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**The New Normal**

**August 28, 2016**

**Luke 13:10-17**

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and from the one who is never afraid to do the Father’s work, even on the Sabbath, Jesus Christ Our Lord, Amen.

What an incredible week this has been! I feel like I’ve been running on a tread mill all week. Revive Ohio has been a lot of work. Doing the ministry God has set before us is going to be a lot of work. Somehow I even managed to squeeze in a wedding yesterday to top it all off. It’s not over yet either. Revive Ohio will continue for another week. I can’t thank all of you enough for everything you’re doing to support this effort. Thanks to all of us 479 people accepted Jesus Christ as the Lord of their lives in the past two weeks. In that same timeframe we baptized 67 brand new Christians and there’s more baptizing going on as we speak at the Great Darke County Fair right now. I have no idea how many, all I know is that it’s a lot. Sports teams from every school in the county have invited the Revive Ohio prayer teams to come and pray for them this week. Large numbers of new Christians are being added to the Church every day. Our new phrase last week was, “This is not normal, but it’s the new normal!” Last week my little 7-year-old granddaughter, Lexie, helped share the Gospel with the F/M Jr. Varsity Cheerleading squad. Folks, the Church is beginning to wake up!

It’s obvious to me God is active in Darke County. In the Gospel text this morning Jesus was actively doing God’s work as well. He was teaching in one of the Synagogues when he noticed a woman with a spirit that had kept her crippled for 18 years. Do you suppose this was the first time she had come to the synagogue? My guess is she had been coming to that place of worship for a long time. For 18 years she had suffered and the church had failed to act. The church was asleep or at least unaware of her plight. When Jesus intervenes had heals her the synagogue leader becomes irate and chastises Jesus for performing work on the Sabbath. What a terrible offense is was too. Healing a woman who had been suffering for 18 years on the Sabbath. Why, could Jesus not have waited one more day? I mean she had already been suffering so long, what difference would one more day make?

One day in deed. If that were you or someone you love do you think one more day would matter? I mean think about this and let it sink in. Jewish law allowed the owner of a donkey to unbind the animal so that it could get water on the Sabbath, but prohibited setting an actual human being who was long suffering from being set free from the bondage to this evil spirit that crippled her. Where is the love? Where is the compassion? It isn’t coming from the religious establishment; I can tell you that… No, the love comes from the place where all love comes. It comes from God, through Jesus Christ. The grace and mercy of God comes to this woman through no action on her part. As God’s grace always does, it comes for free. If you notice the story ends by telling us the people rejoiced, but the religious leaders were humiliated.

I pray we never imitate this story in the church today. I pray the religious leaders of our church might be among those rejoicing when God acts in our midst, even if it means there’s more work to be done. I pray that as we add more and more to our numbers our church will continue to show compassion and the love I’ve seen us show over the past 3 years that I’ve been among you.

After I prayed with the FM Soccer and volleyball teams those young people actually asked if there was any way they could come together as a group to learn how to be disciples of Jesus. Now I’ve been praying for these past 3 years Trinity might grow a youth group. I thought my prayers had been answered when Rob and Jen Arling offered to head up the Trinity Troops. I had been taught in seminary and through the Leadership Institute that once the JR/Sr high school youth are gone from church and involved in sports and other outside activities you can’t get them back. So, I was resigned to grow our youth group by getting the younger kids before they left the church and hopefully getting them involved so that their church would not be left out of their lives.

I guess God had other plans. When I heard them ask if they could become a group of disciples learning how to follow Jesus I jumped up and nearly shouted hey, we have a church a block or so right down the street. Friends, God is handing us a ready-made group of young people who are hungry for Christ. What are you going to do now? If you want to pass this faith on to the next generation, here’s our chance. It’s almost like the younger generation is bound by a spirit that is keeping them spiritually crippled and God is wanting to use this church, maybe even you personally to unbind them and set them free. I’ve already contacted Gary Pecuch, the Youth and Family Minister from the Synod office in Columbus. He wants to come out and meet with us and possibly these youths. I have another Pastor friend who lives right here in Pitsburg who also wants to assist in discipling these kids. Folks this is happening and it is not normal!

Yes, Revive Ohio is going on one more week. I’ve already heard some starting to complain about how much work this is. I never said kingdom work would be easy. It’s actually really hard. On the other hand, it’s also extremely rewarding and blesses those who labor. My prayer for us is that the Revival never ends. Revival can and will be our new normal lifestyle. We can be a church that actually does all three elements of our mission statement. We can be a church that seeks out the lost. We do that by using the Revive Ohio Bibles and bracelets and sharing the Gospel everywhere we go. We can also be a church that welcomes the ones who we find when we seek them out. We do that by assimilating our new Christian brothers and sisters into the church assembly, even if they don’t look or act like us. We make them feel like this is their new home just as we feel it’s our home. We can become a church that serves all by teaching them how to be followers of Jesus Christ and actually making them into disciples. If we are blessed with these new young believers, our work is just beginning. Even as some of us continue seeking more of the lost and bringing them into God’s fold, the work of teaching and discipling will also continue to grow.

I’m asking you today if you are ready to accept this new challenge. Are you ready to take on a disciple and pour love into them one on one? Can you see yourself helping a new Christian learn what it means to love and follow Jesus Christ?

Please pray with me… Heavenly Father we lift up all these newly Baptized Christians. We thank you for using us and the Revive Ohio teams to uncover the faith your Holy Spirit has poured out on them. We ask you right now to pour that same Holy Spirit into Trinity Lutheran Church. We ask you to raise up more laborers who are not afraid to do your work, even if it means breaking the Sabbath rules. Lord we ask you to silence the spirit of doubt and disbelief that seeks to stop what you have started here in Darke County. Instead fan the flames and continue to Revive us and your whole Church. Lord, wake us from our complacency and prompt us to find new ways to minister to your people. May we find your favor with what we do and may all that is happening, the new normal, bring you honor and glory, amen.