

## Devotional - 7 Days for the Coronavirus "Moving from Fear to Faith"

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Day	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Verse	Jesus John 20	Samaritan Luke 10	Mary Luke 10	Zaccheaus Luke 19	Brokenhearted Psalm 34	Woman Mark 5	Believers Rev. 21
Theme	<b>Fear</b>	Hospitality	Anxiety	Love	Sovereignty	Healing	<b>Faith</b>
Prayer	Healthcare	Elderly	Leaders	Children	Least	Lost	Nations

*Disclaimer: This devotional is written in much haste. I'm not proud of it. It is filled with typos and imperfect sentence structure. However, I desperately wanted to get something into the hands of this congregation to guide our thoughts over this week. Please overlook the obvious improvements. Instead, use it as a guide to think more about our Faith than our Fear. And perhaps it will bring us to a greater perspective of God's providence. I still believe revival is around the corner, and Aslan is on the move.*

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## Day One

### **John 20**

*<sup>19</sup> On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." <sup>20</sup> When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. <sup>21</sup> Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." <sup>22</sup> And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld." <sup>1</sup>*

Fear can be absolutely paralyzing. If you see somebody, who's truly scared, they can't move. They're out of options. They find themselves in the fetal position or stuck in sheer terror. Fear tends to dominate our minds and our lives. Whether it's the fear of failure, the fear of our health deteriorating the fear of finances, we often can't find our way out of our own fear.

It's good to know that we serve a God full of possibilities. Who consistently and often told us not to fear. This last week the media, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram has been filled with fear.

The gospel calls us not to fear. Throughout his ministry, Jesus says, "do not fear." At the same time, it calls us to a better and higher fear. Proverbs states that "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." It seems as though we're called to a fear of the right things, **not** the wrong things.

This is what brings me to this text, and this passage for our initial devotion. The disciples were locked in the room. They were paralyzed. Fear of the Jews had overcome them. After all, the Jews had already killed Jesus, and it seem likely, they would go after Jesus' followers. Guilt by association is a real dilemma.

And there they are locked in the room when the God of possibilities stands among them and says, "Peace be with you." There are no locked doors for Christ; there is only an empty tomb.

The words out of the Resurrected Christ's mouth to disciples was peace. And then in the strange turn of events, Jesus said that same phrase to them again. Perhaps they were so shocked that God would come again to them that they didn't get the message, so probably with a chuckle, Christ repeats the phrase in verse 21. Sometimes God has to repeat things so that we could actually hear him. So we say again, to those who feel paralyzed, do not fear, peace be to you.

In this passage, Jesus goes on to remind us that we have a God who comes to us. "As the Father is sending me, so I send you." As I've said many times, God is incarnational. Other World Religions and other gods make us work our way up to them. But not our God. He breaks through the doubts the fears and even the doors of fear to say to us: peace.

But there's more than just peace; it's not just Christian platitudes to help us through difficult times period. In this passage, he breathed onto the disciples and said receive the Holy Spirit. It literally is the

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<sup>1</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Jn 20:19–23). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

breath of God with the Spirit of God that will enable them to move in this world. Interestingly, the thing that he calls them too is not self-preservation but forgiveness (v. 23).

As they leave the isolation of those locked doors, they move into a world filled with people that want to kill them and see them harmed. Jesus tells them if you forgive the sins of any there forgiven them. It's not saying that Christians have the ability to forgive but to point to the God of forgiveness.

In a world filled with fear, we have the ability to talk about a greater problem, which is not our disease, bank account, job, or relationships - but our need for forgiveness.

After this text, it's Thomas that demands to see the mark of nails. And at this moment, our God doesn't deny him. God could've scoffed at the doubts, fear, or uncertainty of Thomas. But instead, Christ acquiesced and allowed him to touch his side.

At this time of uncertainty, God allows us to come close to him. Touch him, bring our doubts, and even our fears him.

Joseph said to his brothers in Genesis 50:19, "Do not fear am I in place of God? What you have met for evil God has worked together for good." As we live in this fallen world together, we can say the same. God will work all things together for good.

So as we begin this week, do not fear. God's got this. And he's the same yesterday today and forever.

