

# SOUNDS OF SALEM

A MONTHLY PRINT AND DIGITAL NEWSLETTER OF SALEM PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH OF VENEDOCIA, OHIO

Volume 22 Issue 4

April 2020

## PASTOR'S THOUGHTS

*Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid (John 14:27 NIV).*

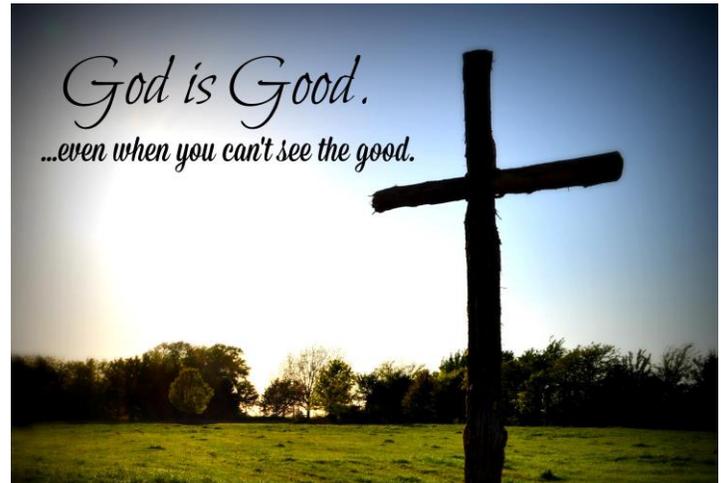
As I am writing these thoughts, I am receiving news that Van Wert and Allen Counties have confirmed multiple cases of the Coronavirus. Our Governor has asked for a "Stay-at-Home Order" through April 6 to avoid travel to limit future contagion of this pandemic virus. By staying at home from work and even church services, we are able to slow the spread of the disease so that the hospital beds and care facilities will not be overwhelmed. Currently with the Stay-at-Home Order, we have a shortage of two out of three hospital beds compared to what might be nine out of ten beds if we did not quarantine ourselves. The Governor is racing to close the care gap of beds with the new National Guard build outs and other means. In the hurry against time, this provides for a mannerly way to care for those who will come down with the virus who need hospitalization. New reliable data from the national Italian viral infection will certainly extend the timeframe of the Stay-at-Home Order; so much is unknown at this time.

The Salem Church congregation voted to close for the March 29<sup>th</sup> and April 5<sup>th</sup> services, and we await instructions from the Governor on when we should reopen. The building will be open on Sunday mornings for those who need a place to meditate and feel closer to God if precautions are enforced. Lent and Easter celebrations may be cancelled and scheduled for a later time.

If we ponder God's Word and Jesus is our Lord and Savior, we have nothing to worry about dying with this deadly virus; we will go to heaven. Christ died on the cross to make us right with the Father if we ask forgiveness for our sins by the blood of Christ and believe that God rose Him from the dead (Romans 10:9-10). Jesus died and rose again to prove that there is life after death for Christ-believers.

As Christians, such a time as this is an opportunity to serve others in the thousands of little ways of love-filled means of helping others. Matthew 5:16 NLT says it like this: "In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father." Let's show God's love to others as the crisis unfolds "in such a time as this!"

*Pastor Tom Emery*



## Goodness of God

*I love You Lord  
Oh Your mercy never fails me  
All my days  
I've been held in Your hands  
From the moment that I wake up  
Until I lay my head  
I will sing of the goodness of God*

*All my life You have been faithful  
All my life You have been so, so good  
With every breath that I am able  
I will sing of the goodness of God*

*I love Your voice  
You have led me through the fire  
In darkest nights*

*You are close like no other  
I've known You as a father*

*I've known You as a friend  
I have lived in the goodness of God*

*Bridge  
Your goodness is running after, it's running after me  
Your goodness is running after, it's running after me  
With my life laid down, I'm surrendered now, I give You everything  
Your goodness is running after, it's running after me*

Source: Bethel Music: [Song link](#).

