**Stopping the Coronavirus Pandemic**

**Intro** – In this last week of social distancing and handwashing, we have all had time to do a little soul-searching. How has your life changed? Has fear gotten the best of you? Are you asking yourself “why is this happening?” Do you want to go to heaven right now and be out of this whole mess? Don’t be overwhelmed by fear! Turn the TV off and start remembering some good news:

**Luke 2:10-11** And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. 11 For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord. KJV

**#1** - **Jesus is still on the throne!!** **He came to save us!!** I could end my teaching right here, but the Lord has more to say. No microbe which is 1/10,000 the size of a grain of salt has replaced Him. He made this virus, knows all about it, and will use its assault on our lifestyle to keep masses of people from going to an eternal hell. **#2** - **Out of his wisdom, He has allowed mankind to discover a cure for it** – a drug known as Chloroquine – which has been around 1934. It is being used by the Lennox Hill Hospital in New York with a 99.75% success rate. Of 100 patients they are treating, none have died. The drug has been fast-laned for use as we speak, so doctors will be prescribing it immediately. Yes, Virginia, there’s a cure!! **#3** - **This isn’t the most virulent plague ever.**  The total coronavirus infection figures are running way below this year’s flu, which has been operating over the same time period: 38,000,000 flu infections in the US, 59,000 flu deaths in the US vs. 64,675 coronavirus infections in the US and 910 coronavirus deaths as I write this on March 25. That means that only .02% (that’s two hundredths of one percent, not 2 full percentage points as it may appear) of our population has been infected. Interesting that we don’t even think about the flu although *it has killed sixty-four times as many people in our country as Coronavirus has thus far this season*! **#4 Warm weather’s a-comin’**! A great article by Yasemin Saplakoglu at Livescience.com reports that two researchers at MIT (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) found that 90% of the world’s coronavirus infections occurred in northern climates between 37-62⁰ and low absolute humidity. Only 6% of the world’s coronavirus infections occurred in countries above that temperature range with higher water content in the air.

Let’s talk in really simple terms about what is known about the virus. If you understand how it works, you can be wise and block its advance. The coronavirus just wants to multiply itself. It doesn’t have a brain, so it doesn’t dislike you. It simply cannot multiply without being in a living host cell. It wants to get into the cells in your nose, because it can’t reproduce in your lung or your gut. The virus is extremely small, easily blowing through most masks you commonly see. Bacteria are 1,000 times larger, by comparison. Viruses eat bacteria, by the way. You’ve seen pictures of the coronavirus resembling a pretty ball with spikes protruding all over. Those are protein spikes, which the virus uses to attach itself to the cells in your nasal passage. Once attached, it bores into the cell and starts to use the cell’s own structural parts to make more of itself. It camps out, tearing the cell apart, using its skin for some of its own. It destroys the cell and leaves a mess, probably burping and excreting as it leaves with its new clone, looking for two more unsuspecting cells to pillage. This is why you get muscle aches and fever with the flu, which acts in a similar way. If your nasal cell is warm enough, it starts emitting an alarm chemical, interferon, which signals the surrounding cells to secrete mucous. If it is too cold, the interferon is slow to come out, giving the intruder lots of time to set up camp. By this time, your nose starts running and your temperature rises as your body’s defenses try to flush out the intruder and insure the rest of the cells’ interferon alarms are ready to go.

Knowing this, let me repeat three simple acts you can do to stay healthy:

 **1. Sleep with a humidifier running.** Our congregation doesn’t live inSri Lanka or Borneo, but we can create conditions like that within our noses for a significant portion of our day by humidifying. The water vapor condensing on the inside of your nose, even though it is almost undetectable to you, is like a vast sea to an invading virus. It’s harder for them to attach if they have to do it underwater.

 **2. Raise the temperature in your sleeping area by a degree or two**. There’s only a 4⁰ difference between your core body temperature and the temperature inside your nose. That little boost helps your nose’s defense system to work better. Many viruses are flushed out without you knowing it, simply because your body’s alarm system detects them early. Your nose may run a little, and then return to normal. Bye, bye, virus!

 **3. Use saline nasal spray regularly.** Saline spray doesn’t kill viruses. It does, however, help your body clean the inside of your nose by loosening and floating the viruses back down your throat into your stomach. Carry a bottle with you. Each spray is like a tsunami from a virus’ point of view.

Most of our homes are too dry through the cold part of the year due to the way we heat. We are sitting ducks for viruses. Realize that if you do these things faithfully, you may never have a cold or influenza the rest of your life!

Now here are some distinctly spiritual lessons:

 **Numbers 21:4-9** 4 *Then the people of Israel set out from Mount Hor, taking the road to the Red Sea to go around the land of Edom. But the people grew impatient with the long journey, 5 and they began to speak against God and Moses. "Why have you brought us out of Egypt to die here in the wilderness?" they complained. "There is nothing to eat here and nothing to drink. And we hate this horrible manna!" 6 So the Lord sent poisonous snakes among the people, and many were bitten and died. 7 Then the people came to Moses and cried out, "We have sinned by speaking against the Lord and against you. Pray that the Lord will take away the snakes." So Moses prayed for the people. 8 Then the Lord told him, "Make a replica of a poisonous snake and attach it to a pole. All who are bitten will live if they simply look at it!" 9 So Moses made a snake out of bronze and attached it to a pole. Then anyone who was bitten by a snake could look at the bronze snake and be healed!* NLT

