

## **Corona Virus And A Faith Based Approach**

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**Scripture:** John 14:1-4, Luke 10:18-20, 1 Corinthians 15:19

**Denomination:** Evangelical/Non-Denominational

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**Summary:** We are officially in the middle of a Pandemic called COVID19. There is no dearth of advice for us believers about how to deal with this situation. Let us look at it from a mindset point of view.

Christianity and Adversity: Corona Virus and a Faith Based approach

One Sunday, the preacher went on for a little longer than normal. After the service, people went by the preacher, tired and exhausted. One of them went up to him and told him. "Your sermon reminded me about Peace of God and Love of God". The preacher was very excited, that at-least some one found comfort in his sermon. So he asked him to tell him more about it and how he found Peace of God and Love of God in his sermon. "Well" the man said. "I found Peace of God in your sermon because it passed all understanding, and I found Love of God in your sermon because it endured forever."

I am going to carefully listen to your comments today after the sermon.

We are officially in the middle of a pandemic. Corona Virus has been officially declared a pandemic by the World Health Organisation and all of us have heard about the emergency measure being taken by several countries in the world. And rightly so. As of last night (14th March 2020) the virus has infected close to 1.5 lacs (150000) confirmed cases. More than 5500 deaths, and 135 countries affected by the disease. WHO defines a pandemic as a disease that is globally spreading, has not stabilized and no cure has been found yet. Locally we are aware that almost everything has been shut down in the past couple of days. Malls, Cinemas. Schools, Colleges etc. In several places church services are impacted in some way or the other. Elders like me are advised to stay away from church services. Even if we want to we cannot escape the scare that is driving the society today.

How do we Christians, respond to such a situation all around us?

All of know that plagues are not uncommon in the bible. God has used plagues to communicate his sovereignty several times. He has sent plague to enemies of Israel (Book of Exodus) as well as for Israelites who have disobeyed and grumbled. (Numbers

16:49 and 25:9). There are several places where He warns His people about such plagues (Leviticus 26:21 and 26:25, Deuteronomy 28:22, 2 Chronicles 7:13-14). So God has used pandemics for helping people to repent in the old testament.

The new testament paints a different picture though. Jesus Christ takes all those curses, and becomes a curse for our sins. The new testament documents Jesus as healing all kinds of sicknesses and afflictions. Apart from the several individual healing occurrences in the New testament, there are records of his healings in mass scale too (Matthew 9:35; Mark 3:10), He added to this by giving such healing powers to His disciples (Matthew 10:1 and Luke 9:1). But unfortunately, we still live in a fallen world and hence such pandemics are not completely absent from this world.

So what is our reaction to these situations? I am not going to dwell so much on the healing part, but more on the mindset part of Christianity during such adverse times. What was Jesus's advice to us to deal with such adversities? What I find is that Jesus asks us to look at a problem from a conceptualizing perspective. Which means that one must think beyond day-to-day realities. While we must focus on day to day realities, we should be able to look beyond them and see beyond what is there today.

In John Ch 13, Jesus demonstrates the Servant Leadership act and then talks to the disciples about his own death (John 13:31-35). On hearing about his sufferings and death, , the disciples are troubled and sad. That is when Jesus turns the table around in John 14: 1-4: Let us read those comforting words. "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going." They are very very comforting words for us, isn't it. But I want you for a moment to go beyond those comforting words, and see another message beyond those words. Jesus is telling the disciples to look beyond the immediate issue troubling their hearts. He is asking them to look at the big picture. He is asking them to look into the future. He is asking them to conceptualise the vision that He has for them. Jesus is asking them to dream BIG.