## The Book of Ephesians 2:1-7

Paul begins this passage with our pre-Christian past. In verse 1, he begins with "And you" speaking to the Gentile non-Jews of Ephesus. Then he says "all" and "the others". He's talking about everyone, including me and you. He shows who we were before Christ, and it's not a pretty picture.

**We were dead** in our trespasses and sins. We were alienated from God. Because of our sin, we were cut off from true, eternal spiritual life given and sustained by God. Contrary to what the world tells us, we are not basically good.

We cannot do anything if we just believe in ourselves. **We were disobedient.** We followed the world. An unsaved person follows the influences and values of



the world which are contrary to God's values.

We followed Satan and took his bait to keep us in

the darkness. **We followed sinful desires** both in our flesh and our thought life. Our behavior is explained by all three of these influences - the world, Satan and the flesh. They all play a part in the sinful condition of man.

**We were doomed!** God is holy, and He will not sweep sin under the rug. Many think God in the Old Testament was a God of wrath but God in the New Testament is like Mr. Rogers. Wrong. What we have now is a period of patience. The door of mercy is open wide, and we can come into His grace and be saved. But the coming wrath of God is worse than in the Old Testament. God will act in a righteous manner, not in unrighteous revenge or in an outburst of anger. He will punish sin and sinners justly.

**The good news** for the Christian is that God's wrath has been poured out not on us but on the Savior. Jesus took the wrath of God that was to be ours, and **we were given grace instead.** Paul draws our attention to the depth of our depravity in order to magnify the mercy and grace of God in saving us.

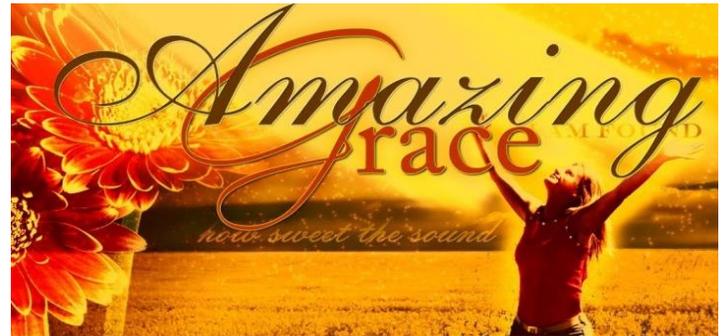
In verses 4-7, Paul shows us God's character. What prompted God's salvation was His **mercy, love, grace and kindness.** Paul speaks of "the immeasurable riches of His grace through His kindness". For all

eternity, we will be recipients of His mercy and grace. He has displayed infinite riches of grace in kindness to us. Thus, showing us what a loving God He is.

In God's mercy, grace, love and kindness, "God made us alive with Christ". Christianity is not about becoming a nicer person, nor is it about starting a new religious routine. It is about becoming a **new person.** Remember the story of Nicodemus? He came to Jesus to ask Him some spiritual questions. Nicodemus had a lot of religious knowledge but he had not been made alive. Jesus told him, *"I assure you: Unless someone is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God"*. (John 3:3) **We are made alive in Christ!**

When Jesus went to the cross, He took all of our disobedience, sinful desires and death with Him. He bore all of our despicable thoughts, all of our deplorable actions. Jesus, who knew no sin, became sin and was nailed to a criminal's cross! **Jesus willingly died** and took the wrath of God so we don't have to have it.

We see God's character come into play on the 3rd day after Jesus' death. Because of God's mercy, grace and loving kindness, He raised Jesus up, opened the tomb and made it possible for each of us to be **alive in Christ!**



What God did for Christ, He did for us as believers. In some strange way, when Jesus got up out of the tomb 2,000 years ago, we got up with Him. **God seated us with Christ.** This means that we do not have to give in to the darkness of this world and Satan's schemes. The reason God has shown us such grace is so we might be the demonstration of His grace forever. God says in effect, "Look what I can do with such a mess." Meditate on this - instead of wrath, we have the gift of everlasting grace!

Source "Christ-Centered Exposition" by David Platt (used in the Salem Women's Bible study).