### **A Prayer for Health Care Workers**

*Father,*

*Today we pray for those who are caring for our health. The scientists, nurses, doctors, administrators receptionists, pharmacists, and researchers. While we sleep and while we rest, they work. They go to the front lines every day to protect and to guide.*

*You're the Great physician, but their hands are wonderful and strong. So strengthen their hands to do your work. Give them patience for the crazy questions and the people that assault them with fear. Make their minds sharp their hearts sensitive, and their hands steady. When they take off their scrubs, and their masks help them to know that they've done great work for the common good. And that's not just something for humanity but a reflection of your glory.*

*Give them rest where they can get it and keep them sanctified and strong. Give them a common dose of reality and sensibility, which allows them to put others at ease.*

*We thank you for their training their love and their care, and we ask that you would watch over them today*

*In Christ's, our Great Physician, Amen*

## Day Two

### Luke 10

<sup>25</sup> And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" <sup>26</sup> He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" <sup>27</sup> And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." <sup>28</sup> And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."

<sup>29</sup> But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" <sup>30</sup> Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. <sup>31</sup> Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. <sup>32</sup> So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. <sup>33</sup> But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. <sup>34</sup> He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. <sup>35</sup> And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' <sup>36</sup> Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" <sup>37</sup> He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."<sup>2</sup>

There is an art in this world that's been lost. It's not a dark art or a secret art. But it's an art of beauty and light. It is the art of hospitality.

When disease comes, so this isolation. Now is a greater time than most to be hospitable to our neighbors, friends, vulnerable, and people in retirement homes. Hospitality is nothing new, but it is a life-line for those who are lonely.

Rosaria Butterfield says it this way:

*"Our post-Christian neighbors need to hear and see and taste and feel authentic Christianity, hospitality spreading from every Christian home that includes neighbors in prayer, food, friendship, childcare, dog walking, and all the daily matters upon which friendships are built."*

— Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, *The Gospel Comes with a House Key: Practicing Radically Ordinary Hospitality in Our Post-Christian World*

Post-Christian neighbors need to hear and see. We can proclaim in our churches, but if they are not present or invited to our churches, what good does it do? The way to get them into churches is to show them hospitality in our homes and communities. That's where friendships, and that's where love is built.

In this often told parable of the Good Samaritan, we see a lawyer put Jesus to the task asking him about eternal life. And Jesus gave that famous response: the summary of the law is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with your soul, and your strength, and love your neighbor as yourself. It is the Golden rule.

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<sup>2</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Lk 10:25–37). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Jesus wasn't going to be tricked by the question, and neither shall we. We could fill our minds about how to do ministry with schemes, good intentions, plans, excuses, or we could simply be hospitable and reach out and invite someone over for tea, soup or bourbon.

In trying to justify himself, the lawyer went for more details more law by asking the question, "who is my neighbor?" And that's when Jesus responded with his parable. The parable of a great Samaritan cut so deeply precisely because most of us would have passed him by.

But if you're honest when you see someone in downtown that doesn't look like you, you want to cross to the other side of the road. As it says in verse 31, people half dead can be very little use to us, so what's the point thinks the priest. The Levite, who excels at going to Sunday school, youth group, volunteering; well, he passed on the other side of the road. It is the Samaritan who binds up his wounds and pours out oil and wine. He takes his wounds and cares for each one of them; he gives him sustenance in nutrition, and he provides not only for his needs but his future needs by striking a deal with the innkeeper.

Jesus then presses the quest the question in verse 36, which of these proved to be a neighbor? And of course, the answer is the Samaritan. Jesus, in his pointed response, tells them to go and do likewise.

This is not just a story for ancient people. With the coronavirus, we're called to press into hospitality. Perhaps you drop off some food at the door. Call to check in with someone who's elderly. Reach out to a single mom who has no child care period. I'm not sure what it is, but there's something that we can do to bind up wounds and to care for others just beyond our own self-interests.

Again Rosario Butterfield says it so poignantly:

*"Are Christians victims of this post-Christian world? No. Sadly, Christians are coconspirators. We embrace modernism's perks when they serve our own lusts and selfish ambitions. We despise modernism when it crosses lines of our precious moralism. Our cold and hard hearts; our failure to love the stranger; our selfishness with our money, our time, and our home; and our privileged back turned against widows, orphans, prisoners, and refugees mean we are guilty in the face of God of withholding love and Christian witness. And even more serious is our failure to read our Bibles well enough to see that the creation ordinance and the moral law, found first in the Old Testament, is as binding to the Christian as any red letter. Our own conduct condemns our witness to this world."*

— *Rosaria Champagne Butterfield, [The Gospel Comes with a House Key: Practicing Radically Ordinary Hospitality in Our Post-Christian World](#)*

As Christians, now is not the time to run away from the world but to run into it. In every plague and every disease across all of the human existence, Christians are the ones the brain light entered the darkness. And if we don't do it now, when will we.

