

GLENKIRK CHURCH



WEEKLY DEVOTIONS

# The DEVO

MAY 4 - 8, 2020

SERMON SERIES

4.19 - 5.17

LIVING IN

Exile



# MONDAY

## Jeremiah 29:8, 9

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While Israel was in exile, the prophet Jeremiah had to contend with false prophets who were misleading the people with wrong teachings. The LORD told Jeremiah that the people must not listen to these false teachers because they were not sent by Him.

Jeremiah's warning is a message to Christians today as we struggle with the overwhelming threats of the coronavirus. We are hearing messages that prompt fear and hopelessness. We must not let these threatening messages overcome us; instead, we must keep our focus on the LORD who is in control of everything.

Inflated fears can cause one to miss God's blessings. I went through such an experience during my college years. My mother asked me what career choice did I have in mind. I mentioned that I was thinking of becoming a pastor. My mother, a non-Christian and a first-generation immigrant who wanted her children to excel academically and enter a well-paying professional career, reacted strongly. "You're crazy! Your belief in Jesus has made you mad! How will you be able to support your family? Put them through college?" From that day forward she proceeded to harangue me daily with the same message. I tried to ignore her unceasing diatribe.

During my first year in seminary, my mother's constant rantings began to get through to me. I began to worry about how I would support my family as a pastor. The doubts became so overwhelming that I decided

to drop out after completing the first quarter of school. I went through several months of uncertainty and considered other possible careers. I was afraid to trust the LORD for my future and for His provisions for my future family. After eight months of fear, I was moved to trust the LORD for my future and returned to the seminary.

When we hear the constant talk of the fears generated from the coronavirus, we can become paralyzed in our worries and miss out on the blessings God has for us. Let us remember in the midst of the turmoil, God is still in control.

LORD, our world is falling apart. We are afraid. Remind us that you are in control and that you will protect us, provide for all our needs, and ultimately bring blessings out of this pandemic.

## QUESTIONS

What fears might come to your mind as you face this crisis?

What should you do about them?

## PRAYERS FOR THREE ANGELS IN HAITI

Pray for protection and provision for all during this extraordinary time of pandemic conditions. (Ten Haitian nannies/staff members have chosen to stay at the orphanage full-time to care for the little ones in their care and not expose them to illness.)

# TUESDAY

## Genesis 39:1-23

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In the midst of the coronavirus, how should we live? Joseph is a good example for us as we face painful times. While we are going through this crisis, we must remember that God is in control and that we can continue to trust Him. Joseph exhibited this trust in the midst of his pain.

Joseph was betrayed by his own brothers. Those who are closest to us can cause us the greatest pain. A woman shared with me how recently her husband had left her for a younger woman. She said, “This pain of rejection by your own spouse is one of the greatest pains that one can ever experience. It hurts so much!” This was how Joseph felt. Older brothers are supposed to protect their younger brother; instead, they sold him as a slave!

What was Joseph’s view of God as a result of this dreadful betrayal? Joseph’s attitudes while a slave in Egypt reveals the closeness of his relationship with God. *“The LORD was with Joseph and he prospered, ... When his master saw that the LORD was with him and that the Lord gave him success in everything he did, Joseph found favor in his eyes ... the LORD blessed the household of the Egyptian because of Joseph”* (vv. 2-5).

When Joseph was tempted to commit adultery with Potiphar’s wife, he said, *“How could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?”* (v. 9). Joseph lived to please God.

Why did the LORD bless everything that Joseph did? Undoubtedly, Joseph was trusting in God, living a holy life, and doing everything wholeheartedly as unto the LORD. Therefore, the LORD blessed everything he touched. *“When a man’s ways please the LORD, He makes even his enemies live at peace with him”* (Proverbs 16:7). The LORD blesses those who live godly lives.

In spite of the pain of being sold as a slave by his very own brothers, Joseph did not become engulfed with anger and bitterness. Instead, he was able to give himself fully to glorifying God in all he put his hands to, and God blessed him as a result.

LORD, don’t let me get bogged down by the pressures of the coronavirus. Let me keep on trusting You, live to please You, and glorify You in all I do.

## QUESTIONS

What can you do wholeheartedly as unto the LORD during this pandemic? Will you do it?

## PRAYERS FOR THREE ANGELS IN HAITI

Pray for peace in Haiti and resolution of the underlying causes of political unrest.

# WEDNESDAY

## Exodus 14:1-18

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As we go through the stresses of the coronavirus, we need to remember that God is in total control. Before Creation, He had a master plan for the world. This plan involves choosing us before Creation and determining the rulers of nations. *“He sets up kings and deposes them”* (Daniel 2:21).

Not only does God determine world leaders, He also controls their actions. *“The king’s heart is in the hand of the LORD; He directs it like a watercourse wherever He pleases”* (Proverbs 21:1). God set up Pharaoh for failure. He purposely had the Israelites wander apparently lost and stuck at the Red Sea. Pharaoh was enticed into attacking so that God could be glorified. *“But I will gain glory for myself through Pharaoh and all his army, and the Egyptians will know that I am the LORD”* (Exodus 14:14). *“Pharaoh, I raised you up for this very purpose, that I might display My power in you and that My name might be proclaimed in all the earth”* (Romans 9:17). God was controlling Pharaoh from his very birth!

