Good morning Colonial! And good morning to all those who are tuning in from many locations around the world! My name is Jim West, and it is my honor to serve as one of the pastors here at Colonial. Now, before I jump into the Gospel of John, I want to provide a few updates.

First of all, many of you know that my family has been quarantined for the past week and remains under quarantine even now. Our quarantine was mandated by the Kansas Health Department because we, along with hundreds of others, were recently in Summit County, CO for spring break, and our state officials considered that area (along with several others) to be of high risk for exposure to the coronavirus. I want you to know that our family has taken this quarantine seriously, though we are all quite well and showing no signs of illness one week after our time in Colorado, thanks be to God! The state guidelines for self-quarantine allow for me to leave my house and come to work as long as I maintain at least six feet of distance from others, so I am maintaining my six feet of social distancing even as I preach from this stage, and I will return home immediately following this service to finish out our time of quarantine. I’m saying this only to reinforce the importance of honoring our local, state, and federal officials who are working hard to lead us well, and to lead by my own example for those under my direct influence. These are serious times, real lives are at stake as we can now plainly observe all over the world and now in our own country, so please know that my family and I are doing what we can to protect the vulnerable from this pernicious disease. I trust that you will do the same.

Next, I want you to know that pretty much all of our groups and ministries are on hold for the next few weeks, at least up to April 11th. We are trying to honor our President’s request for no gatherings over 10 people, and that knocks out MOST of what we do as a church! We have not yet made any decisions regarding our summer mission trips, though we will make decisions as we get into the next few weeks and learn more about the spread or containment of Covid 19.

Finally, I want you to know that God is still on the throne, amen! None of the unprecedented circumstances of this hour have come as a surprise to our Lord…He is not wringing His hands in heaven with worry and uncertainty. No matter how dire the circumstances, we can be confident that He is still in the business of working all things together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose! I am so grateful for Pastor Greg Ealey and his inspiring message last Sunday…I needed that…I think we all did.

These are difficult days…trust me…I get it. I have endured the full spectrum of emotions this week…including my own panic attack and sense of dread. However, the Lord has moved in my heart to return to this incredible story found in John 6:1-15 because I think it is here that we will see and hear our call to action as the Church. So, let us now return to John’s Gospel, and once again, let us read John 6:1-14.

After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. 2 And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. 3 Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. 4 Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. 5 Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, “Where are we to buy bread, so
that these people may eat?” 6 He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do. 7 Philip answered him, “Two hundred denarii[a] worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little.” 8 One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, said to him, 9 “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?” 10 Jesus said, “Have the people sit down.” Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. 11 Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. 12 And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, “Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost.” 13 So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. 14 When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!”

Now, Pastor Greg did a wonderful job of preaching on this text last week. My message this morning is not in any way an attempt to trump or amend his anointed message. On the contrary, his message inspired this message, and I want to share with you what the Lord has shown me through this text as it pertains to our call to action as a church. So…I won’t geek out on the text quite as much as I normally would, but I want to engage you around four primary subheadings: 1) The Problem and the Opportunity; 2) The Turning Point; 3) Lessons Learned; and 4) The Call to Action.

I. The Problem and the Opportunity

To truly appreciate this story and the power it has to speak into our current crisis, we must take a minute to understand the context. We know more about this particular event in the life and ministry of Jesus than most, with the exception of Jesus’s last week of life. Why? Because the feeding of the five thousand is recorded in each of the four gospel accounts, and as we study each one, we can put several pieces of the puzzle together that help establish context. So, let me make three observations.

1) Two significant events took place that prompted Jesus to withdraw from Capernaum and sail over to Bethsaida. Both help us to understand the emotional state of Jesus and His disciples on this day. The first event was the return of Jesus’ disciples from their spring mission trip. The synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) record that some time before our story in John 6, Jesus had sent the disciples out to every surrounding village to proclaim the Kingdom of God, to heal the sick and cast out demons, and to prepare people to meet Jesus. On this particular day of our story, the disciples had just returned and were eager to debrief their experiences with Jesus. So we get the sense that part of the reason Jesus withdraws with His disciples to a “desolate place” is to have quality time alone with His apprentices.

