Concerning re-opening for Worship – As we anticipate meeting together in the sanctuary this Sunday, all of us have mixed feelings. That is normal. There is no “right” answer as to whether this Sunday is the best time to re-open. We all need to be aware that people in our church will have varying personal positions concerning re-opening our church for worship. The same uneasiness and ambivalence we see across the country is true in our own church family. Some may feel opening Sunday may be reckless and unsafe. At the same time, others at West Goshen probably think we have re-opened too slowly. So... there will be folks in our church who feel we are being careless; at the same time others believe we are being faithless. Our congregation’s opinions on these matters reflect the varied sentiments we see throughout society. As believers, however, we can’t let these varied positions become a means for Satan to cause division. One thing we know that Jesus wants for His church is unity. The Bible tells us we are to “make every effort to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.” Let’s all of us be prayerful and be careful of our attitudes and words. It’s a challenging time for all of us.

The leaders at West Goshen are doing the best they can, following the leading of the Holy Spirit for our church. Additionally, be assured that your leadership is not judging anyone’s personal decision as to when they will personally rejoin our onsite meetings. For some of our members, the best decision is to stay home; for others, they may feel greater comfort in coming back to our sanctuary this Sunday. Each of us must do what we feel is best for us. One of the earmarks of Christ-followers is that we are to be gentle spirited, compassionate, patient, and kind toward one another. This is an opportunity for all of us to practice these spiritual virtues.

“Lord, grant us all patience, kindness, and compassion as we gather for worship. Keep us from unhealthy gossip, critical spirits, and the scourge of complaint. May all of us check our attitudes and strive for unity in the body of Christ. AMEN.”

Congregational Prayer Needs
- For Jake Schrock as he recovers from gall bladder surgery this past Tuesday.
- For Betsey Long as she will be having gall bladder surgery on Tuesday, August 25.
- For Pastor Joel/Judy’s son, Andrew, and his wife, Tanya, as they move from Brooklyn to South Bend this Fri-Sat by driving a rental truck cross country.

Are you monitoring your own mental health?
- It’s natural to experience stress and anxiety in the face of a threat we cannot control. Because every person reacts differently, notice what your body and emotions are telling you. Are you sensing increased anxiety, anger, detachment? Be self-aware.
- Be sure to remain in touch with those you love and trust. Loneliness, isolation, and fears can creep in and send you spinning into despondency or other negative emotions. We weren’t created to handle stress alone.
- Be aware that in the midst of pressure, all of us tend to default to our worst character traits. Do you know yours? Some people are prone to worry, others to depression. Still others lash out with a critical spirit or with hurtful words to those we love. Know yourself.
- Discipline yourself to read God’s Word and pray each day, even if it’s just for a few minutes. Talk with God about your frustrations, anxieties, and anger. He has broad shoulders and wants you to be honest with Him.
- Think beyond yourself. Connect with family and friends to see how they are doing. Look for others you can encourage.
- Treat yourself by doing activities you enjoy. Take a walk, put together a puzzle, read a book, watch an educational video on YouTube.
- Be cautious of overexposing yourself to media hype. Listen to health experts, not the politicians. Balance your media intake by considering several different news outlets, not just the ones you agree with.
Church Family Scrapbook

Norma Riley holding her great granddaughter, Liberty.

Getting creative with communion...

Krispy Kreme donuts serving as holders for the juice cups. What isn’t there to like? All in favor raise your right hand.

Further COVID-19 guidance for Amish communities

In-person services are permitted in much of the state as of May 8. Religious services, including wedding ceremonies and funeral services, may continue and will no longer be subject to limits on social gatherings.

However, social distancing and other sanitation measures will continue to apply. Wedding receptions and visitations before or after funerals remain subject to the limitations and restrictions for social gatherings, and it is recommended that religious leaders verify local restrictions.

If implementing in-person services, consider the following practices:

- Ask all individuals who are age 65 and older or who have an underlying or at-risk health condition to stay home and watch services online if possible.
- Family size should be limited to six or fewer.
- If there is a six-foot gap between households, arrange seating to allow for greater separation.

Uh... there may be a problem...