## **A Prayer for the Elderly**

*Father,*

*For whatever reason in your providence, you have decided that the elderly would be more susceptible to COVID-19 than the young. In this country, it hurts us because if we're honest, we've not honored our father's and mother's as we should have. The elderly are sought to seek early retirement and put out to pasture. Typically 70, 80, 90-year-olds are not sought out for the wisdom they have accumulated. We've*

*largely sold out to the young, pretty, strong, handsome, and those we feel have the potential to help our causes.*

*Yet throughout your scripture, you remind us that there's wisdom that comes with years of life. We're called to love each other and care for each other so help us now to reverse the trend of our culture. To honor the dignity, wisdom, perspective, and humanity that comes with our elderly population who are most prone to this disease.*

*Help us to listen and to love may they be encouraged and cared for. May you take time to visit, love, and learn from their stories. As the African proverb says, "with a man, an entire library dies." May we read more from the lives of people who have lived rather than creating new ideas of our own self-importance.*

*And if we can't visit because of regulations, may we call, write, or pray. We thank you for the greatest generation and the generations after them. They've seen things that we can imagine, and we will see things that others can imagine. But for now, we see together the love of Christ*

*In Christ's, our Great Physician, Amen*

## Day Three

### Luke 10

*<sup>38</sup> Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. <sup>39</sup> And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching. <sup>40</sup> But Martha was distracted with much serving. And she went up to him and said, "Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." <sup>41</sup> But the Lord answered her, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, <sup>42</sup> but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her." <sup>3</sup>*

Unlike fear, which paralyzes our anxiety makes us busybodies. It makes us move around in nonsensical ways doing things we think need to be done rather than looking at the big picture. By all studies, we are one of the most anxious nations in the history of the world. It's ironic since we have so much money and comfort. But comfort doesn't breed security if we don't have a purpose. The Prussian philosopher Frederick Nietzsche said, "anyone can deal with the how as long as they know the why." Once we eradicated from the culture that truth that "we're made to glorify God and enjoy him forever," as it says in the Westminster shorter catechism. We no longer have a why...without a why then nobody can deal with the how.

In this brief passage, we see two individuals, Mary and Martha. Jesus enters this village, and he loves this family. We know this from the passages in John where Martha and Mary's brother Lazarus died. Jesus loved him very much.

In John Chapter 11, Jesus was charged with not doing enough to prevent Lazarus' death. I'm sure the phrase "if you had been here my brother would not have died" cut deep. Jesus' response was not to defend himself but to weep. He weeps not only for Lazarus but also for us. Jesus knew that he was a resurrection and the life, and yet he weeps. From his perspective, we need not engage in anxiety but in grief.

Although we all must die, Jesus knows our time, and he knew that was not the time for Lazarus. But back up the story, it's Mary and Martha whose house he is sitting in. Mary is at the Lord's feet listening, but as it says in verse 40, Martha was distracted with much serving. There's so much we could be distracted with today. Among them the news, emails, concerns, and fears over what might happen next. We can begin to think with Martha that we are alone to serve. Ironically Martha was the one that invited Jesus into the house. But it's Mary the sat at the feet of Jesus. And now it's our turn to sit at the feet of Jesus.

As I tweeted a few days ago, it's great that many of us have time off from school from work and from other activities. But that doesn't do us any good if we still indulge in the most anxiety-inducing forms of media and entertainment. Perhaps we could choose the good portion, because the good portion, as it says in verse 42, won't be taken from us.

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<sup>3</sup> [\*The Holy Bible: English Standard Version\*](#). (2016). (Lk 10:38–42). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

And a good portion is sitting with Christ, hearing from him and learning what he wants to teach us. We should use this time to slow down a bit; let go of anxiety allow Christ to not only weep with us but heal us. Sit at his feet and eat his food and learn from him.