This is not the only time Jesus tells the disciples to do so. Let us look at another instance. Let us turn to Luke Ch 10. We have here the sending forth of seventy disciples, two by two, into different parts of the country, to preach the gospel, and to work miracles in those places which Christ himself designed to visit, to make way for his visit and ministry. Jesus empowers them to heal the sick while spreading the gospel, and gives them detailed instructions on what to do and what not to do (Lk 10: 1-16). The disciples return

back triumphantly and says excitedly to the Lord (Lk 10:17) "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." I want you to pause here for a moment and think about the excitement that is there in their minds. These are ordinary men, normal workers, carpenters, fishermen etc, and they were sent out on a difficult task. They see that when they work in Jesus' name they are able to do amazing things, things like healing the sick, things like driving out the demons. They have a reason to be excited about. They are doing wonderfully well. In today's corporate jargon, they would be known as high performers in the organisation. But hold on.. Let us look at Jesus' response to that excitement. Let us read Lk 10:18-20 He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven." What is Jesus telling them? Hey you have achieved great things. That is because I have empowered you. He actually reaffirms this fact in John 14:12 "I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father". So you sure have done some great things. But do not be satisfied by these. This is nothing in comparison to what I have to offer you. I am offering you eternal life. I am offering you a permanent place where I am going. Do not rejoice because of these small achievements. Rejoice because your names are written in the book of life. That is the ultimate. Once again, Jesus is telling them to see beyond the immediate, He is asking them to see what lies ahead. He is asking them to be excited about the future. He is asking them to dream BIG.

Let us look at some other Biblical leaders for example. So let us look at Nehemiah . The first three Chapters of the book of Nehemiah is a great example of how Nehemiah was able to conceptualize both the problem and the solution, much before he even saw it. He knew that it had to be corrected, and he knew how to get it done, through the cooperation and passion of the people who were there. And because of that great leader the Jews were able to rebuild the wall in just 52 days. Just imagine, 52 days to rebuild what has been lying in ruin for more than 120 years. That is the power of looking beyond day to day realities.

All of us at some time or the other go through difficult situations. A major result of being able to see beyond the day to reality is the ability to turn the seemingly negative events into positive outcome. Looking at Jesus' life we can see that He continuously did this. He used the negative situation of a tired and hopeless group of fishermen to demonstrate His vision, and then to ask them to follow Him, to make them into fishers of men (Luke 5:1-11). He made sure that the fishermen were able to see the positive effects before calling them to follow Him. He used the "negative" situation of dining with the sinners (Lk

15:1-7) into a positive outcome through the parables of the lost sheep, the lost coin and the lost son. He turned the negative situation of a death of Jairus' daughter and turned it around to demonstrate the power of belief (Mark 5:25-43). He even turned the seemingly blackest day in the human history, the Good Friday (John 19:28-37) into a positive, by using that occasion to vanquish the evil one. Aren't we glad that He did not cry, "I am finished" (which is what many of us would have done under the circumstances), but "It is finished". The crucifixion was a result of sin, but He turned it into redemption from sin. The crucifixion was the result of hate, He turned it into a revelation of love. He used the empty tomb to demonstrate that He is the resurrection and everlasting life (John 20:1-19).

And Paul tells us just that in 1 Cor 15:19. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. Paul is telling us to see beyond this life and look at what Jesus' resurrection offers us. Paul is telling us that if we have hope in him in this life only, our condition would be worse than that of other men. Note, All who believe in Christ have hope in him; all who believe in him as a Redeemer hope for redemption and salvation by him; but if there be no resurrection, or state of future recompense their hope in him must be limited to this life: and, if all their hopes in Christ lie within the compass of this life, they are in a much worse condition than the rest of mankind, So this morning, Jesus is reassuring us, He is telling us to have hope beyond this life alone. He is reassuring us that He walked out of the tomb, He ascended into heaven and He has gone to prepare a beautiful place for us. A place where we can commune with Him forever. So no matter what happens during this life, the promise of comfort is always always there with us. He is a great comforter. Let us go to Him and surrender our troubles and problems and let Him deal with it. Those of you who have accepted Jesus as your personal saviour, please reaffirm your hope in Him. Those of you who are yet to make up their minds about Jesus being their personal saviour, this might be the right time to make that commitment.

Let us Pray

Benediction:

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Father , son and the Holy Spirit to all generations, both now and forever and ever. Amen.