The second significant event that happened just before our story takes place is the execution of John the Baptist. We learn in Mark 6 that Jesus learns of John’s death right before He withdraws to Bethsaida, and I think that is quite significant. I think we can assume that part of the reason Jesus is withdrawing with His disciples is out of grief following the unjust execution of a man whom they all loved and admired very much.

Now why is that context important? It’s important to understand that Jesus and the disciples were real people with real emotions and needs. Jesus and His disciples were in “hunker down mode” on the day this story takes place…can you see that? They were grieving, they were exhausted, and the death of John the Baptist was clearly foreshadowing their own martyrdom
that was likely to come. They were dealing with many of the same emotions that we are dealing with in this hour of our history. If you don’t get that…if you don’t feel what they are feeling as they get into the boat and set out for a “desolate place”…if you don’t understand their deep need to hide, to recover, to find solace in one another…then you won’t appreciate just how profoundly this story speaks to our situation right now. OK…I can’t see your eyes (and I really miss seeing your eyes!), so if you get this…if you feel in your gut where Jesus and His disciples are emotionally as they climb into the boat…just chime in on FB with, “I feel it.” You have to feel what they are feeling in order to appreciate what comes next.

2) OK, my second observation is where they went. Our text tells us that they left and went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. We learn from Luke that they sailed from Capernaum to the region of Bethsaida (show map https://ischristianitytrue.files.wordpress.com/2017/08/bethsaida.jpg?w=768&h=768), which would, in fact, be the other side of the Sea of Galilee, right? It wasn’t a long trip; however, if they were fighting any kind of a southerly or easterly wind, we can understand how the crowds could have actually made it to the other side before they arrived in the boat. That’s actually how this story reads when we consider all four accounts. And that leads me to my third observation…

3) Things did not go as planned. Clearly the intent of Jesus and His disciples was to escape…to hunker down…to retreat from the crowds and demands of ministry, to rest, and to process their grief. If ever there was a time that they felt justified to “take care of our own,” it was on this day. But watch what happens when they arrive on the shore near Bethsaida, according to Mark 6: “And they went away in the boat to a desolate place by themselves. Now many saw them going and recognized them, and they ran there on foot from all the town[s] and got there ahead of them. When he went ashore, he saw a great crowd, and he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. And He began to teach them many things.”

So…do you see the problem? The problem is this: the followers of Jesus are emotionally strung out…they are in “hunker down mode”…their only desire is to have Jesus for themselves and find solace in being with Him and being together…but when they arrive on this day, they discover a huge crowd with exceptional needs.

Is anyone relating to this story yet? Can I hear an Amen? Church, this is where we are right now. We are all dealing with emotional angst, exhaustion, grief, and uncertainty. Our natural tendency is to hunker down and take care of our own. We want Jesus to ourselves, and we want to find solace in being together. But what do we see before us? We see a crowd…a huge population…who are looking to us and our Lord with extraordinary needs. Now…we have a choice regarding how we will respond, and we see these choices presented to us in the text: we can respond to this situation as a problem, or we can respond to this situation as an opportunity.

Some of the disciples were clearly frustrated and perhaps annoyed by the presence and the needs of this crowd. In the synoptic accounts we actually hear some of the disciples say, “Lord, send them away.” That may seem heartless, but it’s honest, right? The disciples are generally overwhelmed, if not irritated by the enormous needs of the crowd, and they ask Jesus to “send them away.” Church…this is one way we can respond to the extraordinary and growing needs of
our community. We can circle our wagons; we can feel justifiably selfish about our needs…our losses…our safety…our self-preservation…and we can simply ask Jesus to “send them away.”

This is what I am calling a “problem” mentality when faced with extraordinary need, and clearly…as we see in scripture…the “problem mentality” is the natural, default position of even those who call themselves Jesus-followers. Once again, I thank God for the brutal and embarrassing honesty that we find in the gospel accounts. The emotionally strung out followers of Jesus then are not so different from the emotionally strung out followers of Jesus today, amen?

But notice how Jesus responds to this situation. Jesus, as a man like all men, suffers the same emotional roller-coaster as the rest of us; however, when Jesus sees the crowd and their extraordinary needs, He has compassion upon them, for He understands that they are like sheep without a shepherd.