The situation in this story is generally similar to the human condition on the earth right now. Two-thirds of the people on earth reject Jesus and believe in some other deity or none at all. According to Pew Research, Christians account for a bit less than one-third of the earth’s 7.3 billion population. Coronavirus will strike hopeless fear into the unbeliever. Eventually, the unbeliever will seek an answer to his fear, whether he be a rich European or a poor aboriginal tribesman. God will save him, right there in Paris or Queensland, in the quiet of his heart, hoping that eventually His church will make the new believer His disciple. In this story, at least the Israelites believed in God, even though they had grown discouraged and began to complain bitterly about their living conditions. Across the earth, many unbelievers are in the same situations today, suffering in various ways, whether it be from an oppressive government, or from war, or poverty, or natural disasters. If the Lord is watching all these people heading toward eventual eternity in hell, what do you think He will probably be doing? Certainly, He will be trying to reach all of them personally. In addition, He will be trying to reach their leaders as he reached Pharoah in Egypt. Egypt suffered until Pharoah relented and let the Israelites go free. I believe this current pandemic is a relatively gentle entreaty to mankind to wake up and turn to Jesus! During a period which is ahead, the Tribulation, suffering will be incomprehensibly worse. Men will be begging to die, but will not be able to. Christians today suffer terrible persecution in China and Iran, interestingly two of the hardest-hit coronavirus outbreak countries in the world. Even though there are good people within a given country, its leadership determines whether the people endured judgment or not. My opinion is that God is directly judging China and Iran and is secondarily making a statement to the liberal state governments of the United States. The hardest-hit states, New York, Washington, and California are the three most liberal, God-mocking states in our land. The legislators of New York State were giggling in celebration after they officially passed a law allowing a baby to be aborted right up to its birth. The modern church is receiving a fatherly rebuke also, I believe.

In these verses, the Israelites are like modern day Christians. They had the Living God as their protector and provider, but weren’t satisfied with the way He did things. Pastors today are dissatisfied with the church that Jesus started and have made HIS church into what THEY wanted it to be: something fast moving, glorious, spectacular, and exciting. In many churches today there aren’t a lot of poor and sick people present. There certainly are poor and sick in the community, but they can’t make it to our rock-lightshow centers because they don’t have vehicles!

Notice that in the story above, **the healing from the plague of snakes involved obedience**!! Everyone who was bitten by snakes merely had to look at the brass serpent which God had specified to be built. No sacrifice needed, no medicine to take. Just apply Wisdom. The people understood and repented, turning back to obedience to the Lord and the plague was stayed. The modern church needs to do the same. As we build our church mega-businesses, we look past the poor. The diseased don’t get any ongoing ministry because most of the church doesn’t believe that the Holy Spirit is still healing today. Most spiritual ministry has been made second fiddle to the mega-meeting. The modern church is always looking for great revivals, but they just don’t come, so we manufacture our own. It’s because, just like the Israelites, we quietly reject the unglamorous ministry which God has appointed for us, and we “obey” the things which are pleasing to us. This chapter of Isaiah is one of the plainest statements in the Bible about the ministry God wants us to do:

**Isa 58:6-8 -** *Isn't this the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the bands of the yoke, and to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke?**7 Isn't it to deal your bread to the hungry, and that you bring the poor who are cast out to your house? when you see the naked, that you cover him; and that you not hide yourself from your own flesh?**8 Then shall your light break forth as the morning, and your healing shall spring forth speedily; and your righteousness shall go before you; the glory of Yahweh shall be your rear guard.*WEB

In this verse, healing is tied directly to the sharing of the very most private and personal possession for all of us – our homes. I believe God is saying he wants the church to return to homes. It isn’t that congregational life, which we know as “church,” is to disappear. Jesus simply wants the home dimension of church life to become the main thing, and the church building, with all its institutionalness, to move into second place. We need to obey by taking people into our homes, loving people with our homes, making our homes a tool for *His* use, not our convenience. We need to experience the gentle humbling and consequent joy which comes from letting others see where and how we live. Likewise, we need to grow in appreciation for others’ living situations, whether they be more comfortable or less comfortable than ours. The church that Jesus started ate together, prayed together and shared teachings in homes a lot. None of this happens when our homes are sealed off from each other, the only place we meet being the Sanctuary or Fellowship Hall. We can easily clean up our bodies, put on some clean clothes, and show up in those spots. Much more love is needed to make our home presentable, subjecting it to the potential eyes of others. This is probably why the Lord tied physical healing so directly to the use of our homes. One last thought:

**2 Kings 18:4** *He removed the pagan shrines, smashed the sacred pillars, and cut down the Asherah poles. He broke up the bronze serpent that Moses had made, because the people of Israel had been offering sacrifices to it. The bronze serpent was called Nehushtan.* NLT

**Concl** - It's interesting that, even for God’s people, a one-time cure became a problem. The modern Christian can easily depend more on a medical solution to his sickness than on the Lord who authored it. It’s great that we now have a pill to dismantle COVID-19 in its tracks, but I personally place more reliance on applying the simple wisdom of keeping my nose moist and opening my home to God’s people. I can’t wait for the day when the church is so strong, spiritually, that the government is directing people to churches, rather than hospitals, for healing; when the government is asking us to stay open rather than recommending that we close up; and when the plague is stopped abruptly by worldwide repentance. It can happen!!!!