*As it says in Philippians chapter 4, "Rejoice in the Lord always again, I will say rejoice! Let your reasonableness be known to everyone the Lord is at hand. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God. And may the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."*

Anxiety, which makes us want to fiddle and fret, can turn into peace and prayer. That's if we believe that God has the power to heal Lazarus and us! Then we can sit at his feet, knowing that he does all things well. Let us present our request God bring our burdens to him and have our reasonableness be known to all.

### **A Prayer for the Leaders**

*Christ, we are called to pray for our leaders,*

*They could be our health care leaders who are dealing with the disease, our political leaders, or our religious leaders. Regardless we're called to pray for them.*

*They bear a great responsibility. They're supposed to know all of the answers without having all of the facts. They are to bring certainty to those who are anxious and also the freedom to those who feel constraint. They are consistently 2nd guessed and doubted. And very few people give them the benefit of the doubt.*

*Most of our leaders have the burden of having information and trying to decide how to distribute it. Or they have the opposite burden of not having information and trying to make a decision. Either way, the burden is great, and we're called to pray for them.*

*During this time, surround them with great counselors. For with many counselors, a plan succeeds. Give them right and accurate information and facts. Give them a peace of mind that allows them to sleep at night. And help them to make decisions for those under their care that would guide us into a greater good and the glory of God.*

*And above all, keep them humble, gracious, and kind; for you are Christ, the king of the universe, the ultimate leader was humble, gracious, and kind. May leaders pattern ourselves after you.*

*In Christ's, our Great Physician, Amen*



## Day Four

### Luke 19

*He entered Jericho and was passing through. <sup>2</sup>And behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus. He was a chief tax collector and was rich. <sup>3</sup>And he was seeking to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was small in stature. <sup>4</sup>So he ran on ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him, for he was about to pass that way. <sup>5</sup>And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, hurry and come down, for I must stay at your house today." <sup>6</sup>So he hurried and came down and received him joyfully. <sup>7</sup>And when they saw it, they all grumbled, "He has gone in to be the guest of a man who is a sinner." <sup>8</sup>And Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold." <sup>9</sup>And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, since he also is a son of Abraham. <sup>10</sup>For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." <sup>4</sup>*

Just because we have it all together doesn't mean we all are together. The interesting thing about the coronavirus is that you can have it without showing symptoms. Apparently, there is a period of time where you can have the virus in your system without being symptomatic. So it is with sin.

When I think about this truth, I think about Zacchaeus. Here's a guy that had a lot going for him. He was a chief tax collector, and he was rich, but as the chief tax collector has gotten his money the wrong way. He cheated it out of most people; he would take a cut off the top. He was like the Master of the House in Les Misérables, watering down the line just a little bit.

If you can imagine in those days, taxes had a name. You didn't mail off your check or hit send on TurboTax. Zacchaeus would walk down your street. And at your street, he would knock on your door. And as the Beatles said, "if 5% seemed too small, be careful, I don't take it all because I'm the taxman."

But Zacchaeus had his own issues. Although he became very rich from his endeavors, it was ill-gained. And the problem was his name Zacchaeus means "pure and just." He was anything but. Names in that society carried a greater identity than names and our society. His parents wanted him to be without reproach, pure, and just. Zacchaeus perhaps thought that he wasn't living up to his parents' expectations. Or anyone's.

Somewhere along the way, Zacchaeus heard that Jesus was coming to town. Maybe he heard the hustle about the blind beggar that he healed on the road to Jericho. Perhaps Zacchaeus thought here I am rich and powerful, and yet this man decides to heal the beggar.

For whatever reason, Zacchaeus wanted to have a look, but he was blocked out. And why would anyone let him into the front after he's just taken their taxes? It doesn't help that he was a "wee little man and a wee little man was he." Zacchaeus, with all of his dignity, climbed with humility into a sycamore tree.

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<sup>4</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Lk 19:1–10). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Jesus calls him out of the tree by name. And it's a good reminder to know that Jesus knows us by name. If you're in the hospital room, isolated and scared, know that Jesus knows you by name. Perhaps you're surrounded by crowds, but like Zacchaeus, you still feel alone. Jesus still knows your name.

It is the humility of God at this moment that astounds me. He looks up to Zacchaeus, a sinner, in a tree. And yet in a few short days, Christ will be pinned to a tree. In humility, he will climb the tree so that all may see his love for us.