## Psalm 91 Speaks to Your Coronavirus Fears

Now, read **Psalm 91** in full, and meditate on the truths of God's comfort and protection:

<sup>1</sup> Those who live in the shelter of the Most High  
will find rest in the shadow of the Almighty.

<sup>2</sup> This I declare about the LORD:  
He alone is my refuge, my place of safety;  
he is my God, and I trust him.

<sup>3</sup> For he will rescue you from every trap  
and protect you from deadly disease.

<sup>4</sup> He will cover you with his feathers.  
He will shelter you with his wings.  
His faithful promises are your armor and protection.

<sup>5</sup> Do not be afraid of the terrors of the night,  
nor the arrow that flies in the day.

<sup>6</sup> Do not dread the disease that stalks in darkness,  
nor the disaster that strikes at midday.

<sup>7</sup> Though a thousand fall at  
your side,  
though ten thousand are  
dying around you,  
these evils will not touch  
you.

<sup>8</sup> Just open your eyes,  
and see how the wicked  
are punished.

<sup>9</sup> If you make the LORD your  
refuge,  
if you make the Most High  
your shelter,

<sup>10</sup> no evil will conquer you;  
no plague will come near  
your home.

<sup>11</sup> For he will order his angels  
to protect you wherever you go.

<sup>12</sup> They will hold you up with their hands  
so you won't even hurt your foot on a stone.

<sup>13</sup> You will trample upon lions and cobras;  
you will crush fierce lions and serpents under your  
feet!

<sup>14</sup> The LORD says, "I will rescue those who love me.  
I will protect those who trust in my name.

<sup>15</sup> When they call on me, I will answer;  
I will be with them in trouble.  
I will rescue and honor them.

<sup>16</sup> I will reward them with a long life  
and give them my salvation."

This Psalm 91 NLT translation bursts with assurances about the protection of God—filled with words like shelter, refuge, fortress, shield, deliver, rescue, and satisfy. At this time of global pandemic with the novel coronavirus COVID-19, this Psalm speaks God's power, presence, intentions, and protection against fear. Described as a covering for His people, God's comfort is a wing of security amidst this world's uncertainties and suffering.

## Will God Protect Us from Pestilence?

Psalm 91 was used by Satan to tempt Jesus in the desert (see [Matthew 4:5-7](#)). The Devil said that surely Jesus could place Himself in the way of harm in order to demonstrate the rescuing power of God. But Satan misused God's Word, removing it from the context of the whole and unity of Scripture. Jesus, honoring Scripture, responded that God is not to be put to the test. Careless behavior is not condoned by God—and neither is misuse of Scripture.

Learning from Jesus, then, we also must handle Scripture well in our times. That God is our refuge, comfort, and shade amidst pandemic does not mean that if we believe in Jesus Christ we have physical immunity to COVID-19—all credible commentators agree.

However, verses in this Psalm do appear to promise present, bodily deliverance from pestilence. The word pestilence means any sudden fatal epidemic or pandemic, and in its Biblical use it generally indicates that these are divine visitations. The word is most frequently used in the prophetic books. Consider, for example, verses 3 and 6: "For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence" and "You will not fear . . . the pestilence that stalks in darkness, nor the destruction that wastes at noonday." How do we faithfully interpret those statements?



## Israelite Context

First, we can remember God's covenants with Israel, in which God promises abundance as the nation is faithful. As listeners of this psalm commit themselves to God, He would give success in their purpose of inhabiting the promised land and being God's beacon to the nations. As they trusted, no pestilence would keep the Israelite army from defeating its enemies and from becoming the nation God promised.

Consider [Exodus 19:4-6a](#), which contains similar imagery to Psalm 91 of God's protective wing:

*"You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."*

The psalm does not promise, then, that no Israelite would ever become ill. God promised that no pandemic would keep them from being the nation He foretold they would become. And the ones who would become ill and pass from this life are not excluded from the promises of God for Israel that will be fulfilled at the end of this age.

