

Coronavirus! Now What?

(A Message to the Members of the Body of Christ)

(Preached on Good Friday Evening, April 10, 2020)

“And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?

“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

“He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.”

(Matthew 26:40-42)

Today is Good Friday, April 10, 2020, and the following timeline is according to ABC News.

“The novel coronavirus outbreak, which began in Wuhan, China, in December, has expanded to touch nearly every corner of the globe. Hundreds of thousands of people around the world have been sickened and thousands of others have died. ...

“Here's a timeline of how the outbreak has unfolded so far:

- ❖ Dec. 31, 2019: WHO says mysterious pneumonia sickening dozens in China
- ❖ Jan. 11, 2020: China reports 1st novel coronavirus death
- ❖ Jan. 21, 2020: 1st confirmed case in the United States
- ❖ Jan. 23, 2020: China imposes strict lockdown in Wuhan

- ❖ Jan. 30, 2020: WHO declares global health emergency
- ❖ Feb. 5, 2020: Diamond Princess cruise ship quarantined
- ❖ Feb. 11, 2020: Novel coronavirus renamed COVID-19
- ❖ Feb. 26, 2020: 1st case of suspected local transmission in United States
- ❖ Feb. 29, 2020: 1st death reported in United States
- ❖ March 3, 2020: CDC lifts restrictions for virus testing
- ❖ March 13, 2020: Trump declares national emergency
- ❖ March 15, 2020: CDC warns against large gatherings
- ❖ March 17, 2020: Coronavirus now present in all 50 states
- ❖ March 17, 2020: Northern Californians ordered to 'shelter in place'
- ❖ March 18, 2020: China reports no new local infections
- ❖ March 19, 2020: Italy's death toll surpasses China's
- ❖ March 20, 2020: New York City declared US outbreak epicenter
- ❖ March 24, 2020: Japan postpones Olympics
- ❖ March 24, 2020: India announces 21-day complete lockdown
- ❖ March 26, 2020: United States leads the world in COVID-19 cases
- ❖ March 27, 2020: Trump signs \$2 trillion stimulus bill
- ❖ March 27, 2020: UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson tests positive
- ❖ April 2, 2020: Global cases hit 1 million
- ❖ April 9, 2020: Evidence that first COVID-19 cases in NYC came from Europe"

(Timeline: How coronavirus got started", ABC News, <https://abcnews.go.com/Health/timeline-coronavirus-started/story?id=69435165>)

Major tragedy, grief and fear... have gripped the world!

What are we to do?

Today we celebrate the suffering, death, crucifixion, and subsequent burial of the Son of God, the Son of Man, the Savior of the World: Jesus Christ, our

Lord. As we do so, in the middle of a death wielding pandemic spreading rapidly across the planet, we are compelled to wonder,

- What would Jesus tell us, if here were here right now, today?

Well, the fact is that he is here right now, and he has told us what to do, as spoken in his Word, and as recorded for us to respond to today.

I. He rebukes the leaders of the church for being asleep

“And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?” (Matthew 26:40)

No more programs. No more building funds. No more trips. No more camp. No more mega churches.

The simplicity of Jesus was ignored. His easily understood instructions in what has been labeled, shelved and forgotten as the “Sermon on the Mount.”

The dramatically given marching orders were twisted away from our Lord’s basic command. They called it the “Great Commission” They left it on the pages of our Bibles; and then they lead us to promote their own private agendas, which increasingly caused us to wonder about what our lives had become in comparison to what we daily found in the Word of God.

Yea, they fumed at those who departed: the many who gradually (or sometimes in swarms) left their ministry to seek to serve somewhere else... or not at all, ever again.

And what was our Savior saying to them during all of this? What message, what warning had he explicitly left for them upon that printed page within his written and readily available Book of Books: the Bible?

- “What,
- “Could ye not watch with me

➤ One hour?"

No, they did not.

"And he ... findeth them sleeping."