What happens next is wonderfully intimate. Jesus goes into the house of Zacchaeus. The people outside grumble because they know he is a sinner. But Jesus came to seek and save the lost. It's a good reminder because, as Jesus says in the gospel of Mark, "it's not the healthy that need a doctor but the sick." And thankfully, God is the great physician.

He does his work privately with Zacchaeus in his house. We have no idea what kind of heart surgery he did. All we know is that when Zacchaeus comes out of the house verse 8, he says behold half of my goods I give to the poor and if I defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold.

There's something about the grace of God that changed Zacchaeus forever. He not only offered to pay people back but pay people back with interest. Such is the grace of God that it makes us that loving and kind.

In the day and age where people getting brawls at Costco, Walmart, and Sam's Club over items that are consumable, what we need is graciousness. Zacchaeus, realizing the grace of Christ, changes to seek the benefit of others. Love is modeled in Zacchaeus current, and maybe we could see it modeled today. Today's the day that we share even the most basic things such as Toilet paper, soup, and grace, and kindness. All because Jesus has met with us in our homes.

## **A Prayer for the Children**

*Father,*

*we are so thankful that for whatever reason and your mercy, this virus isn't as susceptible to children as others. That is your kindness and your grace.*

*That being said, children are highly affected. As schools close, they miss a meal or two that they depend on for their daily needs. So we would pray the old prayer, your prayer, "give them today their daily bread."*

*Sustain them and guide them. Give them not only sustenance but community. Keep them away from evil or for those that would prey on them. And in Jesus' name, we pray, protect our kids.*

*We thank you that we were all like God's children. Remind us of what it's like to be childlike in our faith and in our life. May we trust you as much as they believe you. May we have the joy and excitement. Show us today that we are you're adopted, sons and daughters. As we go through these next weeks and months, help us trust you and follow you with childlike faith.*

*In Christ's, our Great Physician, Amen*

## Day Five

### Psalm 34

- <sup>1</sup> *I will bless the LORD at all times;  
his praise shall continually be in my mouth.*
- <sup>2</sup> *My soul makes its boast in the LORD;  
let the humble hear and be glad.*
- <sup>3</sup> *Oh, magnify the LORD with me,  
and let us exalt his name together!*
- <sup>4</sup> *I sought the LORD, and he answered me  
and delivered me from all my fears.*
- <sup>5</sup> *Those who look to him are radiant,  
and their faces shall never be ashamed.*
- <sup>6</sup> *This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him  
and saved him out of all his troubles.*
- <sup>7</sup> *The angel of the LORD encamps  
around those who fear him, and delivers them.*
- <sup>8</sup> *Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!  
Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!*
- <sup>9</sup> *Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints,  
for those who fear him have no lack!*
- <sup>10</sup> *The young lions suffer want and hunger;  
but those who seek the LORD lack no good thing.*
- <sup>11</sup> *Come, O children, listen to me;  
I will teach you the fear of the LORD.*
- <sup>12</sup> *What man is there who desires life  
and loves many days, that he may see good?*
- <sup>13</sup> *Keep your tongue from evil  
and your lips from speaking deceit.*
- <sup>14</sup> *Turn away from evil and do good;  
seek peace and pursue it.*
- <sup>15</sup> *The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous  
and his ears toward their cry.*
- <sup>16</sup> *The face of the LORD is against those who do evil,  
to cut off the memory of them from the earth.*
- <sup>17</sup> *When the righteous cry for help, the LORD hears  
and delivers them out of all their troubles.*
- <sup>18</sup> *The LORD is near to the brokenhearted  
and saves the crushed in spirit.*

- 19 *Many are the afflictions of the righteous,  
but the LORD delivers him out of them all.*
- 20 *He keeps all his bones;  
not one of them is broken.*
- 21 *Affliction will slay the wicked,  
and those who hate the righteous will be condemned.*
- 22 *The LORD redeems the life of his servants;  
none of those who take refuge in him will be condemned.*<sup>5</sup>

Our theme today is God's sovereignty. Psalm 34 opens up with abruptly, *"I will bless the Lord at all times his praise shall continually be in my mouth."* That's not a conditional phrase but rather a phrase of worship. There's a call in verse three for this to occur in a community, *"Oh magnify with the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together."*

God is sovereign over all things. We have to believe this. If we don't, then we're left to chance, determinism, or taking matters into our own hands. If you work those out, philosophically, none of them are great options.