1. We know from the wider testimony of Scripture that God's promised deliverance is spiritual in the present, while being spiritual and bodily in the age to come.
2. We know that in God's common grace in this world and in His Fatherly love for believers, all bodily healing that does happen in this life is from His generous hand.
3. We know that God's plans for this world are secure—His plans for Israel, as well as His plans for the Church and all believers.

In our times, God has promised the believer that He has prepared good works for us to do ([Ephesians 2:10](#)). No coronavirus can come between us and His plans. For the believer, being able to glorify God with our lives is the ultimate hope and dream for this life. Being able to fulfill His will for us cannot be disrupted or cancelled.

Hear God's message to you that your life is beneath the shelter and shadow of His wings. He is your life's fortress, delivering you to spiritual strength now and certain bodily strength as well in eternity. This day, no arrows of evil or of disease can touch the meaning and purpose that God is pulling from your life. Make the Lord your refuge, and nothing will be able to affect or infect you that will diminish God's purposes for you.

The psalm ends with what is referred to by commentators as a divine oracle. God is speaking to His people. And He promises that those who call upon Him will be answered; that those who hold fast to Him will be delivered; that those who trust Him for who He is will be protected.

### How Can We 'Rest in the Shadow of the Almighty'?

Jesus gives us words in [Luke 21](#) that are parallel in theme to Psalm 91. Hearing them and receiving them into our spirits, we can receive the security that Psalm 91 promises to rest in our Almighty God.

In [Luke 21](#), Jesus is speaking about the signs of the end of times. In verse 10, He speaks of wars—of nation rising against nation. In verse 11, He speaks of earthquake, famine, pestilence, terrors, and signs from heaven. In verses 12-17, He talks of persecution for Christians and times when we will be delivered over to authorities for death.

He concludes in verses 18-19: "But not a hair of your head will perish. By your endurance you will gain your lives." Think about this: Jesus says that in dying, not a hair on our heads will perish.

We who believe are spiritually secure through Christ—never to face judgment. We are eternally secure—headed to the place of no suffering or pain. We are presently secure in purpose—no event of the world can surprise, overwhelm, or demote us from fulfilling God's good works for us here. And, by Jesus' words, we are to consider ourselves miraculously secure when meeting the eruptive trials of this life.

God's protection is beyond our understanding. And so, my conviction is to read Psalm 91 exactly how it sounds—that nothing even of my body can be touched by the coronavirus. Though I die, not a hair of my head will perish. Even if my body is touched by COVID-19, it cannot be harmed. In the paradox is the hope. For, the age to come is not ever to be viewed by the believer as a distant and abstract reality.

Touch the hairs of your head—reach up and grab them. Know that you are the Lord's and no evil or manifestation of evil in this world can touch you, not even a strand you hold. You will suffer in this world. Yet, Jesus has overcome it. So, you being in Him, nothing can touch you. Whatever does touch you, His hand is the closer layer abiding over you like a shadow of protection.

### 9 Ways We Can Take Comfort in God During Coronavirus Fears

Knowing this God is our comfort. Psalm 91 describes Him as our shelter, shadow, refuge, fortress, refuge, shield, buckler, dwelling, rescuer, and protection.

1. **Shelter** (v. 1): God is our hiding place, covering us with His good purposes.
2. **Shadow** (v. 1): God is over and beyond us—seeing more than we see and knowing more than we know. We can rest in His shadow.
3. **Refuge** (v. 2): He is a safe place for us of security; we climb into Him.
4. **Fortress** (v. 2): He is our defense whose promises cannot be inhibited.
5. **Shield** (v. 4): Resting in our God deflects the enemies of fear and doubt in times of trial.
6. **Buckler** (or, shield that completely engulfs) (v. 4): He is a defense on every side. He knows every part of us and our lives—no aspect is beyond His reach.
7. **Dwelling** (v. 9): God's protection is not fleeting; His protection serves for our continual habitation.
8. **Rescuer** (v. 14): He leads us off with Him, drawing us to Himself and rescuing us from being overcome by the world.
9. **Protection** (v. 14): In His protection, He carries us to an elevated place—by trusting in Him, our minds and hearts become inaccessible to the churning fears below.