I want you to think about this picture. Sheep are defenseless creatures. Their safety is not contingent upon their claws or teeth or their ability to outrun their predators. The safety and survival of sheep is dependent upon the Shepherd. Shepherd-less sheep are vulnerable…even more vulnerable then they themselves realize. Jesus sees the “shepherd-less sheep,” and He thinks of their needs, not His own. He thinks of their plight and places their well-being over His needs and those of His disciples! Don’t miss this. Jesus is not unfamiliar with the needs of His disciples…and He is certainly compassionate and caring for His apprentices…but at this critical moment…on this long and difficult day, Jesus prioritizes the needs of the shepherd-less sheep over the needs of those sheep who now benefit from the provision and protection of the Good Shepherd! I believe that is a fair and accurate reading of the text; and I suspect that was not lost on the disciples, either!

Whereas the disciples saw the needy crowds as a problem, Jesus sees this moment of extreme need as an opportunity to Shepherd the shepherd-less sheep. And He clearly expects His disciples to do the same, right? How do we know? Because when darkness spreads across the land, and the needs of the crowd increase, Jesus assumes that He and His church will minister to the needs of the shepherd-less sheep.

In all three accounts in the synoptic gospels, the disciples initiate this awkward conversation with Jesus by presenting the problem. They say, “Lord, this is a desolate place, and the day is now over. Send the crowds away to go into the villages to buy food for themselves.” In each instance, Jesus turns the problem into an opportunity for His disciples to do ministry. In John’s account Jesus asks Phillip, “Where are we to buy bread so that these people can eat?” In Matthew’s account, Jesus responds to the whole group, saying, “They need not go away; you give them something to eat.”

We know from John’s testimony that Jesus already knows what He is going to do. He is now testing His disciples, and of course, the disciples panic. Phillip speaks for them all when he says, “Two hundred denarii worth of bread…[two hundred days of wages]…would not be enough for each of them to get a little.” Phillip was clearly the Finance Elder at his church! Just kidding Tim Madderom…we have an awesome finance elder! But seriously, Phillip is just being a
practical businessman, right? The need is overwhelmingly beyond our capacity…we don’t even need a calculator to figure that out, right?

How many of you know that this is sadly the way many Christians and churches respond in times of crisis? We look at the need, and we throw up our hands in hopelessness. If we can’t do everything, we decide to do nothing.

Now, notice: Jesus didn’t ask Phillip HOW they would pay for the crowd to eat; He asked where they could get the bread. Jesus didn’t tell the disciples to launch a fundraiser to feed the crowd, he told them to get started with what they had. And when they complained that they didn’t have enough, Jesus asks in Mark 6: “How many loaves do you have? Go and see…”

And that leads to my second subheading…

II. The Turning Point

The turning point of this story comes through Andrew. Andrew doesn’t allow his pessimism to paralyze his obedience. Andrew has seen Jesus at work before, and so when Jesus says go and see how many loaves you have, Andrew gets started. He asks for those in the crowd to volunteer whatever food they have with them to see what was available to feed 5,000 men. Amazingly, the only person to step forward…the only soul to sacrifice his own meal so that others might eat…is a boy. We can assume this boy is not wealthy; he is not overly educated; he is not yet even considered a full-blown apprentice of Jesus; but this boy has been listening to Jesus, and his heart is moved to bring what he has.

Andrew brings the small lunch of five small barley loaves and two fish to Jesus. Andrew reveals his wavering faith when he says, “There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?” Andrew asks the question that we all ask when faced with such incredible need and limited resources, “What is this in our hands as compared to the needs of so many?”

But notice: that’s not the right question to be asking. Here’s the right question: what will Jesus do with the little we have when we give it over to Him?

And here’s what we learn: Jesus will take what we give to Him, and He will thank God for us! He will thank the Father for the generosity of His Church! He will bless what has been given to Him, and then He will have His church distribute that which He has blessed…and that’s where the miracle begins!

