

Trinity Lutheran Church & Early Childhood Learning Center

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First and foremost is the **first commandment** in which we fear, love, and trust in God above all things. Through faith in Christ, we have forgiveness, life and salvation. We need not fear sickness, death, hell or the devil.

“But the Decalogue does not only require external works that reason can somehow perform. It also requires other works far beyond the reach of reason, like true fear of God, true love of God, true prayer to God, true conviction that God hears prayer, **and the expectation of God’s help in death and all afflictions. Finally, it requires obedience to God in death and all afflictions, lest we try to flee these things or turn away when God imposes them**” (Ap IV, 8).

Second, we need to heed the **third commandment** in which we receive God’s gifts. The church has been established to give out the gifts of God: Word and Sacrament. At a time in which we are being visited with an affliction, the church has the Word which can comfort in sickness/death and give eternal life. The Triune God provided the church to give our members the bread of life. We need to be concerned about our members spiritual health. “Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.”

Third, the **fourth commandment** requires us to obey those placed in position of authority over us (Romans 13). Earlier in the week, the governor of Illinois mandated that events with 50 or more people be cancelled. It now appears that the White House and Centers for Disease Control have suggested that gatherings be limited to no more than 10 people. That rule significantly limits normal services. I don’t consider that these gathering guidelines necessitate some sort of “obey God, rather than man,” response. We are not being commanded to sin. Furthermore, the gathering requirements are being applied equally to all areas of the community.

Fourth, the **fifth commandment** requires us to help and support our neighbor in every physical need. Thus, we are not to be careless with our life and health—It is a gift of God—nor should we be indifferent to the bodily needs of our neighbors. Of course, we should use precautions not to endanger their life.

On a snowy day, if the pastor can get to the church, services are held. The members and others are to use their own judgment. As a Christian, all that we do is out of thankfulness for the salvation we have already received. We are not obligated to attend. We want to attend. If the government hadn’t set down these drastic measures, I would have had regular services, just like a snowy day. Those who need to stay home, can make that decision. We need not live in fear.

Nevertheless, drastic measures require drastic solutions—from both the governing authorities and the church. As a church we need to continue to follow our first love to offer the medicine of immortality to a dying world. And, we need to submit to the governing authorities. “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.”

Sincerely,

Pastor Michael Henson, Trinity Lutheran Church (Herrin, IL)