As believers, we have committed to Christ that our lives and times are in His hands; our dream is that our days might bring Him eternal glory. The reality of God's comfort and power to deliver us to eternal life is what gives us the spiritual deliverance from being dominated by pandemic in these days. The promises of God – of life to come and of His divine purposes in this life – shade, shelter, and satisfy us. When fears of the coronavirus and its impacts surround us, how much fiercer is the security of an infinite God!

Adapted from "How Psalm 91 Speaks to Your Coronavirus Fears" by Lianna Davis. [Crosswalk.com](#)

## Salem Sights



March 1st St. David's Day event visiting quartet



The St. David Day Reception



The Reception cake



St. David's Day Junior Bells

## Church Financial Update

Before the pandemic hit Salem Church, we were doing financially better than last year at this time. With church services being suspended by the State of Ohio, we need more than ever for our church family to continue their giving to keep up, during the trying time. Church offerings should be mailed to the church at:

**Salem United Presbyterian Church  
PO Box 678  
Venedocia, Ohio 45894**

Last March 29th offering:	\$1,226.30
Needed to Date:	\$25,854.12
Received to Date:	\$30,704.10

## Gymanfa Ganu 2020

In these difficult days with the virus consuming our thoughts, try to remember the beautiful sounds of our Welsh music from the Gymanfa each year. Once again, we turn our thoughts towards sharing our heritage and gift of music with all of you. Mark your calendar for Sunday September 6, 2020. Our director this year is Kevin Fancher. As a bit of background, he has been attending the Gymanfa in Venedocia since he was 1 year old. His grandparents were married at Salem (Bob Bates and Jane Letitia Morris).

We look forward to healthy days and more sunshine to bring us to a happy time of celebration. Until we see you on September 6<sup>th</sup>, keep a song in your heart!

## Updated Communication

We will shortly have available electronic call-in, Facebook and Zoom meetings to gather together during the Stay-at-Home Order. We are also rebuilding our Salem Church Facebook page. More updates will follow.

# IN OUR THOUGHTS & PRAYERS

Remember our elderly members, soldiers, and college students with cards and visits.

## **Natalie Morgan Wilkins**

Vancrest Healthcare  
10357 VW—Decatur  
Van Wert, OH 45891

## **Marjorie Rhoades**

Hearth & Home  
1118 Westwood Dr.  
Van Wert, OH 45891

## **Marian Morris**

Hearth & Home  
1118 Westwood Dr.  
Van Wert, OH 45891

## **Serving our Country**

### **Cory McCollow**

(U.S. Coast Guard)  
311 Oak Street #109  
Oakland, CA 94607

**Phoebe Eutsler** (Army)

### **Micah Linger**

Grandson of Doris Evans  
(U.S. Marine Corps)

## **Away at College**

**Evan Pugh** – Aquinas University, Grand Rapids

**Andrew Emery** – University of Cincinnati

**Christina Emery** – University of Cincinnati

## **Birthdays**

2 Lyndi Breese/Forsythe	6 Carol Emery
8 Andy Breese	12 MaKenna Kimmet
13 Sami Jones	16 Bill Evans
20 Kevin Matthews	22 Elgarda McGee
23 Grant Zielke	25 Julia Morris/Moliter
26 Gwenda Blackmore	29 Jenny Pugh
30 Ruth Evans	

## **Anniversaries**

John & Mary Ellen Lloyd

## **Condolences**

Condolences to the family of Steve Gullickson

## **Prayer Concerns**

Connie Bassett (breast cancer)  
Kyle Baxter (brain cancer)  
Warren (Punkin) Burnett  
Barry Coil (stroke)  
Kathy Comer  
Amy Cunningham (Fibromyalgia)  
John Davis (stroke)  
Cathy Donnal (health issues)  
Kent DuCheney (surgery)  
Aiden Ellerbrock (serious injuries from a fall)  
Betty Ellis (rapidly failing health)  
Catie Emery (nightmares)  
Rod Eutsler (hip surgery)  
Stephanie Gamble (eye issues)  
Suzanne Hadley-Himes (recurrent cancer)  
Bill Harmon (cancer)  
Tim Huster (cancer)  
Connie Johnson (cancer)  
Jan Jones (health Issues)  
Paula Jones (healing from fall)