Now…what was the miracle? The miracle was that a crowd of 5,000 men (not to mention a few thousand women and children that were also likely there) were fed that night without having to go anywhere! The miracle was that everyone had all they needed, and there was even a surplus. And of course, as a consequence of this miracle, the crowd exclaims in vs. 14, “This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!” Jesus was glorified…Jesus was recognized as the Messiah of God and the fulfillment of God’s promises. That is always the appropriate end to a miracle story, amen? People come to know Jesus. Now, I’ll pick up the story there next Sunday, but for now, let us reflect upon what we have learned…
III. Lessons Learned
As we think about what we can learn from this story, we must first ask this question: how did Jesus accomplish the miracle? We really don’t know, do we? The text doesn’t say. Traditionally we have assumed that Jesus supernaturally multiplied the fish and loaves so that the supplies never ran out. That is certainly a fair reading of the text. That is the way I have thought about this story for years. However, as I was researching this text, I discovered a reasonable and intriguing alternative way to understanding the “how” of this miraculous event. This alternative understanding brings every bit as much glory to Jesus and yet serves as a very practical lesson for the disciples then and now. Let me begin with these questions: What if Jesus knew that He did not need to manufacture bread and fish when, in fact, all the food that was necessary was already in the possession of the crowd? What if the true miracle here is the way Jesus powerfully moved the hearts of people from fear and selfishness to hearts of generosity? I’m not just speculating here…I think there are reasonable points that might lead us to this conclusion.

Here’s a few things to consider:

1) When Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness to turn stones into bread, Jesus emphatically said, NO! In the synoptic accounts, we learn that Jesus resisted using supernatural powers to feed Himself or to feed His starving nation when tempted by Satan. If Jesus resisted the temptation to supernaturally feed Himself and His people in the desert, I think it’s possible that Jesus might resist that temptation here in Bethsaida as well.

2) John reports in vs. 4 that the Passover was at hand. That means that many of the people from the villages assembling around Jesus in Bethsaida may have been pilgrims heading for Jerusalem to observe the Passover celebration. If that were the case, they would have had plenty of food for their journey in the bags and baskets that they carried along the way.

3) Consider this question: Was it that no one else had food, or was it that no one else was willing to share? When Jesus asks, “How many loaves do you have?” and orders his disciples to “go find out,” the disciples survey 5,000 men; yet only one boy was willing to come forward with his lunch. Should we not think that at least one or two others among 5,000 were also carrying a lunch in their customary Jewish basket that all Jews were known to carry on their backs?

4) Finally, this story is certainly a “teaching moment” for the disciples. John makes it very clear that Jesus is teaching the crowd many things; He is shepherding the shepherd-less; and He is testing His disciples …so the teaching value of this story is paramount to our understanding of what happened. There is certainly teaching value in Jesus’ supernatural ability to make much out of nothing…to supernaturally reproduce loaves and fishes in order to feed the masses. God the Father supernaturally produced manna for the Israelites in the desert for years; so clearly Jesus the Son has a precedent to do the same for these hungry villagers in Bethsaida. However, here’s what we know from 2000 years of church history: counting on God’s supernatural provision is not a disciplership strategy that can easily or regularly be replicated by Jesus followers then or now. Let’s look to our own history for example. All of us would say that God delivered us from our debt, right? We were buried under $9 M of debt just 7 years ago, and it felt overwhelming and daunting to even think about becoming debt free. God accomplished that miracle, but how
did God work in our congregation to accomplish that miracle? We did not make a $900 deposit and then wait on God to supernaturally multiply our deposit into $9 million so we could pay off our debt, right? That’s not how God worked in our past as a church; and we rarely see God working that way in our present. However…here is our testimony as a church: God moved fearful and self-protecting hearts to become courageous and generous hearts when we obediently got started with what we had in our hands. Again…God did that…We didn’t. We give Jesus all the glory, because looking at what we had to begin with, becoming debt-free looked all but impossible.

Church, consider this possibility: What if the lesson that Jesus is teaching His disciples in Bethsaida is less about Jesus’ supernatural abilities to multiply bread and fish than Jesus’ supernatural ability to change human hearts when His Church obeys His commands to get started with what they already have by faith? As I think over my 30 years of ministry, this is a lesson that I’ve learned and seen repeated over and over again, and I think that’s consistent throughout church history.

