**Jesus Cares for the Godless**

Questions I’ve received concerning COVID 19:

*“Is it a Biblical plague?” “Is it God’s judgment?” “Is it God’s wrath?”*

*Did God create the virus through natural causes, or was it brought about by someone’s mistake, or worse yet someone’s deliberate actions?*

These are all good questions, because they are predicated on an important assumption that we know is truth,

*That God is somehow involved in everything that takes place.*

Remember*: “Nothing happens unless God makes it happen, or allows it to happen”.*

Coronavirus - Covid19 did NOT catch God by surprise, nor was he powerless to prevent it from happening.

This is hard for many to understand, especially those who are suffering from the disease and its effects OR have lost loved ones from it.

There are many questions that are asked, that we may not have all the answers to. We call these *questions of Theodicy*, which acknowledges that God in His sovereignty, allows both *good* and *evil* to exist. We don’t always have the complete answers to these questions here on earth. They have to do with trying to understand *God’s mind,* despite the disclaimers in scripture that tell us that God is beyond human comprehension.

**Rom 11:33-34 “**Oh, the depth of the riches, of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!
**34**“Who has known the mind of the Lord? Or who has been his counselor?

 **Isaiah 55:8-9** ““For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
    neither are your ways my ways, ”declares the Lord.
**9**“As the heavens are higher than the earth,
    so are my ways higher than your ways
    and my thoughts than your thoughts.

We cannot fully know the *mind of the Lord* or His every thought, But what we DO know about God is what we see in scripture, (*which is a lot*). We see Him exercise His authority and demonstrate “*His Will”* in many ways.

In theology we see God’s will described in several descriptions. Usually starting with His “Decretive will”, (That which He decrees) and ending with His “Permissive will: (That which he permits).

All of these are consistent with His *Sovereignty* and are directed towards *His purposes*.

In other words, He allows ungodliness to take place to ultimately bring about His will in our lives.

We see this clearly in the Story of Joseph and his brothers in Genesis .His jealous brothers first tried to kill him, then decided to sell him into slavery and lie to their father about his death.

**Gen 50:20** “But as for you, you meant evil against me; *but* God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as *it is* this day, to save many people alive.”

But what about COVID19?

God has clearly allowed it to take place.

Is it a Biblical plague? Is it God’s judgment? is it God’s wrath/punishment?

Let’s look at each of these:

Biblical plague: It does not exactly fit the model of the plagues in Egypt or the other plagues in the Old Testament that were always predicted by a prophet, and then administered supernaturally by God for a distinct purpose. Some Bible teachers may believe COVID19 does fit this criteria, but most do not.

Is it one of the plagues in the Book of Revelation?;

In Revelation 6, The rider of the Pale horse which came forth after the fourth seal is opened, carries with it the death of ¼ of the planet through; sword, famine, *plague* and wild beasts. COVID19 does not seem to fit this description either, because as bad as it is, it has not brought death to a large percentage of planet earth.

Later in Revelation 15 and 16 seven angels bring forth seven bowls of wrath, but this happens after the antichrist is revealed and much later in the apocalypse than we are at this point, and none of them fit the description of COVID 19.

So if it’s not a Biblical plague, what is it?

Is it God’s *judgment*, or *wrath*?

Let’s look at each of these scary words and see what they mean, (not just how they make us feel).

**Judgment:** There are very many uses of this word in the Bible. The most common is based on the Hebrew word “Mishpat”. Which is also used to translate the word Justice.

Justice is defined “To set things right”

*This is why our Supreme Court is made up of “Justices”, who are to interpret the law and make “judgments” in order to “set things right”.*

**IF** this **IS** judgement from God, the purpose of judgement is “rectitude” – to set things rights.

*(God’s judgement is NOT a matter of him throwing fireballs at the earth because he can’t control His temper. It’s doing what must be done to make things right.)*

The other words that we hear in questions about COVID19 are, is it God’s **wrath** or **punishment**?

In many instances in the Old Testament these words have the same meaning (although these words are more complex and have many other usages).

These words are usually used in the form of God’s consequences for disobedience, with the intention of *bringing about justice*, or *making right* that which has gone wrong.

So, IF God were to use COVID19 as punishment to bring about justice, why would He do it?

What would motivate Him to make us stop in our tracks, and make us slow down and return to a simpler life focusing on *what* and *who* are really important in our lives, instead of allowing us to operate in an endless maddening pursuit of comfort, pleasure and happiness?

What would cause him to make us cease from worshipping money, sports, entertainment and lavish freedom for a period of time?

He’s suppose to be a Good Good Father right?, why would he either make, or allow all this to happen. As our “Heavenly Father”, shouldn’t he be primarily concerned for our happiness?

I can’t speak for God in answering that question, I can only compare it to my own experiences of fatherhood.

There are times when I have to exercise judgement, even punishment (which I suppose could be considered wrath). I consider myself a good good Father too, so why would I do this.

I don’t like to exercise judgement, and mete out punishment, but I love my children very much. I want them to be safe, healthy and well taken care of.

If I feel that they begin developing destructive habits or dangerous behavior, I will do all I can to *get their attention* and bring correction.

Heb 12:6 “For the Lord disciplines those he loves,
    and he punishes each one he accepts as his child.”

The worse thing we could do as parents is to never discipline our children.

*What if we didn’t care if they ever washed or brushed their teeth. What if we allow them to eat whatever they want, when they want, … and go to bed whenever they felt like it.*

*What if we didn’t insist that they learn to read and write, and allowed them to go outside and play wherever they want to wander and come home at any time of night, or not at all.*

*Or plainly, if we gave them rules and guidelines, but did nothing if they completely ignored them.*

*This would be the easiest form of parenting that any of us could imagine. We wouldn’t have to do anything. Just let them do whatever they want when they want without consequences.*

*But it wouldn’t be love.*

*Love by definition “willing the highest good for the other person regardless of self”.*

*That type of parenting would be the opposite of love. Not willing to make extreme efforts in order for your children’s life to be better.*

The coronavirus is very serious and has caused a tremendous amount of hardship and heartache all around the world and is not to be taken lightly.