God determined the actions of Cyrus, King of Persia, even before he was born. Two hundred years before his birth, Isaiah prophesied, *“I (God) will raise up Cyrus in my righteousness; ... He will rebuild my city and set my exiles free”* (Isaiah 45:13). Two hundred years later, the LORD moved the heart of Cyrus to carry out this prophecy (Ezra 1).

Here is one more example of God controlling the actions of world leaders. On May 14, 1948, eleven minutes after Israel had declared its independence, God led President Harry Truman to recognize Israel as an independent

nation. Later when his Jewish friend praised him for helping create Israel, he retorted: “What do you mean ‘helped to create’? I am Cyrus! I am Cyrus!” (Simon Sebag Montefiore)

LORD, You have controlled world rulers from the beginning of time until now. Therefore, we do not have to fear the coronavirus. You are in full control.

## QUESTIONS

What might keep you from remembering that God is in full control during this crisis?

## PRAYERS FOR THREE ANGELS IN HAITI

Pray for smooth and timely processing of adoptions through Haitian social services. With the severe slowdown of government processes, this needs LOTS of prayer!

# THURSDAY

## Genesis 50:15-21

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Because God is in control, he determines the choice of world leaders and controls their actions. He also brings good out of evil. The greatest act of evil in the history of the world is the Crucifixion of Jesus. God turns this supreme act of evil into the highest act of love. Another example of God bringing good out of evil is Joseph being sold as a slave. He said to his brothers, “*You meant it for evil; but God meant it for good*” (v. 20).

A further example of God bringing good out of evil is the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7. Stephen, full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, did great wonders and miraculous signs. Yet, he was killed. One might think, “What a waste of such a gifted person!”

His death precipitated a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem causing the believers to flee the city. However, this great act of evil caused the Gospel to spread throughout the region (Acts 8). And, a culturally-shattering breakthrough took place when some Jews began to share the Gospel with Gentiles and many believed (Acts 11). This was the good that came out of Stephen’s death.

A more recent example of God bringing good out of evil is the Holocaust, the killing of six million Jews during World War II. What good could come out of these horrendous crimes? One good that we know of is



that the Holocaust helped to bring about the reestablishment of the nation of Israel. During the Holocaust, Jewish leaders in Palestine were able to smuggle out of Europe into Palestine 70,000 Jews in three years. (Montefiore) These Jews helped to form the foundation for the new nation of Israel in 1948.

The coronavirus is causing much suffering. What good can come out of it? Shutdowns are helping some families bond closer together. Bible sales have increased. People have more time for meditation and solitude. We have yet to see other good results come out of it. Some Christians are predicting a great revival will result from the pandemic.

LORD, we have seen how You have brought good out of evil. During this pandemic, even though we may not see much immediate benefit coming out of it, we believe that You will be glorified through it.

## QUESTIONS

What good can come out of this crisis for you and your family?

## PRAYERS FOR THREE ANGELS IN HAITI

Pray for our students who are learning from home while schools are closed due to the pandemic.

# FRIDAY

## Psalm 77:1-15

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As we go through the coronavirus, it is essential that we remember the character of God and His faithfulness to His promises. The psalmist in Psalm 77 goes through a period of intense pain where he feels as though God has absolutely rejected him. *“Will the LORD reject forever? Will He never show His favor again? Has His unfailing love vanished forever? Has His promise failed for all time?”* (vv. 7, 8).

However, the psalmist changes his focus, no longer fixing his eyes on his pain; instead, he is concentrating on God and His faithfulness. *“I will remember the deeds of the LORD. ... I will meditate on all Your works ...”* (vv. 11, 12).

My wife and I went through such an experience many years ago when I was pastoring a small church. Everyone knew each other well. An elder and his wife were childless after several years of marriage. The church even held a half-day of prayer specifically for them. We rejoiced when their baby was born. After the baby was three months old, the wife took her own life due to post-natal depression. The whole church was devastated. My wife and I were in no condition to comfort the people. We had to invite a professional counselor to speak to the congregation.

While in this deepest pit of despair, my wife and I were moved to pick up a hymnbook. We flipped it open to the hymn “Holy, Holy, Holy.” Neither of us felt like singing; however, we forced ourselves to do so.

We could barely mutter the words of the first verse. On the second verse we could enunciate the words a bit more clearly. On the third verse we were able to sing softly. By the fourth verse we were able to sing loudly, “Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord, God Almighty! All Thy works shall praise Thy name, in earth, and sky, and sea.”

What had happened to us while we were singing? The Lord used the hymn to change our focus. Instead of being stuck in our pain, our focus changed to dwell on the character of God. The crushing darkness was lifted as the light of God broke through.

LORD, as we go through the pains of the coronavirus, let us fix our eyes on You, Your character, and Your faithfulness.

## QUESTIONS

As you dwell on God’s character during this crisis, what is He saying to you?

## PRAYERS FOR THREE ANGELS IN HAITI

Pray for the medical program and pilot dental program of Three Angels in Haiti that urgently need increased funding.

## Sources

- Simon Sebag Montefiore, *Jerusalem: The Biography* (New York City: Vintage Publishers, 2012), pp. 484 and 497.