Dale Kiesza (leg operation)  
Nancy Lautzenheiser (colon cancer)  
Linda Lissey (cancer)  
Bob Louth, Jr (prostate health)  
LuAnn (family issues)  
Carol Matthews (Lou Gehrig's disease)  
Tom Menker (cancer)  
Marian Morris  
Joan Poling  
Terry Profit (chemotherapy)  
Mallory Rentz (blood clot in brain)  
Marjorie Rhoades  
Derek Sellers (Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy)  
Julie Sheets (cancer)  
Sherry Siler (cancer)  
Bruce Taylor (had a liver transplant)  
Martha Jean Evans Vasquez  
Natalie Wilkins (failing health)  
Noah Wyatt (son of Stuart Wyatt)

## April 2020

Sunday	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
<b>5 Palm Sunday</b> 9:30 Worship 10:45 Sunday School 5:00 Trustee Meeting <b>Cancelled</b>	6	<b>7</b> 7pm Women's Bible Study	8	9	10	11
<b>12 EASTER SUNDAY</b> <b>Lincolnview Bible offering</b> 8:00 AM Breakfast 9:00 AM Flower the Cross 9:30 AM Worship	13	<b>14</b> 7pm Women's Bible Study	15	16	17	18
<b>19</b> 9:30 Worship –Confirmation and baptism 10:45 Sunday School 11:30 Session Meeting 5:00 Trustee Meeting	20	<b>21</b> 7pm Women's Bible Study	<b>22 Noon-Senior Luncheon</b> <b>Cancelled</b>	23	24	25
<b>26</b>	27	<b>28</b> 7pm Women's Bible Study	29	30		

Week of	Nursery	Flowers	Organist
April 5	Bill & Ruth Evans	Lisa Lloyd	Becky Reichard
April 12	Nursery avail-not staffed	Lisa Lloyd	Connie O'Neil
April 19	Jeff & Kim Coil	Liz Hobs	Becky Reichard
April 26	Todd & Jayne Morris	Liz Hobbs	Dave VanTilburg
Ushers	Bob & Kathy McCollow	Greeter	Rex Lloyd
<b>Ushers</b>	Bob & Kathy McCollow	<b>Greeter:</b>	Rex Lloyd

Salem Presbyterian Church  
P.O. Box 678  
Venedocia, Ohio 45894



Flowering of the Cross on the church porch in anticipation of the Easter Service

## *Sounds of Salem Newsletter*

Church Phone: 419-667-4142

Church Web Pages: [www.SalemChurch.cc](http://www.SalemChurch.cc)  
[www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) (Page is being renamed)

Secretary E-Mail: [Secretary@SalemChurch.cc](mailto:Secretary@SalemChurch.cc)

Secretary's cell: 419-303-2032

Rev. Thomas Emery's cell: 419-863-9131

Pastor's Email: [PastorTomEmery@live.com](mailto:PastorTomEmery@live.com)

April 2020 REVISED COMMON LECTIONARY YEAR B	
<b>Palm/Passion Sunday – April 5</b>	
Isa. 50:4-9a	Psalm 31:9-16
Phil. 2:5-11	Matt. 26:14-27:66
<b>Resurrection of the Lord/Easter – April 12</b>	
Acts 10:34-43	Psalm 118:1-2, 14-24
1 Cor. 3:1-4	John 20:1-18
<b>2<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter – April 19</b>	
Acts 2:14a, 22-32	Psalm 16
1 Peter 1:3-9	John 20:19-31
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of Easter – April 26</b>	
Acts 2:14a, 36-41	Psalm 116:1-4, 12-19
1 Peter 1:17-23	Luke 24:13-35