"Watch ye therefore: for ye know not when the master of the house cometh, at even, or at midnight, or at the cockcrowing, or in the morning: lest coming suddenly he find you sleeping. And what I say unto you I say unto all, Watch." – *Jesus* (Mark 13:35-37)

II. He warns the members of the church to pray

"Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak." (Matthew 26:41)

The worst moments in the history of the world were about to occur (whether the *world* knew it or not). Jesus called it.. "darkness."

"When I was daily with you in the temple, ye stretched forth no hands against me: but this is your hour, and the power of darkness." (Luke 22:53)

But he loved us, and he warned us to "watch and pray."

Did we, and if so, to what extent?

Are you not challenged by what you see happening both right around you and abroad?

The world has changed in a matter of days.

First, just four months ago, in China. We all read it as we do any other broadcasting of news. Something very bad occurring very far away. We

expressed concern, and then turned our attention to the more immediate matters of our daily lives.

Then suddenly, rapidly, and overwhelmingly quick “the virus” was all around us, changing everything we knew and understood to be.. *life!*

Yes, and now here we all sit, “safe at home”, as they attempted to so calmly call it all. Confined. Afraid. Attempting to stop something that the more forward experts tell us is not being stopped “anytime soon.”

All this and have we yet woken up to

- “Watch and pray?”

Are we not yet aware, do we not yet dare admit, will we not finally allow our hearts to confront the truth shouting at us from all around. That when Jesus said, “except that the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh should be saved” (Mark 13:20).. that those days are here, *now?*

How shall we react if and when things get worse? How shall those who, at the very least see themselves as being the true members of the Body of Christ, the “called of God”, the Christian who is “in the world but not of it”, *how shall we handle this possible and very imminent future?*

Shall we indeed “enter not into temptation?” And in doing so, shall we not be vividly cognizant of the fact that, as our Lord put it,

- “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

III. He, despite the failure of his people and their leaders, fulfilled *his* mission and went on to actually pay for *your sins*

“He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.” (Matthew 26:42)

People will - fail you.

Yet, as the deformed beasts in H. G. Wells' novel, *The Island of Dr. Moreau*, chanted, “Are we not men?” Yes, we are? Yes, *you* are?

So there it is. We as a people – fail. In the end, we all fail when we live a life away from God; and yes that includes Christian ministers, Christian people *and you!*

Of course! Shall we not be sensible in this understanding. As Jesus put it,

“There is none good but one, that is, God.” (Matthew 19:17, Mark 10:18, and Luke 18:19)

What was “this cup” that was so hard for Jesus to drink? It was your sin!

Jesus knew that in a few minutes he would begin to experience increasing suffering; pain unimaginably exuding from the agony of what should have caused his bodily functions to cease, if not for the fact that he, who by “all things consist” (Colossians 1:17), kept himself alive. And for what? That the horror of the horribly doomed, the sin that, like leprosy pervades your every being, could be fully “propitiated – *paid* – by Him!

Conclusion

So yes, thank God that *He* did “watch and pray.”

Turn to Jesus to save you from the sin that leaves you facing the coronavirus with fear and dread of dying.

Your “flesh *is* weak”, but his “spirit indeed *is* willing.”

Trust Jesus, who loved *you* so much; and thank God the Father, God the Holy Spirit, and God the Son that Jesus, who knew how to trust God in prayer until He answered finished his prayer with, “Thy will be done.”

God’s will *was* done on that very first of all Good Fridays. Jesus paid for your sin. Now, rise, and come trust Jesus to take away your sin... now!

OUTLINE:

Coronavirus! Now What?

- I. He rebukes the leaders of the church for being asleep. (Matthew 26:40)
- II. He warns the members of the church to pray. (Matthew 26:41)
- III. He, despite the failure of his people and their leaders, fulfilled *his* mission and went on to actually pay for *your sins*. (Matthew 26:42)

“And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, ‘What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.’ He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, ‘O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.’”
(Matthew 26:40-42)