I was lonely until I glued a coffee cup onto my car

Now everybody waves at me!

New Face Mask

Romaine Calm. Lettuce come together as this is just the tip of the iceberg.
Mark 4:35-41
35 That day when evening came, He said to His disciples, "Let us go over to the other side."
36 Leaving the crowd behind, they took Him along, just as He was, in the boat. There were also other boats with Him. 37 A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped. 38 Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, don't You care if we drown?" 39 He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, "Quiet! Be still!" Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. 40 He said to His disciples, "Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?"
41 They were terrified and asked each other, "Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey Him!"

The story is given in such detail that we know it is an eyewitness account, undoubtedly from the lips of Peter as he retold this story to Mark. Travelling to the "other side" would involve heading from the west shore to the east shore of the Sea of Galilee, a 6-7 mile journey.

The photo on the right is taken from the east shore looking to the west. It is in the approximate location where Jesus and His disciples would eventually land after the storm... the area of the demoniac whose name was “Legion.”

The Sea of Galilee is 600 feet below sea level, surrounded by 3000 foot mountains, deep gorges, and steep ravines. Around the sea it is tropical with bananas growing. At those surrounding mountains the higher elevation is cold. When the rising air from the lake meets the cooler air at altitude, it results in violent storms. Additionally, because of the geography these storms often come up suddenly without warning.

For seasoned fishermen to be frightened gives you an idea that this was not a typical storm.
In fact, Jesus’s rebuke of “Quiet! Be still!” in vs. 39 is the same phrase He used to cast out a demon earlier in Mark 1:25. Because of this some experts believe the storm had demonic origin and was Satan’s attempt to destroy Jesus or at least prevent him from reaching the “other side” where a demon possessed man named “Legion” was waiting.

It’s interesting to note how “terrified” (vs.41) these disciples were. The question becomes: Why? Why would they have been so scared? They had seen storms on the sea before. They had already seen the power of Jesus at work in various settings: They had seen Jesus heal multitudes, cast out demons, and work miracles (like changing water into wine). Furthermore, they had heard Jesus teach with authority.

So, once again, why the fear? Perhaps one answer would be this: it’s one thing to observe Jesus working in someone else’s life and even to hear His Word. However, it’s something else to trust Him for what You are facing at the moment.

That has huge implications for us as we are all confronting the fallout of the COVID-19 virus. Many of us are seasoned believers. We have trusted Jesus for many things in the past. However, this story from Mark’s gospel has practical application for us as we cope with the corona virus in America. I like how commentator Merrill Tenney puts it:

In this story the disciples did not apply what they already knew by trusting Him to do more than they had already witnessed. One of the steps of faith is to accept the power of Christ as a fact, and to call upon Him for that which is greater than what we have already experienced. -- Merrill Tenney

That is an incredible insight. God does not always prevent the storms from coming. In fact, the disciples found themselves in the midst of this storm by obeying Christ’s command (vs.35).

No, we are not always immune from life’s storms; however, we have a competent Savior in the midst of the storm. Jesus knew the storm would occur. He also knew that the disciples’ faith needed stretched to trust Him for a circumstance they had never experienced before. Are you making the connection? Many of us have trusted the Lord for finances. We have trusted the Lord for guidance. For provision. For our family members. However, most of us have never had to trust Him amidst a worldwide pandemic.

Early in the story questions I’m sure the disciples were dealing with all kinds of questions:
“What?” Questions - What is this storm all about?
“Where?” Questions – Where in the world did this storm come from?
“Why?” Questions – Why is this happening when we are obeying the Lord’s directive?
“When?” Questions – When will this storm be over?
“How?” Questions – How are we ever going to make it through this storm?

But as we get to the end of the narrative in Mark’s account, the disciples begin asking the real question… and that question is the “Who?” question.

"Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey Him!" (vs. 41)

I believe this is God’s Word for each of us today. In the throes of this COVID-19 crisis, we don’t have the answers to the what/where/why/when/how questions. We really don’t. But those probably aren’t the right questions to be asking anyway. The right issue to be dealing with right now is the “Who?” issue – Who is really in charge… and am I willing to trust Him for something I’ve never faced before?

Learning along with you,

Pastor Joel