Now…we still hear occasional stories of God’s supernatural increase of food…I heard that story not long ago from our partners in Kenya. However, most of the time…in my experience, God brings the increase through the transformation of human hearts. That was certainly the story of how God miraculously delivered this church out of debt. That is the story of how the church shined brightly during the bubonic plague in the mid-1300s. This is the story of how the church established hospitals and orphanages and cared for widows in times of war. It is this very story that explains why times of crisis have historically been the Church’s finest hour! When the Church obediently turns towards the hurting culture with faithful generosity in Jesus’ name, miraculous provision is the result because God moves, and human hearts are transformed from fearful to generous.

Some of you are concerned that this alternative reading of the story might belittle the supernatural power of Jesus. I disagree. Transforming a fearful, hoarding heart to a generous, giving heart requires perhaps even a greater miracle than multiplying bread and fish, amen? I believe that kind of miracle comes only through the power of Jesus our Lord. And, as I think about our current circumstances, this is exactly the kind of miracle we need right now.

III. Lessons Learned: What lessons have we learned?

1) We as Jesus-followers must stop looking at the needs of people as a problem that frightens us, and start looking upon the needs of our city with compassion. We must come to see this hour in history as an opportunity to care for “sheep without a shepherd” in Jesus name and for His glory!

2) Though we should rightfully acknowledge that our needs and concerns are real, we must also acknowledge WITH GRATITUDE that we are NOT shepherd-less sheep. The LORD is our Shepherd, and we shall not be in want! The LORD is our Shepherd, and He has not forgotten us. The LORD is our Shepherd, and He will supply our every need. The LORD is our Shepherd, and He is faithful! We are not shepherd-less people, which means…we prioritize the needs of the shepherd-less over our own. We lead the way in generosity at our own expense. We lead the way in obedience to our LORD by serving others over ourselves, even if that means we set aside
our comfort and our needs for a time. I know that sounds harsh, but should we not expect that in obediently serving our LORD, that our very needs will actually be satisfied in ways that we could never hope or imagine? Isn’t that how the LORD has always worked in the church? That has certainly been true in my life.

3) The third lesson is this: we don’t despair over the need, nor do we do nothing because we can’t do everything! It will always appear to us that what we have in our hands is paltry in comparison to the need. But we must be faithful to give what we have to Jesus, and to get started with what we already have.

4) We must trust God, that through the power of His Holy Spirit, generosity will beget generosity. God has all the resources necessary to meet the needs of our hurting city; but He will unlock those resources from the vaults of fearful hearts when His Church leads the way, obediently presenting what we have to Jesus and distributing what He has blessed.

5) We must also trust God that when we are obedient to generously give what we have to Jesus, to faithfully get started distributing what Jesus has blessed; there will be more than enough…there will be a surplus, and God will be glorified!

This is the Word of the Lord, amen? So…let me conclude now with our call to action!

**IV. The Call to Action**

I have been working with our leadership team and Elders all week to create a pathway for us to respond to the great needs that are accelerating with alarming speed in our city. This is a work in progress, so please know we will be developing systems and strategies as we go, but in the most basic way I am asking you to consider two pathways:

1) Colonial’s “Bless the City” Offering

Long before Covid 19 hit our shores, we had already planned on hosting a Bless Our City offering on Easter Sunday. But we can’t wait until Easter, amen? The need is real, and now is the time to launch the Bless Our City offering. Now…our original goal for this offering was just over $80,000 which would cover our annual commitments to several of our city partners including Advice and Aid, City Union Mission, Freedom Fire Ministries, the Healing House, House of Hope, Avenue of Life Ministries and several others. It is my hope that we can honor that commitment through this offering. But Church, our $80K commitment is a drop in the bucket in comparison to the needs that lie before us. In this dark hour in our nation’s history, thousands of people with little to no margin are facing unprecedented challenges. And I’ll tell you the first group of people that I feel the need to prioritize: single parents with children.

With all of our schools closing for several weeks, if not the rest of the year, single parents are forced to stay at home and miss work, or they must pay for childcare so they can keep their jobs. Consider also that many single parents work multiple part-time jobs…and many of those jobs have gone away. Many of you know that by the Lord’s providence, we have recently entered into a meaningful relationship with Single Moms KC, which means we now have a relationship with 150+ single moms and their kids who are no doubt in harm’s way. Add to that number our
single parent families and friends in the Center School district, along with the single-parent families in our very own congregation, and we are relationally positioned to make an impact in the lives of many families who have little to no margin.

