

## Lord's Day Greeting to Lancaster Presbyterian Church - March 22, 2020

Comfort, O comfort My people," says your God (Isaiah 40)

What is comfort? Tea and a bit o' cake? Hot chili on a blustery night? A bright cheerful fire crackling on the hearth? Soft sheets and a touch of lavender? How about love and friendship when we're feeling lonely or overwrought? There's nothing like a good hug. It's hard to feel satisfied in any way with "social distancing" and "self-quarantine." It is the strangest thing when the most loving thing you can do for a person is to stay away from her.

The Heidelberg Catechism begins with the question, "What is your only comfort in life and in death? The answer is satisfying: *That I, with body and soul, both in life and in death, am not my own, but belong to my faithful Savior, Jesus Christ, who, with His precious blood has fully satisfied for all my sins, and delivered me from all the power of the devil; and so preserves me, that without the will of my Father in heaven not a hair can fall from my head; yes, that all things must work together for my salvation. Wherefore, by His Holy Spirit, He also assures me of eternal life, and makes me heartily willing and ready henceforth to live unto Him.*

Dear hearts, that's comfort! *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ. But if we are afflicted, it is for your comfort and salvation; or if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which is effective in the patient enduring of the same sufferings which we also suffer; and our hope for you is firmly grounded, knowing that as you are sharers of our sufferings, so also you are sharers of our comfort.* (2 Corinthians 1:3-7).

The recitation of heavenly realities, where our citizenship abides, brings comfort: *But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord. **Therefore comfort one another with these words.*** (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

I know that it is not Christmas, but the comfort of the ages indicated in God's word to Isaiah finds fulfillment in the good news of Jesus' first coming, as in the anticipation in hope of His expected return. And so, in the uncertainties of pandemic, our hearts can sing: *God rest ye*

*merry gentlemen let nothing you dismay. Remember Christ our Savior was born on Christmas Day. To save us all from Satan's pow'r when we were gone astray. Oh tidings of comfort and joy, comfort and joy. Oh tidings of comfort and joy!*

God bless you, Loved Ones! "Comfort, O comfort My people," says your God!

I love you all!

Happy Lord's Day!

Pastor Kelly

Please pray with me.

Dear Father, Lord Jesus, Holy Spirit, thank You for the comfort of Your scriptures. It is hard for us to be apart, especially on the Lord's day, but we want to respect the safety measures pursuant to the minimization and containment of the plague that is sweeping the world. When I shared with my brothers the steps that our Session is taking to be faithful and protect all of us, Randy said, "I knew God would take care of you through your people!" Then, when I answered, "Yes, they really are the best!" Cary fired back, "Liked 'Yes, they really are the best!'" We are richly blessed for the love that we share in You, Lord. Please draw near to us through this trying season. Give us patience and wisdom to know how to proceed. Give us faith and endurance to persevere. Protect the whole flock from illness or harm, and in Your mercy hold each one forever, according to Your word when it affirms: Behold, the LORD GOD will come with might, with His arm ruling for Him. Behold, His reward is with Him and His recompense before Him. Like a shepherd He will gather the lambs and carry them in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes. Thank You that we may all rest in Your loving care, Lord Jesus, Amen!