Once again, we know that nothing happens unless God makes it happen or lets it happen.

I cannot say for certain, that the coronavirus is definitely God’s judgment on the world for the growing and permeating godlessness that exists in society today, but **IF** it was…

It would be because *He loves us.* He loves the people of the world and wants to get their attention.

*In prayer this week, I asked the Lord…*

 *IF you are trying to get the whole world’s attention, you’ve done it, but why do you even care? Society is going to get worse and worse in the end times and there will be increase in wickedness as men’s hearts grow cold.*

*The world has become so godless, why wouldn’t you just leave it alone to suffer from its own devices, and then come back and rescue your people from it?*

*And He reminded me that he Loves the world, and wills none to perish.*

Just like He said to Jonah, when he had the same attitude about Nineveh:

**Jonah 4:11** “should I not have concern for the great city of Nineveh, in which there are more than a hundred and twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left—and also many animals?”

God cares about the world, just like He cared about the evil city of Nineveh. He will go to great lengths to reach them and cause them to turn to Him.

Jesus cared about *godless people* who knew nothing about Him, and were overcome with evil, and *sought them out.*

*We see this in the next step of our journey through the gospel of Mark:*

EYES ON JESUS. ****

**Mark 5**They went across the lake to the region of the Gerasenes

 (a.k.a. *Gadarenes – right across the Galilee by the Golan Hts*).

 **2**When Jesus got out of the boat, a man with an impure spirit came from the tombs to meet him. **3**This man lived in the tombs, and no one could bind him anymore, not even with a chain. **4**For he had often been chained hand and foot, but he tore the chains apart and

broke the irons on his feet. No one was strong enough to subdue him. **5**Night and day among the tombs and in the hills he would cry out and cut himself with stones.

**6**When he saw Jesus from a distance, he ran and fell on his knees in front of him. **7**He shouted at the top of his voice, “What do you want with me, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? In God’s name don’t torture me!” **8**For Jesus had said to him, “Come out of this man, you impure spirit!”

**9**Then Jesus asked him, “What is your name?”

“My name is Legion,” he replied, “for we are many.” **10**And he begged Jesus again and again not to send them out of the area.

**11**A large herd of pigs was feeding on the nearby hillside. **12**The demons begged Jesus, “Send us among the pigs; allow us to go into them.” **13**He gave them permission, and the impure spirits came out and went into the pigs. The herd, about two thousand in number, rushed down the steep bank into the lake and were drowned.

**14**Those tending the pigs ran off and reported this in the town and countryside, and the people went out to see what had happened. **15**When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; and they were afraid. **16**Those who had seen it told the people what had happened to the demon-possessed man—and told about the pigs as well. **17**Then the people began to plead with Jesus to leave their region.

1. The reason Jesus got into the boat, and asked to cross to the other side was likely to pursue this crazed demon-possessed man who broke the iron and chains he was bound with and roamed the tombs, crying out and cutting himself. The storm that Jesus calmed probably looked tame compared to what they were about to experience in the Gadarenes. (Clearly a Gentile village, due to the pigs – part of the “Decapolis” – 10 Gentile cities)
2. The legion of demons inside the man recognized Jesus’ authority and begged him for mercy. *(Shows the authority we have in Jesus over the demonic -Demon’s tremble at the One True God – James 2:19)*
3. Jesus “*permitted*” them to enter into a herd of 2000 pigs. (example of both “God’s judgment” and His “Permissive Will”).
4. As a result of this action. The little village went from having one crazy madman to 2000 demon possessed pigs. (which is worse?)
5. All 2000 pigs ran off a cliff and drowned in the lake.
6. When the townspeople finally got there, all the action was over.

Mark 5:15 “**15**When they came to Jesus, they saw the man who had been possessed by the legion of demons, sitting there, dressed and in his right mind; *and they were afraid.” : {*

*(They saw the crazy Demoniac behaving like a peaceful mild-mannered, well-dressed man sitting with Jesus AND THEY WERE AFRAID, and pleaded with Jesus to leave them.*

Mark 5:18-20 “**18**As Jesus was getting into the boat, the man who had been demon-possessed begged to go with him. **19**Jesus did not let him, but said, “Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” **20**So the man went away and began to tell in the Decapolis how much Jesus had done for him. And all the people were amazed.”

Jesus was not *rejecting* this new believer; he was *commissioning* him. The man would have liked to leave his past reputation behind, and start a new life with Jesus and the Apostles but that was not what Jesus intended for him to do. He went to the people who knew him or knew of him, and became a shining testimony of what God can do. And all the people were amazed.

(Sometimes as Christians we want to disassociate with our past and the friends we once knew, and knew us. We want to hide in safe comfortable Christian communities where no one knows our past and only see us in the *new Life* God has brought us into.

But instead of hiding from or disassociating with these people, God wants us to “tell them how much the Lord has done for us”.

In some ways during the lock-down, that’s sort of hard right now. However, in other ways it’s easier than it’s ever been.

We can share our testimony in emails, social media and online more effectively than ever before.

Our church gets regular visitors now from people who very possibly would have never come to either of our locations, simply because someone invited them online, or shared our link. I hope that you are doing that regularly.

Our message today is, Don’t give up on others, because God hasn’t given up.

He loves the world and wants to be reconciled with them.

**It could be that he allowed all this disruption to happen, so that more people would stop and listen, and seek Him and be saved. If so, let’s be part of that plan.**