The right mindset is found in verse four, *"I sought the Lord, and he answered me he delivered me from all of my fears."* This doesn't mean that everything goes away, nor does it mean all of life is just roses and rainbows. But it does mean that we can be content. So here's the hope for us, *"taste and see that the Lord is good."* Will we take refuge in him and trust that his ways are the ways that we should follow?

Thankfully we have a God who sees us, and he hears our cries for help (v. 15). We are not abandoned. We are not alone. Instead, *"The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and save the crushed in spirit"* (v. 18). What a great God we have who loves those who are vulnerable and grieving.

During a time of uncertainty, I wonder what it would look like for us to "taste and see" that the Lord is good. Perhaps it would mean that we're more joyous in the marketplace and more gracious in our homes. Maybe when we go to work, and where there is fear and anxiety, we bring peace and gentleness, because there is a God who's incarnational and who is close to those who are brokenhearted. Many of us may face tough times, but God is still the God of all.

I really enjoyed this parallel from The Gospel Coalition as CS Lewis instructed the UK about the atomic bomb. And as they noted, if you substitute "atomic bomb" for "coronavirus" is amazingly relevant today

*In one way, we think a great deal too much of the atomic bomb. "How are we to live in an atomic age?" I am tempted to reply: "Why, as you would have lived in the sixteenth century when the plague visited London almost every year, or as you would have lived in a Viking age when raiders from Scandinavia might land and cut your throat any night; or indeed, as you are already living in an age of cancer, an age of syphilis, an age of paralysis, an age of air raids, an age of railway accidents, an age of motor accidents."*

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<sup>5</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Ps 34:title–22). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

*In other words, do not let us begin by exaggerating the novelty of our situation. Believe me, dear sir or madam, you and all whom you love were already sentenced to death before the atomic bomb was invented: and quite a high percentage of us were going to die in unpleasant ways. We had, indeed, one very great advantage over our ancestors—*anesthetics*; but we have that still. It is perfectly ridiculous to go about whimpering and drawing long faces because the scientists have added one more chance of painful and premature death to a world which already bristled with such chances and in which death itself was not a chance at all, but a certainty.*

*This is the first point to be made: and the first action to be taken is to pull ourselves together. If we are all going to be destroyed by an atomic bomb, let that bomb when it comes find us doing sensible and human things—praying, working, teaching, reading, listening to music, bathing the children, playing tennis, chatting to our friends over a pint and a game of darts—not huddled together like frightened sheep and thinking about bombs. They may break our bodies (a microbe can do that) but they need not dominate our minds.*

— *“On Living in an Atomic Age”* (1948) in *Present Concerns: Journalistic Essays*

## **A Prayer for the Least of These**

*Father,*

*we pray the day for those who no one is watching after. The orphan kids, the single moms, the elderly, those are nursing care or ICU whom no one is visiting.*

*We pray that she would be with the broken-hearted. Care for the lonely, the least, and the lost. At this moment, when worldly affections fail, may they taste and see that the Lord is good. Keep them safe and strong. In the future, we would be in awe of the way that they have lived their lives. We pray that their reward would be great and that the new heavens & earth would give them the freedom that they've so long for in this life.*

*You are a God of refuge. The cities of refuge in the Old Testament are places where people flock to for protection. We now ask that you, by your Spirit, that our churches, communities, and hospitals would be a refuge to those in need. May the believers in you, lead the brokenhearted to your throne where they might find grace and mercy. Be with those that we cannot be with. Give freedom of discipline to the addicts. Heal those with mental illness. Watch over those who are vulnerable. Stay close, super-glue close, to the brokenhearted. You are our God and can do what we cannot.*

*May we all taste and see that the Lord is good.*

*In Christ's, our Great Physician, Amen*

## Day Six

### Mark 5

*<sup>21</sup> And when Jesus had crossed again in the boat to the other side, a great crowd gathered about him, and he was beside the sea. <sup>22</sup> Then came one of the rulers of the synagogue, Jairus by name, and seeing him, he fell at his feet <sup>23</sup> and implored him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter is at the point of death. Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well and live." <sup>24</sup> And he went with him.*

