

We are not in the same place we were when we last heard this story.
We are never in the same place as we were when we last heard this story –
But this year we are really not in the same place as we were
when we last heard this story.

How did you hear it differently today, at home instead of in church?
How did you hear it differently today, with your family, or alone?

What jumped at you this time? What character grabbed you in a new way?
What part caused your heart to ache the most?
We are not in the same place we were when we last heard this story.

It is hard for me not to connect the words "crown" and "corona."
It is human nature to look for patterns and connections, even if there aren't any.
And that one is claiming me. Crown of thorns, corona virus.

It is a virus that Jesus died to heal us from, a virus Jesus took upon himself.
This one has a short name – sin.
That word has so many layers and connotations, it is useless for some.
But whether we call it sin, or missing the mark, or separation from God,
separation from other people, separation from our true selves – it is a virus.
Sin is a virus that replicates quickly once it takes hold.
It is highly contagious, spreading from one person to another.
And it is often fatal.

God was not willing to leave us to the mercy of this disease –
he sent his own Son, to be both remedy and vaccine.
God says, "It is medicine that I will give you full strength, leaving nothing back.
Jesus says, "I have a remedy for this disease – it is love.

It is love that is overwhelming. It is love that pours itself out for others.
It is love that is poured out upon the least deserving,
upon us when we are least deserving of it.

This remedy that God gave us, which we just heard about in this sacred story,
is also contagious, as contagious as the disease.
We are called to be inoculated with it, and to spread it.
Unlike coronavirus, we don't have to be isolated with it –
We are invited to be connected.
We don't have to be physically in the same space to be connected.

This holy week, my friends, be connected to one another.

Join every day in worship – every single day this week,
Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday, Sunday
there is worship.

Come and worship with us.

Connect with the people you know, and with those who don't know this Jesus.

Connect with them online, by phone.

Make a viral connection, spread viral love.

Amen.