

REFLECTIONS FROM CORONAVIRUS AND CHRIST

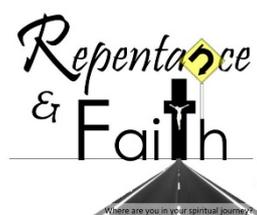
PART 5

A TIME FOR RADICAL REALIGNMENT AND COURAGEOUS ACTION

RADICAL REALIGNMENT.

Repentance.....

The coronavirus is not a unique call to repentance. In fact, every natural disaster- whether floods, famines, tsunamis, the coronavirus etc. ... they are all God's painful and merciful call to repent. Luke records a disaster in **Luke 13. 1-5**. In this story we read that Pilate had killed many worshipers in the temple and that the tower of Siloam fell killing eighteen innocent victims. One disaster was the fruit of human wickedness and the other disaster was apparently an accident. The crowds were wanting to know from Jesus what the meaning and purpose of these disasters were. Was it a specific judgement for a specific sin? Jesus' answer was astonishing. He draws a meaning from these disasters that relate to everyone, not just the ones who died. In both cases he says those who were murdered and those who were crushed were not worse sinners than you! The crowd were wanting to know what the disaster means for the victims, not for the rest of us. The reason why Jesus' answer was so incredible was because he was saying (in essence) that the meaning of this disaster was for everyone. And the message is, "Repent, or perish" (**Luke 13:3**).



What does Repentance mean? The word in the new Testament simply means a change of heart and mind. Not a superficial change of opinion, but a deep transformation so that we perceive and prize God and Jesus for who they really are. Jesus described the change like this:

**"You shall love the lord your God with all of your heart , soul and mind."
(Matt. 22:37)**

"Whoever loves the father more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me." (Matt. 10:37)

In other words, the most fundamental change of heart and mind that God calls for is to treasure God with all that you are and to treasure your relationship with Jesus more than any other. **So what does this mean for the world and the church?**

For this world

I believe that one thing God is doing in and through this coronavirus pandemic is that He is sounding a trumpet call of repentance to all outside of his saving grace. This coronavirus is God's cry to a world who has rejected him, and he is saying, "come back to me, embrace my son Jesus as your Lord and saviour and I will give you life, meaning/purpose and hope that is not just for this life but lasts for eternity."

For his Church

This pandemic has taken away or restricted our freedom of movement. It has and continues to prevent many from working and deprives us of face to face contact and connection with family and friends. It has pulled the blanket of comfort and security from under us and also poses a very real threat to our physical health and wellbeing. The reason why God is exposing his people (the church) to such losses is to rouse us to rely on Christ. If God is calling his church to repentance in this season (I believe he is!) it is a calling to turn away from everything that is competing for God's throne in our lives. For example the good gifts of money, material possessions, relationships with family and friends, employment etc... all of these things are good and God given, but when Christians start to put their **COMPLETE** trust and confidence in these things, they become idols. **God is jealous for the glory of his son in our lives** and in this season. He is stripping everything away, not to leave us exposed in guilt and shame, but rather that we might respond with the Apostle Paul when he says... **"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21)**

For everyone:

For everyone, the coronavirus is the experience of loss- from the smallest loss of convenience and comfort to the greatest loss of life. That is what God is saying to non-Christians and Christians alike. **Repent** and **RADICALLY REALIGN** your life with Jesus so that you might declare with the Apostle Paul, **"indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have counted them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ. (Phil. 3:8)**

COURAGOUS ACTION.

"The coronavirus is God's call to his people to overcome self pity and fear, and with courageous joy, to do the good works of joy that glorify God." (John Piper)

Self-isolation, not hibernation:

Whilst the church (with everyone else!) is called to self-isolation, it is not called to hibernation. Church history is replete with examples of how Christians took the initiative in times of international and national crises and broke out of their comfort zones (even at times risking their own safety in the presence of real danger) so that they might selflessly display the grace of God by offering help and support to those in need. **(1 Pet. 2:12).**

Christ magnified in wise but risky acts of kindness:

In this season the church is called to exercise wisdom in knowing how to practically help those who are in need. Whilst I do not think that Christians are to deliberately risk their own health and wellbeing in their pursuit of helping others, the fact is that many who are working on the front line in this pandemic are doing just that. How is God calling us to be salt and light in our communities at this time? I know for example that Hope church continues to offer practical help and support to those in **Open House**, but also as individuals God is calling us to be salt and light in our communities. Let's with God's grace and in the power of His spirit put to death self-pity and fear. Instead let's lean towards the needs of others, not our own comfort, and towards the love of others, not our own safety. That's what our Savior is like. In dying on the cross Christ displayed the ultimate act of selfless COURAGEOUS GIVING. God is looking to be magnified and glorified in our lives as we selflessly allow our **light to shine before men/women so that they may see our good works, and glorify our father who is in Heaven. (Matt.5:16)**

Questions for reflection

- 1) Do you think your life needs realigning in this pandemic?**
- 2) What is God calling you to specifically repent of in this season?**
- 3) What are some of the ways that God might be calling you to meet the needs of your neighbors, friends, and family in this season?**

Thoughts for Prayer

- Ask God to reveal any areas in your own thoughts, attitudes and actions that he might be wanting you to bring in line with his word
- Ask God for insight, grace and wisdom in knowing how you can be salt and light in your neighbourhoods and with your friends at this time

