

Hello, everyone. Thanks for tuning in. I'm Pastor Nathan Cordes. Here is the April 5, 2020 video from **St. John's Lutheran Church** in Lake City, MN.

I keep hearing how fearful people are. Some are nearly scared to death. I get that. Fear knocks on my door too. God designed us humans with the ability to fear, if not originally, then as part of the redesign that seems to have taken place after Adam's fall into sin. Fear can be your enemy if you let it control you. But fear can actually be a blessing to us humans if it moves us to gather up facts and form strategies. If you are also a believer in Jesus, fear can serve as a reminder to pray. God promises in Psalm 50: "*Call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you will honor me.*" There are quite a number of Bible verses which urge us not to stay afraid. Isaiah 41:10 is one of my favorites. There the Lord says: "*Do not fear, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.*" Our best reason for not holding on to our fear is that God has redeemed us from all sin and from death through Jesus Christ. God's got you. You're either going to live here under His grace, or you're going to live with Him forever in His heavenly home.

After you deal with the spiritual component of fear, you can address what is making you feel afraid and figure out how to cope with it. The German-speaking people who founded this congregation 132 years ago appreciated a good proverb. A popular proverb among the German Christians was, "Bleiben sie mit die mitteldinge." Stay with the things in the middle. Keep to the center. Don't get too far to the right or to the left. This old German proverb can help us as we deal with the COVID-19 virus. We don't want to let fear control us so that we are more afraid than is helpful. We also don't want to disregard fear so that we bring harm to ourselves, or more likely in this case, bring harm to many others. Not too much fear. Not too little fear. Stay in the middle.

So you see that I have 20 legos here. Let these legos represent 20 people who catch the COVID-19 contagion. We don't know the actual number who will get infected. Some won't, and if you are among the people who are not going catch the virus, you definitely don't want to let fear be in charge of your mind. But if fear keeps you at home and gets you to wash your hands with soap before you touch your face, sounds like fear has led you into a wise strategy. If fear of this virus has pushed you to get your will written or updated and get your beneficiaries named, sounds like fear is benefitting you.

Of course, the experts are predicting that many of us will catch this virus. Should we be afraid? Yes, but stay in the middle. Here's what I mean. Look at these 20 legos. I'm not a scientist. I'm not a medical expert. But I'm going to repeat some statistics that are widely available through national news sources. Don't get stuck on the statistics if mine are slightly different from yours. Stick with me while I make a few points about fear. Look at these 20 legos. For every 20 people who actually get infected with COVID-19, the experts are saying that 10 will either not notice any symptoms or not be bothered by their slight symptoms. That's half of all those who get infected. Should you 10 out of 20 be afraid? Not for yourself. But here's where I would ask you please to be a little afraid. Your infection might not hurt you, but you could still unknowingly spread the virus to others who will be knocked down hard by it, maybe because you are not being careful. It's good to stay in the center between too much fear and no fear.

Now the CDC is advising everyone to wear masks when they go out to public places. They don't want us wearing the N95 masks. Let's leave the N95 masks for the medical community. The rest of us can wear homemade masks, or bandanas, or scarves. But we are wise to wash our hands before we put our mask on or take it off. Most masks can still let in some of the virus around the edges. So these masks are not intended to keep us from getting the virus. These masks are intended to keep us from unknowingly spreading the virus to others. These masks catch up to 99% of the virus that we could spread by sneezing, coughing, talking, and possibly just by breathing. Here's where I encourage you to stay in the center. Be somewhat afraid, because fear can be your friend and everyone else's friend if it leads you to wear a mask out in public places so that you 10 out of every 20 don't accidentally spread the virus to someone else.

Now let's talk about the next 6 out of 20. The experts are saying that 6 out of 20 people who get infected by COVID-19 will feel bad: fever, body aches, coughing, sneezing, other symptoms. Should you 6 out of 20 be afraid? Maybe a little. Be afraid enough to isolate yourself from others, cover your cough and sneeze, and don't touch things that others will touch. But the experts are saying you 6 out of 20 will recover within two or three weeks. That doesn't sound so scary.

Now let's talk about the next 4 out of 20. The experts are saying that 4 out of 20 are going to be very sick. These 4 will need medical attention. Should we 4 out of 20 be afraid? Maybe a little. Let's be afraid enough to pay attention to our symptoms, and have someone check in with us often enough to call for help if necessary. The experts are saying that some of us 4 will need oxygen, others will need prescription medications, but we will still recover. Some of us 4 may need to

be put on a ventilator, and still we will recover. That sounds uncomfortable, but the possibility of recovery gives me a reason to be hopeful. So I'm going to stay in the center between too much fear and not enough.

Now let's talk about the small percentage of people who won't survive.

Depending on your age and underlying health, it might be less than 1 out of every 20 who dies from COVID-19. Some experts say that 3 out of 20 in the at-risk group will succumb. Should we be afraid? Not even a little. "*Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil. For thou art with me*" (Psalm 23:4). If the Holy Spirit has brought you to faith in Jesus as your Savior, now is the time to stare death in the face and say, "You were gonna get me sooner or later anyway, because I am descended from my first parents, Adam and Eve. And I have added plenty of my own sins to this life. "The wages of sin" has always been "death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). Death, because of Jesus I'm ready for you to take me down, if that's what God chooses for me. So what if you use COVID-19 this year, or a heart attack in five years, or something else in ten years. So what! My soul will be with my Savior Jesus in heaven. You'll have my body only until the Last Day. And then my God will sound the trumpet, and you'll have to give up my body forever. You will lose and I will win, thanks to my Redeemer Jesus."

COVID-19 is a little scary. But this is how I deal with my fear. I hope it helps you.

Peace in Jesus.