*And a great crowd followed him and thronged about him. <sup>25</sup> And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, <sup>26</sup> and who had suffered much under many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better but rather grew worse. <sup>27</sup> She had heard the reports about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and touched his garment. <sup>28</sup> For she said, "If I touch even his garments, I will be made well." <sup>29</sup> And immediately the flow of blood dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease. <sup>30</sup> And Jesus, perceiving in himself that power had gone out from him, immediately turned about in the crowd and said, "Who touched my garments?" <sup>31</sup> And his disciples said to him, "You see the crowd pressing around you, and yet you say, 'Who touched me?' " <sup>32</sup> And he looked around to see who had done it. <sup>33</sup> But the woman, knowing what had happened to her, came in fear and trembling and fell down before him and told him the whole truth. <sup>34</sup> And he said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease." <sup>6</sup>*

Now on this sixth day, we pray for healing. This passage opens with a scene of Jesus being assaulted. Right at his feet, a big-time synagogue ruler implores him to attend to his daughter, who is close to death. Jesus went with him. Such as the kindness of Christ.

As he went, massive amounts of people crowded around him. He was in a moshpit of humanity. In the crowd was an individual who's had a physical struggle for 12 years. We don't know all of the details, except it was long, hard, and difficult. She was at the end of her resources. She had spent, as it says in verse 26, all she had instead of growing better, she grew worse. Now she has reached the end of her rope physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Maybe some of you are there today; perhaps you're to the place where you've spent all you've had on entertainment, consumerism, healthcare and it hasn't turned out the way you wanted to. Maybe this woman gives you hope. Her belief was, if I touch his garments, I will be well. In other words, if I can just be close to Christ, he can heal me.

Imagine the scene where she is pushing through the crowd to touch the robe of Christ. At this point, it would be helpful to know some Old Testament background.

In the Old Testament, there were three categories Holy, Clean, and Unclean. If a Holy thing touched something Clean, then the Holy would become Clean. If the Clean thing touches something Unclean, then the Clean thing became Unclean. There were three categories so that a Holy thing would never touch something Unclean. This would be an abomination before the Lord. So there was a buffering category. In most of life, if anything clean touches anything unclean the clean thing becomes unclean. Everything works downward.

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<sup>6</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Mk 5:21–34). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

When Christ comes, it all turns on his head. Things start to work upward. Christ, who is completely Holy, is touched by a woman who is Unclean. It shouldn't have happened, and it was an abomination. But now, instead of Christ becoming Unclean, the Unclean becomes Clean.

More than this, we who are Unclean coming in contact with Christ become Holy. That's why it says in Leviticus 11:45, "Be holy as I am holy."

All of a sudden, in 2020, the Levitical laws of cleanliness become relevant. We're told to have distance and isolation, but isolation from God is dissolved by his incarnation. As he comes into our world and touches us, and he doesn't become Unclean; instead, we become holy.

So I wonder if this Coronavirus is in this world so that we can find not only healing for ourselves but healing for others. And I don't mean just physical healing but a healing of the soul. Would we think about how we could influence others during this time to guide them to the throne where they really will find healing and grace through the touch of Christ?

No one would suggest that we don't take this virus seriously. But as Dutch philosopher Soren Kirkegaard says, there is a "sickness unto death" that only can be healed by Christ.

I know you're scared, and you might be frustrated. Push through the crowd of your fears and touch the cloak of Christ. Be healed and give that healing to others. Let's not treat others as lepers unclean not worthy, for all are beggars in the House of God. Robert Capon says it this way:

*"Grace doesn't sell; you can hardly even give it away, because it works only for losers and no one wants to stand in their line. The world of winners will buy case lots of moral advice, grosses of guilt-edged prohibitions, skids of self-improvement techniques, and whole truckloads of transcendental hot air. But it will not buy free forgiveness because that threatens to let the riffraff into the Supper of the Lamb."— Robert Farrar Capon, Kingdom, Grace, Judgment: Paradox, Outrage, and Vindication in the Parables of Jesus*

And so we are, the riffraff who get to taste the wine and bread of the lamb.

