

Good News & the Coronavirus

You asked Ruth to speak about missions. Mission is a word that describes our purpose in life. As followers of Jesus *our mission* is to announce – “announce good news” – which is what the word “gospel” means...

1. that Jesus – the Christ, the expected coming King, died for our sins, as the Scriptures said he would;
2. that he was buried (people who die are buried in a tomb!);
3. that he was raised on the third day, as the Scriptures said he would be; and
4. that he appeared to real people; there were living witnesses they could ask whether it was true!

The apostle Paul wrote this to the church in Corinth. We read it, you can read it, in *1 Corinthians 15*: fifty-eight verses about dying and being raised from death. There is everything to expect, there is nothing to fear. We call it HOPE!

In this chapter Paul used three important words in writing to the Corinthians.

1. *appeared* – 4 times in 4 verses
2. *raised* – 16 times in 58 verses
3. *resurrection* – 5 times

As Paul said (1 Cor. 15:19) “If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men [and women!]” As followers of Jesus, we do not need to fear! He confronted and defeated death on the cross. And it will be destroyed finally when Jesus returns, when those who have died in Christ are raised, and we are raised - caught up with them - and reunited with resurrection bodies.

Of course the word resurrection raises all kinds of *why - what - when - who & how* questions. Paul has a whole chapter to talk about these questions; you can read them for yourselves after we are done. What I want to ask is **what do we do now**, as the Coronavirus spreads and infects throughout Pucallpa, the Ucayali and Perú, as people suffer and die and lose family members. Let us leave you with five words:

1. *Lament*. We lament the suffering of men, women and families in economic distress; we reach out to help them as we are able.
2. *Grieve*. We grieve the deaths of those who have died from this enemy called the coronavirus. Grief is a divine reminder that persons are created for relationships, that we have loved and have been loved. Grief is that natural and normal human response to the loss of someone close to us. The Bible does not disparage or discourage grieving. Instead it invites us into the presence of those who suffer deeply the loss and pain of separation. Experiencing grief is natural and normal, it is necessary to move forward in life.
3. *Pray*. After Jesus left the Passover meal he shared with his disciples – before his arrest, trial, sentence and cross – he went to Gethsemane and cried out in agony to the Father: “If this is possible, let this cup of suffering and death pass from me. Nevertheless, not my will but your will be done.” Let us pray for our friends, our families, our communities, our country, as we pass through this pandemic.
4. *Help*. We can find practical ways to help our neighbors. Jesus fed the hungry, healed the sick, bound up the injured, searched for the lost, strengthened the weak. Jesus was very practical.
5. *Hope*. We move into the future with hope. Hope in the King’s coming to make all things new. Hope in the Light that has come into the world. Resurrection hope! Again, in Paul’s words: “The one who calls you is faithful and he will do it” (1 Thessalonians 5:24).