

## Sunday Sermon March 15, 2020

### Sermon for Times of Trouble

I did something different this week. I don't usually write sermons on Saturday, but I did this week. I usually write sermons on Wednesday or Thursday. Then I think things over on Friday. It's amazing how many good ideas come after the first draft. Then I go back on Saturday, change a few things, maybe a lot of things, if the sermon isn't my best. Saturday is also the day I really get to know the sermon. I practice the sermon so that it is less lecture and more personal.

I have had a sermon going through my mind for a little while now. It really started to take shape about Thursday when all the sports got cancelled. Then Friday, I began to have an outline in my mind. I still didn't know if I was going to write it. But then yesterday, I just sat down and wrote it.

So I ask you, what will you do if you get.... leprosy? Yes, I said leprosy. Until 1984, there was no cure for leprosy. Even today, the mortality rate for leprosy with treatment is still very high. If you get leprosy you are 3 to 4 percent more likely to die than the person sitting next to you who does not have leprosy.

Or what if you are diagnosed with ALS, the disease known as Lou Gehrig's disease. 30,000 people will be diagnosed with Lou Gehrig's disease this year and there is no cure.

Of course, neither of these is in the news. I am not making light of coronavirus. It is something serious that we should take seriously, but this morning I would like to take a step back from coronavirus this morning, and I want us to think about how we respond to any problem in our lives as God's children. This morning I want you to think about the promises that God gives, faith that clings to those promises, and our God who carries out all of those promises.

I want to read for you something that I found very interesting. **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."**

**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. 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 but they need not dominate our minds.**

Pretty insightful message. You might know the author. CS Lewis is a noted Christian author. He wrote the Chronicles of Narnia series which began with the famous The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. He was also a Christian theologian who wrote other more religious books like Mere Christianity and the Screwtape Letters. CS Lewis isn't living today, he lived during the World Wars. Obviously his letter is not about coronavirus, but it is about the hysteria that can happen when worry and fear take over our life.

He makes three points and they are really Biblical points.

First, Lewis states what the Bible states. Sin is in the world. There have always been and there will always continue to be terrible things that happen in this world because of sin. We shouldn't be surprised when these things happen because sin is in this world.

Secondly, because of sin we will all die. God makes that clear in the Garden of Eden when he told Adam and Eve that if they ate of the fruit they would die. Paul also tells us that the wages of sin is death. We know that the moment we are born, is also the first step in death.

Finally, Lewis brings those two points to a practical question, What's the point of worrying about how we are going to die when we know that we all will die? It's interesting because we often have a lot of

worrying about death, even though we know we will die. With all the opinions that are flying around, don't our minds begin to wander and we start to worry. What are we going to do? How are we going to live?

I don't believe CS Lewis could have written this if he were not a believer who had faith in God. He knew and trusted in the promises of God. That's the only way can face anything in life. This sermon could be preached for anyone who is having a problem in their life whether it be a disease or national crisis because we have an awesome God who has made some awesome promises to us.

The devil wants to forget God's promises. He uses wars, disease and death to create fear and panic. What we may not realize is fear and panic cause us to take our eyes off of God. We are only looking at what makes us afraid and not at where our hope and comfort lie.

Disasters, disease, death are not products of God, they are products of the devil. God created the world perfectly. It did not have war or evil or problem. God created the world perfectly. It did not have disease and death. Yet, when the devil tempted man and man fell, the devil frustrated God's perfection. Now, because of the devil, we have to deal with these temptations, troubles and problems.

Even though disease and death are now in the world, as our eyes to faith look to God, we see that he has the answer for every one of the things that gives us fear and worry and doubt, whether it be something from the outside like a national crisis, an economic downturn, a virus, a pandemic, or a disease or illness that is on the inside. We have the Word of God in which God gives us some amazing promises. **Do not fear for I am with you, do not be dismayed for I am your God. (Is. 41:10) I will never leave you nor forsake you. (Heb. 13:5) For I know the plans I have for you, plans to prosper you and uphold you, plans to give you a hope and a future. (Jer. 29:11).**

Here the devil has another opportunity to tempt us. We may have seen a friend, a family member, an acquaintance who may have experienced some earthly trial or strife. Maybe someone we know will contract or even die from coronavirus.....How can God say he will never leave me, he left Frank when he had his cancer? How can God say that he has plans to prosper me, Francis sure had a lot of pain in the end?

The devil wants us to think that this world is the only thing that is important. He wants us to think that God's promises are only about this world. That's why the devil can create such fear when there is a virus or any other national crisis. The devil tempts us to think that any earthly problem means that God is not keeping his promises. He wants us to believe God is not here.

God's promises are so much more than earthly promises. God is with us to guide us through this life to our home in heaven.

I am sure that the reason that CS Lewis wrote what he did is that he has his eyes on heaven. But this is also something we learn in the Bible. How many times do we see people in the Bible that would paralyze us? They had things that were in front of them that were terrible, that they could not handle on their own, and the Lord provided for them and protected them. Job, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, David and Goliath, Paul and Silas in prison, the apostles when they faced death. All of these trusted in the Lord and we can do the same.

The devil does not want us to see an all-powerful God who can make a blind man see, who can drive out demons, or who can heal illnesses. The devil definitely does not want us to see a God who rose from the dead.

There is only one person that God turned his back on. There is only one person that God foresook, one person he punished. That was Jesus on the cross. He punished Jesus for our sins, so that on days like today, when there is struggle and problems in our life, we can have hope and comfort of knowing that your sins are forgiven and your home in heaven is secure. We can have confidence in times of trouble because we see that God does love us and cares about us. We can be comforted because he has prepared our place for us and that place is waiting for us.

This is why we are here this morning. We want to rise above the fear and the worry and look to our awesome God, who has the power to heal the blind from birth, to drive out demons, to bring the dead to life. We want the Holy Spirit to build us up in faith so that we can and will cling to God with full confidence because He is still in control.

How are we going to respond when there is a national problem like we have. We live using the wisdom that God has given us to show love.

There is one of two ways that I have noticed that people have been responding to this virus. Lock yourself in your house and hide or make fun of people who lock themselves in their house and hide. I don't know as either of these ways are God pleasing.

God has given us wisdom for times like these to do the common sense, practical things. We can live our faith to understand when someone else is struggling. We don't have to panic, we can trust in the Lord. Yet, at the same time, take common sense measures that you would normally always take. When did washing hands become a drastic measure? When did covering our mouths when we sneezed or coughed become something that we need to reminded of?

Maybe we are not worried for ourselves. For most, the coronavirus will be another flu, however we can take the same measures to show love to others. It is wise and loving to care for the elderly, to watch over the young, to care for the sick. It is loving to take the common sense precautions we are hearing about so that someone else does not get sick from us. If you are feeling ill, stay home, get better. If you know someone who is struggling help them, pray for them, do what you can to serve them in love.

These are ways that we can live our faith and show our trust in God in the words that we speak and in the actions of love we show for others.

In the end, it is God who will bring this to an end as he has done so many times during the history of the world. Some may get the virus and not know it, some may get sick and spends a few days at home, some in the hospital, some may face death. But that is no different than any other day of our life. Yet, our comfort we have is from God. He is with us as we live, but he has also with us when we die. One last thing to think about when we do start to get wrapped up in any fear and worry we might face. **Thanks be to God, he gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.**