done (and paychecks feel ever more tenuous). Thank God we worship Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. Thank God he has gathered us into the Body of Christ, formed us into a community that genuinely cares. This morning, as I deliver my first-ever virtual sermon, not to be accessed in person but online only, I want to focus on What Has Not Changed. To that end:

Top Ten Things That Have Not Changed

10. The Central Presbyterian Church of Terre Haute remains a vibrant, powerful expression of God's work. We often remind ourselves that the church is not a building, but the people of God united in love and ministry. Never have we had a more clear opportunity to incarnate the love of Christ. I have no doubt that all the ties that have bound us together at Central will continue to fill us with the knowledge that we belong to God and to one another.

9. Fred Roger's mom was right. Whenever he, as a little boy, said he was afraid of fires or storms she would tell him to look for the helpers. Look for those people who move **toward** disaster. We have already watched people leaning into the current

crisis. Let us pray for the EMTs and medical personnel who expose themselves to risk simply by doing their jobs. And let us praise God for all who have organized food distributions to poor children, called their older neighbors, and otherwise comforted and helped those hurt most by our viral enemy.

8. The Psalmist was right. God **is** our refuge and strength, a very present help in time of trouble. Trouble has come to our doorsteps, invisible and insidious trouble. No one living can remember the last time our nation faced such a foe, (which for the record was the Spanish Flu epidemic over a hundred years ago). But to us, here, now, the Psalmist has heard God proclaiming, “Be still, and know that I am God.” Be still. Be at peace. God is in his heaven and all truly is right with the world.

7. Jesus' First Great Commandment has not gone away. When asked which of all God's laws was first and most important, he answered, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength.” That call remains today. Note that Jesus charges us to **love** God. After all, as Psalm 46 concludes, “The Lord of hosts is with us.” God is with us. We need to stick with God.

6. Jesus' Second Great Commandment is still with us, too. He continued his answer from before with, “And there is a second commandment like to it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” How old are your next-door neighbors? Do you suppose they could use supplies from the grocery, pharmacy, home improvement store? Our neighborhood has already organized shamrock scavenger hunts for children home

from school. How might you make the love of Christ real for people who share your zip code?

5. The Cincinnati Reds from 1975-1977 are still the greatest baseball team of my lifetime. I know that has nothing to do with God and viruses, but it is one more thing that has not changed! I mean, c'mon: Johnny Bench, Joe Morgan, Pete Rose, George Foster, Tony Perez, David Concepcion? Am I right?!?

4. God has placed gifted, inspired leaders at the helm of our church. It has been a real privilege to serve alongside these elders and deacons and staff members as they have addressed the problems posed by Covid 19. God has put wise, loving, skilled, dedicated men and women in place to help us all get through to the other side. Praise the Lord for this evidence of the truth of Ephesians, I Corinthians and every other book of the Bible that references gifts and leadership in the church.

3. Speaking of the Bible, a few minutes ago we read I John:4:4: "Little children, you are of God, and have overcome (the evil); for he who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." One of our oldest members quoted this verse to me from memory this week. She said all through her long life it has helped her get through every seeming triumph of darkness and evil. This, too, has not changed.

2. God is still sovereign. God is still in charge. No matter how it might appear, all things continue to work for good for those who love God.

And the #1 Thing That Has Not Changed: Our hope is in the Name of the Lord. Our faith in Jesus as Lord and Savior will keep us together in the Body of Christ, the church. It will keep us hopeful. It will carry us into the sunshine that awaits the passing of this present dark cloud.

Remember, the more things change, the more they stay the same. Even in this time of upheaval we remain rock solid, together, united, redeemed, inspired, thankful, and all because we worship the Rock, Jesus Christ! Now don't forget: call your

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