Colonial, the time has come for us as a church to step into the gap and provide for these families in Jesus’ name. Many of our city partners are doing this work very well, but we have scores of families that are in direct relationship with Colonial, and it is my heart and that of the elders to care for each of those families to the best of our ability. To that end, I am asking you to dig deep. Church, I know this sounds crazy, but I would like us to provide at least $1000 to every single parent in our relational network. I’ve estimated somewhere in the neighborhood of 170 families, which means we need to raise an additional $170,000 to meet those needs. That number is conservative, and no doubt the need is greater than any of our estimations, but when I look around at our church…when I think of the way that so many of us have been blessed by our Amazing Shepherd…I believe $250,000 is our collective five loaves and two fish. I believe it is just the beginning. And I believe with all of my heart that if this church will lead the way in faithful obedience and generosity, if we will get started with what we already have in our hands, others will follow. More hearts will be transformed from fear to generosity; more ministries will be launched to bless our city by more churches who will hear the voice of our Lord and respond; and more glory will be given to our Lord and Savior, Jesus of Nazareth! Amen? I know that’s a big ask, but has there ever been an hour like this in our lifetimes? No…there has not. Church, let us remember those insightful words once spoken to Queen Esther by her Uncle Mordecai when the Jewish nation was facing imminent danger, “Do not think to yourself that in the king's palace you will escape any more than all the other Jews. 14 For if you keep silent at this time, relief and deliverance will rise for the Jews from another place, but you and your father's house will perish. And who knows whether you have not come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” This is our time…this our opportunity to be faithful…we have been blessed for such a time as this.

2) The second avenue of response comes with our willingness to volunteer. We have been scrubbing the numbers, and we have over 500 individuals in our church who are 70 years old or older. As we all know, those over the age of 70 are particularly at risk of serious illness or death should they contract the Covid 19 virus. No doubt many of our seniors are hunkered down and experiencing extreme isolation. In addition to our seniors, we have many in our church and community who are immune-compromised, and they are also very vulnerable to this virus as well. As such, we are asking you who are willing to be the hands and feet of Christ to our most vulnerable in this critical hour. We are asking for someone who will simply make phone calls and check on our seniors and our immune-compromised members. We are asking for shoppers who will make a grocery run and deliver what’s needed to those who dare not engage with the public at this time. We are asking for people to volunteer to do what needs to be done…because frankly, we don’t yet know all that needs to be done!

So…two calls to action: give and serve.

So…here’s the next steps:

1) You will see the link to our Bless the City offering on your screen, or you can jump on our website, click on the giving link, and then find the Bless the City option. We are asking every person who calls Colonial your church home to do something…bring your
fishes and loaves, no matter how small, and entrust your gift to the Body of Christ to distribute among those who are in great need in our church and community.

2) You will see an email link by which you can provide your name, contact number, and what you would be willing to do to serve others. You can be a caller, a shopper, or a “whatever it takes person!” Our staff leaders are working hard to identify and evaluate needs, create systems and teams, and mobilize the church to serve in this time of crisis. Let us know you are willing…and we will let you know of the need as we are able.

Now…listen: if you are tuning in this morning, and you are facing significant needs as a result of this current crisis, please click on our care/prayer link and let us know what you need. We can’t help if we don’t know what the need is. Your information will be dealt with discreetly by our staff and leaders, but we do sincerely desire to help as God empowers us to do so.

3) Finally, start where you live. Church, even though we are committed to a churchwide response in giving and serving, please start where you live. Look to the needs of your neighbors, particularly the elderly and the vulnerable. Just give them a call and ask how they are doing. Look to the needs of your own children and families as well. Read scripture aloud, remind them of God’s promises, and provide an outlet for your family to serve together as you seek to comfort your neighbors and provide for those in need. Pray for one another, and resist the temptation to panic or despair. And by all means, continue to tune each week as we worship God and cling to His every Word! I know online worship is not ideal, but thanks be to God we GET TO worship together online, amen? This is a privilege that we enjoy that no other generation of Christians enjoyed when they faced similar circumstances. We GET to worship online…we GET to respond to our city’s need with generosity and faith…we GET to be a part of shepherding the homeless in Jesus’ name…amen? Let’s pray.