

## 1. Preamble...

a. I'm here with a small group of people...

b. Warm greetings to the central campus, the north campus, and the soon to be valley campus...

c. A few announcements

i. **Home groups...** some of you have asked about home group details. Unfortunately, things are very fluid right now. The elders are meeting tomorrow morning to talk about home group details. Please watch your email inbox and check our website.

ii. **Church next week...** What are we going to do next week church? Probably the same thing, although we don't know for sure... the elders are going to meet again this week and talk through the way forward.

iii. **Giving to the church....** even though we are not meeting our church expenses remain the same. Please continue to give to GCF over the next six weeks. You can drop your checks off at the office or mail them in...

d. Prayer...

## 2. Introduction to sermon...

a. "As World War I was coming to a close, still another enemy was making its way toward the nation's capital: the Spanish Flu. Between October 1918 and February 1919, an estimated 50,000 cases were reported in the District of Columbia; 3,000 D.C. residents lost their lives.<sup>[1]</sup> At the peak of the pandemic, the DC government banned all public gatherings, including churches."

b. Today we face a similar situation.

- i. As of this afternoon...
- ii. There have been roughly 156,000 cases of coronavirus worldwide.
- iii. There have been 5821 deaths (over 40 in Washington).
- iv. The scariest thing about Coronavirus is the incubation period. People may not know they have it for 2-14 days. In the meantime, they infect people all around them.
- v. It is now officially being called a pandemic.
- vi. On Friday afternoon the governor of our state closed all of the public schools in Washington for at least six weeks. Plus, he made it illegal for groups larger than 250 people to gather for the foreseeable future.

c. People are very anxious!!!

- i. People are anxious about their health.
- ii. People are anxious about the stock market.
- iii. People are anxious about their jobs and their finances.
- iv. People are anxious about getting enough toilet paper and groceries.
  
- v. How should we respond to this pandemic???  
Christians must respond very differently than the world.
  
- vi. How must Christians respond? Christians must respond by remembering five things about God-

## 1. We must remember God's sovereignty

a. **Ephesians 1:11 (ESV) — 11** In him we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will,

### b. Exposition

- i. I can't wait to do a detailed exposition of this verse during our Ephesians series.
- ii. But for now, I want us to see one thing.
- iii. God works all things according to the counsel of his will.

- iv. What does all things mean?
- v. All things means all things!
- vi. God controls every single detail of the universe.
  
- vii. He controls the rate at which the universe is expanding, He controls the strong and weak force in atoms, the amount of toilet paper in stock at your local Costco, and every single sub atomic particle in the universe.
  
- viii. This means that he also controls every single germ and virus in the universe.

**ix. Consider Psalm 91:9–10 (ESV) — 9** Because you have made the LORD your dwelling place— the Most High, who is my refuge— **10** no evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near your tent.

- x. King David can pray this because he knows that God controls every plague... (and virus)
  
- xi. Knowing this, gives us great confidence.

### c. Illustration

- i. One of the greatest military leaders in our nation's history was Stonewall Jackson. He was one of the most successful generals during the Civil war.
- ii. He was also a deeply religious man, who cared deeply about theology.

- iii. Stonewall Jackson was famous for being fearless in battle.
- iv. With bullets flying all around him, and men dying all around him, he often remained on his horse above his troops fearlessly leading men into battle.
- v. Why was he fearless?
- vi. One of his captains asked him how he was so brave?
  - 1. He said,
  - 2. "Captain, my religious belief teaches me to feel as safe in battle as in bed. God has fixed the time for my death. I do not concern myself about that, but to be always ready, no matter when it may overtake me. Captain, that is the way all men should live, and then all would be equally brave."
- vii. He believed that God controlled every detail of his life, including the path of all the bullets flying around him, making him fearless.

#### d. Application

- i. God is sovereign.
- ii. You can trust God! You must trust God! When it is your time to go, it is your time to go!!!

iii. At the same time, God works through means and expects us to be responsible.

1. **Proverbs 14:15 (ESV) — 15** The simple believes everything, but the prudent gives thought to his steps.

2. **Proverbs 22:3 (ESV) — 3** The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it.

iv. One author writes

1. “Until God’s appointed time comes for any individual, nothing can touch that person. Our days are numbered by God alone. But because the sovereign God uses means, we should take all reasonable precautions (which will obviously vary depending on whether you live in Italy or South Dakota), and we should do so while trusting in the Lord fully.” (Doug Wilson)

v. Here is the point...

