I went to Giant Eagle to pick up a prescription. You know how you try to just dart in and out now? I don’t linger over the frozen food section any more or think up 12 more things to buy. Go to the Pharmacy counter, grab the prescription, and dash out to the parking lot is the order of the day. So I got my prescription and rapidly turned to exit and the woman next in line moved up within about three feet of me, saw she was too close for social distancing and recoiled in horror like I had the plague. “Unclean, unclean!” was the way she made me feel. I felt like saying: “Honey, all your social distancing won’t save you; only the Lord God Almighty will”. Now mind you, I am in favor of doing everything we are being asked to do right now to protect one another. Absolutely. But as your Pastor I still have to say to you – that won’t protect you absolutely; only the Lord Jesus Christ, the Messiah, will.

Its Palm Sunday; one of those triumphal, happy days in the life of the church, where ordinarily the church is full, we are singing great hymns of praise, the little children are marching in with palm branches waving. Jesus has come in all His glory, power and love and His people are glad and delighted that the King of Glory has entered in to reclaim His temple and reclaim His people once again. But today there are no children waving palm branches here; indeed, I am preaching to an almost empty sanctuary. It feels strangely quiet and silent for Palm Sunday. But I must say to you that the Lord Jesus still rides on in majesty and triumph today. He is Christus Victor! He is the Prince of Peace! Would you have known the things that make for peace! “He is our peace.” (Ephesians 2: 14) He has come to claim us as His own whether we are here today in this sanctuary or whether we are listening in at home. Jesus has come. He has come to save us! He has come to protect us! He has come to heal us! We may rejoice today because of HIM! Hosanna! Blessed is HE who comes in the name of the Lord! There may be social distancing. But this is not the time to distance ourselves from the Messiah.

I have often pondered why Jesus was the way He was on that very first Palm Sunday. He was being hailed as King; hailed as Messiah. All the world was naming His name. People were laying their cloaks before Him. Waving palm branches as they would for the conquering Messiah. But Jesus was strangely and quietly introspective. I don’t see Him smiling; I don’t see Him waving at the crowds; I don’t see Him exulting even though on Palm Sunday it sure seemed that the people of God had fully turned their heart to Him and His heavenly Father. For Jesus knew the Old Testament Law perfectly. He was instructing the elders of Israel on it when he was only 12 years old. (Luke 2: 41 ff.) He understood the significance of a book like Leviticus perfectly. He understood that it required a sacrifice to enter into the presence of God. He understood that it required a lamb without blemish to die. He understood that only with the shedding of blood could people be forgiven. “There is no forgiveness of sin without the shedding of blood.” (Hebrews 9: 22) He understood the absolute holiness of God; how only a separate and set apart people could enter God’s presence. “Be ye holy, as I the Lord your God am holy.” (Leviticus 19: 2) It required a HOLY Sacrifice to make a holy people. It required the intervention of God to save God’s people. Passover was coming. The Passover lamb would be killed and the blood of the lamb spread over the doorposts of the people of God. The blood of the lamb kept the angel of death from entering that house. So the angel of death would PASSOVER that house where the people of God dwelt because they were covered, protected, and made HOLY by the Blood of the Lamb. Jesus understood the significance of the law in Leviticus, better than we do. And He understood the significance of the Jewish festival of Passover, better than we do. He understood the wild spiritual convergence of the Old Testament Law, coming together with the festival of Passover, and coming together with His arrival into the Holy City of Jerusalem. He understood how God worked. He understood the Holy Spirit and its presence. He understood the moment. The Messiah had come to the Holy City, the One whom John the Baptist had greeted “Behold, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.”, (John 1: 29) had come to the Temple, the place of sacrifice. The Perfectly HOLY Son of God had arrived at the moment of His destiny. The Passover offering and sacrifice was about to be prepared. All they needed was the Lamb of God, the Lamb without blemish, the one perfect and Holy sacrifice. Who will
supply the offering? He knew. O, He knew. Our Master knew. HE KNEW HE WAS THE OFFERING. The
 guilt offering—it is HOLY. And as Leviticus attests: “In the place where they kill the burnt offering they shall kill
 the guilt offering.” (Leviticus 7: 2) Jesus Christ had come to the Temple in the Holy City of Jerusalem. The
 Lamb of God had come. And HE KNEW HE WAS THE OFFERING…

So how is it that what Jesus has done for many, Jesus can do for you? People ask and pray to God and beg for
 protection now, because they are fearful. But how does the blood of the Lamb come, and how does it cover and
 protect us as at that first Passover? To be clear, just like at that very first Palm Sunday Jesus has come in all His
 fullness and majesty today. He has come riding up to the doorway of each one of our hearts. He has come yet
 again to claim us, His people, to claim His Temple, His church, and to claim His world, His creation, and every
 person within it for His heavenly Father. But how does that happen?

In 2 Chronicles 7: 14 I think it tells us, how to receive Jesus on this Palm Sunday. First of all, the context of this
 familiar Bible verse is that in verse 13 it notes that when there is a drought, a literal drought or a spiritual drought of
 the absence of God’s Holy Spirit in a time where a nation has gone after other gods, or a plague of locusts has
 come to devour the land and kill the economy and the stock market, or when there is a pestilence among my
 people and disease is rampant (All of this is what precedes this famous verse, so it is entirely apt for our current
 situation).

So 2 Chronicles 7: 14 states: “If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my
 face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their
 land.” We are God’s people who are called by His name—We are Christians, named for Christ. So, if we will
 humble ourselves—if we will acknowledge before God that all our own efforts will not save us, not the
government, not science nor medicine (though surely God can use these means of healing), not our social
distancing nor all of our precautions (though surely we want to do all these things and follow the rules), not our
home remedies or trying out every idea on social media, nothing that our own will can conjure or think up,
nothing that Hollywood can provide, nothing that any sports figure can say, no cable news program, no pat saying
on Facebook that wants us to forward it to our friends, that nothing, nothing at all, nothing apart from the One
True and Living God can save us, if we can humble ourselves as the people of God enough to acknowledge HIM.
And if then in our humility we will pray to Him as the only source of our deliverance. We kneel before Him, we
bow in humility in prayer before Him. And if we “seek His face”, this always means we seek to enter into a close
personal relationship with God through His only begotten Son Jesus Christ; we seek HIM, not what He can do for
us; we want to see HIM be active in our lives and church, and community and world. And if we turn from our
wicked ways, if we are willing to repent of all the things we ourselves, and our society has done apart from HIM,
if we repent and turn away from the things of this world and turn our hearts to the things of God. THEN, THEN,
and only THEN God promises us…I will hear from heaven (I will hear the cries of your heart) and I will forgive
your sin through what the Lord Jesus Christ has done at Calvary through His sacrifice and His shed blood, And
then and only then “(I) will heal their land.”

Jesus knew he was the offering. Do we know what it takes for His blood to forgive us and protect us and
have the angel of disease and death pass over us? Will you invite the Savior who has come this Palm
Sunday to enter in and heal our land? Amen and Amen.

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IF THIS HAS BLESSED YOU, PLEASE PASS IT ALONG TO A FRIEND!