## **A Prayer for the Lost**

*Father, Son, and Holy Spirit,*

*We pray today for the Lost. For those who feel unclean. Like they don't belong. On the outskirts of society and popularity. We pray that they may see that you can give healing.*

*We pray for those that have spent all they have to find joy and happiness in this life. But instead of growing better, they have grown worse. May they seek you.*

*We pray for those who don't know you, your grace, mercy, and kindness. Give them a fresh look at your kingdom. Show them that you are truly the king of Kings.*

*And make us holy. Not holier than thou, but a gospel-like, joy-filled, graciously-minded holiness. Because you are God, are holy, may we be like you.*

*In the name of the Great Physician, we pray, Amen*



## Day Seven

### Revelation 21

*Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. <sup>2</sup>And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. <sup>3</sup>And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. <sup>4</sup>He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."<sup>7</sup>*

Friends, we have tried to move this week from fear to faith. We walk through the topics of hospitality, anxiety, love, sovereignty, healing, and faith. Through these stories and these prayers, hopefully, we've gotten to a point where we are more centered on the purpose and mission of Christ.

I write all of this, not knowing what will happen with this next week. But I trust that the "grass withers the flowers fade, and the word of God stands forever."

A blessing of this pandemic is to focus us in this life to honor and glorify Christ. We're called to live by faith and not by sight. So we turn our eyes to Revelation chapter 21, where we see the ultimate picture a new heaven and the new earth. Here God will dwell with us, and we will be his people, and God himself will be our God.

As I wrote to the officers this weekend, we have many plans for the coronavirus, green, yellow, orange, and red, all based on CDC and governmental regulations. We're working diligently to protect in the care for all. But the best plan is the blue plan.

Here is what I said to the officers:

This is part of what I wrote recently to our Officers and Staff:

*....There are possibilities to under or overreact in regards to the virus. On one side, we don't want to give in to fear, panic, and anxiety, and another hand, we want to deal with protecting and caring for the least and the lost of these, especially our elderly.*

*I would like to urge you to speak Gospel truths to your groups (being Journey, Community, Sunday School, etc.). This is a time to lead the individuals into belief in God's sovereignty and our responsibility for a fallen world. And, in a desire to make us increasingly outward-focused, this is a wonderful opportunity to pray for the lost and to have conversations with neighbors and friends. As Dutch philosopher Soren Kierkegaard said, there is a "sickness that leads unto death." As difficult as any pandemic is, the separation from God we face because of our sin is the greatest tragedy of our time. I wonder if we can reimagine evangelism and outreach with the same urgency as the culture faces this virus?.....*

*Remember, the "joy of the Lord is our strength (Neh. 8:10)." Let's bring that joy and hope to our congregation this Sunday in Worship, while we greet each other (from 6 feet away).*

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<sup>7</sup> [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Re 21:1–4). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

Part of this communication above was to distribute a plan to our leadership for MRPC. The roadmap has four action steps.

**Green Action Steps: Government announces potential pandemic**

**Yellow Action Steps: Widespread infection domestically**

**Orange Action Steps: Local outbreak (CDC standards), near-site infection, or government ordered containment**

**Red Action Steps: Onsite infection based on CDC and government Mandates**

Each of these categories has concrete and detailed action steps that will be implemented. MRCA has already made major adjustments with cleaning, trips, travel, etc. MRPC will most likely do the same. We want you to know that we are thinking deeply through these issues, and will continue to seek wisdom and medical counsel.

We will also continue to worship, privately, and Lord willing, publically, knowing that God is Sovereign, and we are still responsible for caring for others in a fallen world.

Ultimately, we don't know how many of the Green, Yellow, Orange, Red Steps we will take; but we will get to a Blue Action Step.

**BLUE ACTION STEP: Christ announces his Return (CDC is thanked for its service and dissolved), we meet for worship by the Crystal Lakes, God wipes every tear from our eyes, all things are made New!!!**

## **A Prayer for the Nations**

*Our God, our help in ages past,*

*We don't want you to just heal us; we want you to heal the world. And we want to be a part of it. We want to be the people that love others well. To cherish the humanity of others because we're all created in God's image.*

*We pray for the nations. We know that others and China and Italy are struggling with this virus right now. But we also know that there are nations that are impoverished of the gospel. They have no hope economically, politically, or spiritually. But you have a heart for all of the nations. One day you will gather them all under your throne: every language, tribe, tongue, and nation.*

*But this is too big for us to comprehend, so we ask that you would help us to love our neighbors, meaning the people right beside us as well as the nations. And may you heal us with leaves of the tree in the new heavens and earth.*

*In Christ's, our Great Physician, Amen*