1. We must take precautions, but....
2. We don’t have to worry.
3. We don’t have to worry about the economy
4. We don’t have to worry about getting sick

5. We don't have to worry about being isolated and alone.
6. We don't have to worry about our retirement savings.
7. We don't have to worry about keeping our children preoccupied for the next six weeks.
  
8. Why??? God is sovereign and he is good. God may allow us to suffer, but if he does it will be for our good.
  
9. One author writes,
  - a. "Corrie ten Boom... lived courageously in the face of the Nazi fascism—a different form of deadly virus. And she reminds us, "Worry doesn't empty tomorrow of its sorrows, it empties today of its strength." (Todd Wagner from TGC blog)
  
10. We must be governed by faith not fear.

*e. We must remember God's sovereignty.*

## **2. We must remember God's love**

- a. **Romans 8:35–39 (ESV) —35** Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or

sword? **36** As it is written, “For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.” **37** No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. **38** For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, **39** nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

### **b. Exposition**

- i. According to Verse 35... tribulation, distress, and danger can't separate us from the love of Christ...
- ii. According to Verse 39... not death nor anything else in creation can separate us from the love of Christ...
- iii. Wow these are incredible promises...

### **c. Application**

- i. Contracting coronavirus can't separate you from the love of Christ.
- ii. Financial ruin can't separate you from the love of Christ.
- iii. A slow and painful death can't separate you from the love of Christ.
- iv. Nothing can separate you from the love of Christ...



- v. This means we have nothing to fear... no matter how bad things get we can still experience the love of Christ, the greatest source of Joy in the universe!!!

*d. We must remember God's sovereignty*

*e. We must remember God's love*

### **3. We must remember God's commands**

a. God give us several commands to help us prosper as human beings, not to burden us down.

b. I want to talk about two commands that relate to our current situation...

c. First, God commands us to love our neighbors as ourselves.

**i. Matthew 22:35–40 (ESV) — 35** And one of them, a lawyer, asked him a question to test him. **36** “Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?” **37** And he said to him, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. **38** This is the great and first commandment. **39** And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. **40** On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets.”

## ii. Exposition

1. God calls us to love our neighbor as ourselves...
2. This means that we must consider their needs as more important than our own needs.

### 3. What does this look like in the midst of coronavirus?

- a. For now, love looks like canceling services to avoid the spread of the virus.
- b. Love looks like, respecting other people's consciences (especially those you disagree with). Christians are going to think and respond differently to this crisis. We need to respect people's consciences.
- c. Love looks like not shaking hands with each other
- d. Wash your hands for at least 20 seconds, at least several times a day.
- e. If you are sick stay away from people.
- f. Offer to serve, especially the vulnerable.

## iii. Illustration

1. Someone sent me a great email this week.
  - a. It was simply a picture of a note left on someone's apartment door.

b. This is what it said,

i. "Hello Neighbors!

ii. My name is Michael. I live in J206 with my girlfriend Emily. Given the coronavirus situation, and Governor Tom Wolfe's announcement that for the next two weeks all schools, and entertainment venues, gyms and community centers will be closed, I want to offer help to my neighbors here at 450 Green apartments.

iii. If you are elderly or have health complications that make you more susceptible to the virus, please give me a knock or call/text at 484-925-9563 and let me know how we can help each other in this strange time. I'm calling on all of the young and healthy members of our building to join me in getting groceries or medications or whatever is needed for our in-need neighbors during this two-week period, so please also contact me to let me know if you'd like to help.

iv. Let's work together to get through this and not give into fear!"

2. This really challenged me...

- a. Why? It does not appear that this person is a Christian. He is living with his girlfriend, yet he is outdoing many Christians in acts of costly love.
- b. Of all people the Christians should be the most loving in these situations because we have nothing to lose.
- c. If we get sick and die, we go to heaven....
- d. This is why Christians have historically usually been the first ones to help during plagues.
- e. And that is why the Christians in the Wuhan province of China have been so amazing in their care for the weak, vulnerable, and infected in the last few weeks. (reference article by world magazine).

*iv. God commands us to love our neighbors as ourselves. In addition...*

d. God commands us to submit to the civil authorities.

**i. Romans 13:1–2 (ESV) — 1** Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. **2** Therefore whoever resists

the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment.

ii. Exposition.

1. We must remember to submit to the civil authorities
2. I don't think that the American civil authorities are persecuting us by telling us not to meet.
3. They are telling us not to meet because they are trying to save the lives of American citizens.
4. Furthermore, our government has more experience and competence in the fields of public health and pandemics than the church.
5. We need to listen to them and submit to them.
6. There may come a time when we need to disobey the civil authorities, but now is not the time.

