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## **April 28 – A Message from Jim Everette**

Few people like to hear themselves talk and even fewer like the way they look. Watching and hearing myself preach for the last two Sundays has been an odd and uncomfortable experience. Though the sermons preached from the pulpit of our church have been available for listening for a quite a while, I have not made it a practice of listening to my preaching. I don't think I have listened to myself preach since my seminary days in the Delivery of Sermons class. Each student was assigned a passage of scripture from which we were to prepare and deliver a sermon before our classmates, with an audio recorder in use for each "Preacher" to have the opportunity to hear what they said. This was nearly forty years ago so there were no video recordings. Classmates were to critique each other with the reminder from the professor, "As you critique, remember, you will have your day in the pulpit." The professor's words helped us season some of our "constructive criticism" with words of encouragement.

Many of you have been kind and gracious with your comments regarding my preaching over the years and for that I am appreciative, but the Preacher is always aware that one sermon is preached but many are heard. Typically, the hearer's mindset, disposition, personality, life situation, etc... effects the way they hear. As I have sat in the congregation watching and listening with you for the last two Sundays, I have been pretty critical of the preacher. "I messed up here. I messed up there. I preached too long. I looked the wrong way." I asked, "Am I walking the talk?" I needed to be reminded to trust the power of the Gospel. The word "Gospel" means good news. The Gospel has always been presented in lots of ways and lived out in unique situations, always imperfectly because none of us is perfect so we depend on the power of the Holy Spirit to bridge our gaps. In the midst of this pandemic, we see the Gospel and hear it on our screens every day.

Many of our heroes are wearing Personal Protective Equipment in hospitals, face masks while they fill and distribute food boxes, they sit at sewing machines making masks and share from their bank accounts such that other people stay afloat. They stretch themselves beyond what they previously thought they could do, and they develop new friendships with people they passed by previously. One of the things this person in the congregation has seen and heard come out of COVID-19 is that Superheroes don't wear capes. Like Jesus, they have scars—scars that are evidence of healing for them and the lives they have touched. I hope all of us is taking advantage of our day in the pulpit, and that we are "walking the talk" as God's good news outdistances the spread of COVID-19.