*e. We must remember God's sovereignty*

*f. We must remember God's love*

*g. We must remember God's commands*

#### **4. We must remember God's heart**

a. Introduction

- i. God loves people.

- ii. God desires for all people to be in relationship with him.
- iii. People often come into a saving knowledge with God when they see hope in others.

**b. 1 Peter 3:15 (ESV) — 15** but in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect,

c. Exposition

- i. When people see that you have hope they want to know why?
- ii. This is especially the case when our hope does not make sense.

d. Application

- i. People put their hope in all kinds of things.
  - 1. Their retirement savings
  - 2. Their careers
  - 3. Their health
  - 4. The child's success
  - 5. When these things are taken from them, they feel hopeless.
- ii. What is the Christian's hope?
  - 1. Our hope is not rooted in anything in this life.
  - 2. Therefore, our hope can never be taken from us.

3. Our hope is rooted in the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.
4. Our hope is in heaven.

iii. Therefore, when we lose the things of this life, we can remain hopeful.

1. When your retirement account plummets
2. When you contract coronavirus
3. When you are isolated from friends and family
4. You can still be hopeful.
5. When non Christians see this, they start to ask why???

iv. People are scared and nervous.

1. We have the answers.
2. We know where hope is found.
3. This crisis will open doors for evangelism. Are we going to walk through those doors?

e. The Heidelberg catechism, written in 1563, asks a very important question...

- i. ***What is your only hope in life and death?***
- ii. That I am not my own,  
but belong with body and soul,  
both in life and in death,  
to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.
- iii. He has fully paid for all my sins  
with his precious blood,

and has set me free  
from all the power of the devil.

iv. He also preserves me in such a way  
that without the will of my heavenly Father  
not a hair can fall from my head;  
indeed, all things must work together  
for my salvation.

v. Therefore, by his Holy Spirit  
he also assures me  
of eternal life  
and makes me heartily willing and ready  
from now on to live for him.

*f. We must remember God's sovereignty*

*g. We must remember God's love*

*h. We must remember God's commands*

*i. We must remember God's heart*

## **5. We must remember God's gospel**

**a. Romans 5:12 (ESV) — 12** Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned—

**b. Romans 5:17–19 (ESV) — 17** For if, because of one man's trespass, death reigned through that one man, much more will those who receive the abundance of grace and the free gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man Jesus Christ. **18** Therefore, as one trespass led to



condemnation for all men, so one act of righteousness leads to justification and life for all men. **19** For as by the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, so by the one man's obedience the many will be made righteous.

c. Exposition

- i. Our greatest problem is not coronavirus...
- ii. Our greatest problem is the sin virus.
- iii. It is far deadlier than the Coronavirus, and it affects every human being on planet earth.
  
- iv. According to romans 5 everyone descended from Adam is infected with this deadly disease.
  
- v. This virus ends not only in certain death, but eternal destruction...
  
- vi. The story of the Bible is the story of God entering into a world affected by the virus of sin. He lived among sick people, he did not wear a chemical protective suit, he did not wear a mask, he ate our food, and then he volunteered to be infected with the virus of sin... although he never once sinned.
  
- vii. When he was affected, he paid the ultimate price, dying on the cross for our sins.

1. On the cross he died in total isolation... so that all people could be healed of the worst, pandemic virus of sin....
2. John 11:25-26

d. Application

- i. If God has cured you of this virus, what do you have to fear? Nothing...
- ii. We worship the God who has conquered sin and death and destroyed the deadly virus of sin.

**1. 1 Corinthians 15:55–57 (ESV) — 55** “O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?” **56** The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. **57** But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

- iii. Furthermore, we can tell everyone in the world how they can be cured from this virus, and we don't need special medical training, medicine, or special masks.
- iv. Have you been cured from the deadly virus of sin? This is far, far, far more serious than coronavirus.
- v. How can you be cured? Repentance and faith...

- e. We must remember God's sovereignty*
- f. We must remember God's love*
- g. We must remember God's commands*
- h. We must remember God's heart*
- i. We must remember God's gospel*

## 6. Conclusion....

a. Let's go back to where we started...

- i. Tragically, the Swine flu outbreak in Washington DC, in 1918, killed thousands of people. Cities shut down, churches shut down, and communities were totally overwhelmed. But Eventually the city recovered, the economy recovered, and the church recovered...
- ii. This pandemic will pass. It has not caught God off guard. He still rules and reigns and we can trust him. Let's pray...

## 7. Prayer...

8. Please watch your email and our website...

9. Benediction...

10. **Romans 15:33 (ESV) — 33** May the God of peace be with you all. Amen.