

# Unwrapping the gifts of this present crisis

*Pastor Wyley Jenkins, Jr.*

There's a story in 2 Kings 6 where Elisha, the prophet, wakes up to discover that the city he lives in is surrounded by enemy troops. Elisha's servant is scared to see all the horses, chariots, and soldiers. But Elisha is not disturbed at all.

*<sup>16</sup> He said, "Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." <sup>17</sup> Then Elisha prayed and said, "O Lord, please open his eyes that he may see." So the Lord opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.*

The Bible is a book filled with stories where God's people face terrible and difficult circumstances. So often, the issue we have is the same issue that Elisha's servant had. We only see the problem, and we cannot see what God is doing. My prayer for you this morning is that God would open your eyes to see what he is doing through the coronavirus. I'm not saying that to diminish the pain or to downplay the severity of this sickness. I'm not making light of the sacrifice of doctors and nurses. My heart is also with the poor and the sick and those who have lost loved ones. As a matter of fact, I'm really not referring to any of those things. It is a definite crisis. And I will not argue with that. But that does not take away the fact that God is doing something in this time. We are not the first people of God to be overwhelmed or even confused by our circumstances. So today, I want to share with you four things that are being revealed by God through the coronavirus, and I pray that like Elisha's servant, God would give you the grace to see them.

1. Humanity's total weakness and need for God.
2. The church needs desperately to get back to the Bible.
3. God is angry at sin.
4. The Gospel is the only hope for any of us.

So let's take them one at a time.

## 1. Humanity's total weakness and need for God

What if I would've said to you six months ago that the company you work for might go bankrupt? What if I told you six months ago that you would be trapped in your house for a month? There is absolutely no person who could have predicted any of these things were going to happen. I read on a news report that they are estimating €20 trillion of global economic losses as of March 23. The number is so big it is difficult to wrap my mind around. And it will only get much worse. The stock market is totally unpredictable. People who live on day-to-day wages are being asked to survive with no source of income. Apart from the economic side, there is the obvious healthcare challenge. Countries like Spain which people have paid their entire life into the healthcare system are finding that now there is no care available for them when they are sick. What about the quarantine? There are many strange effects of being isolated from other humans. But this global pandemic will test the limits of many people who struggle from mental health issues.

You would think the countries like the United States would be able to come together and stop fighting over politics, but once again we have demonstrated that there is nothing stronger than our hatred of each other. It is absolutely disgusting to see political parties taking advantage of each other and this time of crisis. And what can we see in humanity? We have seen Italians singing from the windows and Spaniards clapping from theirs, but we also have seen supermarkets attacked by crowds of people, and people stealing medical equipment from their own hospitals. The Spanish government saw a cyber-attack on its online medical services on Monday. They believe the goal of the criminals was to lock down the online medical care records to hold them for ransom money. How disgusting and low do you have to be to take advantage of this time to blackmail the Spanish healthcare system? May God let us see the highs and the lows of humanity.

The coronavirus has given us the ability to see our overconfidence in ourselves. We believed we were safe. We believed that nothing was smarter than our scientists. We believed that we would never face the difficulties that our ancestors faced. We were blind. Habakkuk, the prophet, was confused and prayed to God for wisdom. God responded with a very powerful statement: ***"Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told."***

God is always doing things that we would never expect. This world does not belong to us. It belongs to its creator. We desperately needed a wake up call. We were becoming too proud. Like Icarus, we believe that we could fly close to the sun with our wings made of wax. There is no doubt that God sent this coronavirus to remind us that we are nothing but dust. Our life is like a vapor. Our futures are not secure on earth. All of our storing up of treasures cannot protect us from the hand of God. God has revealed to us that we need him desperately. That is a gift to you in this time. Even we as Christians can be tempted and confused to believe that we are Supermen and have no need of God. If we're not careful, we buy into the lies of the culture around us. But God is so good! Once again, we are brought back to reality. Do not harden your heart during this time. Recognize your need for God and humble yourself before him. I hope you can see how much of a gift this is from God. So the first thing we learned is that all humanity is weak and needs God. The second thing that the coronavirus is bringing into the light is the church's desperate need to get back to the Bible.

## **2. The church desperately needs to get back to the Bible**

Before I say what I have to say here, I want to make it clear that my goal is not to cause pain, but to ask Christians to have a serious reflection on what they believe. There are evil people who want to take advantage of you in this time. They are even selling holy cures to people at this time claiming their products can cure coronavirus. That is a lie and a shame. I have had multiple people send me a prophecy from a book by Sylvia Browne. In the book, Browne predicts a pneumonia-like virus that will attack the world in 2020. The people that passed this book to me were very well-meaning and I believe they are people who want to bring glory to God. What they did not know is that Sylvia Browne was a psychic, she talked to the dead and founded a gnostic church that is not Christian. It is blasphemous. She is also very famous for telling two different sets of parents their child was dead when they were kidnapped. In both cases she was wrong. Both children were found. I did not have to go to the CIA's database to discover this about Browne. It was on Wikipedia. Don't spread anything she writes or does. She is a false prophet.

A second book that has been passed around is by Dean Koontz. In the book, he predicts a virus that will wipe out a large percentage of the human population. He calls it the Wuhan 400 and it says that the virus was manufactured in the laboratory outside of that Chinese city. This is not a prophecy. The book is a fiction book. Koontz never intended it to be taken as a prophecy. Koontz had written a lot of fiction, including pornographic novels. Despite this, Christians are passing around these things like they are prophecy. He said that the virus will have a 100% mortality rate. That means it will kill everybody who gets it. That is just not the case with the coronavirus. It is fiction. I do not need psychics who talk to demons or fiction writers to give me confidence that God knew this was going to happen. I do not need to read it in the book of Revelation to know that God planned it. Brothers and Sisters, do you understand we are called to test everything in the light of the Scriptures? Do not be deceived. People need truth, not psychics or fiction books. But it is not only these kinds of false prophets who plague the Christian church. I want to give you just a few basic practical tips during this time.

### **a) Please do not pass around information that has not been verified:**

You don't help the Gospel like that; you just continue to spread the belief that Christians are ignorant and easy to deceive. Ask me if you are wondering. I will try to help you verify anything. My email is [wyleyjenkins@IBCmadrid.com](mailto:wyleyjenkins@IBCmadrid.com)

### **b) Pray to God, but understand that he can say "no" to your prayers:**

One frequent mistake I read and see is that Christians spread false beliefs about prayer. They say things like no Christian will suffer from this plague. They speak as if everyone should be healed if they would just have faith. I want to be a person of faith, but I refuse to believe things God has not said. Jesus has promised us that in this world we will have tribulation. That means Christians will get sick. That means our family members may pass away. That means natural disasters and diseases will come. The hope of the Gospel has never been in God changing everything now on earth. Faith is not me inventing something I want to believe in. Like "Oh, I want to believe that I'm going to be healthy!" That is my faith. Or "I am believing that this plague will not touch my house." Do you have a right to decide that? Are you now in control of the universe? That is not biblical faith at all. Biblical faith is trusting in God, not telling him what to do. The Christianity that I see today for many

evangelicals reminds me more of the witchcraft I saw in the Amazon indigenous people than the biblical faith of the Apostles. The Amazon indigenous people worked hard to control the spirits so that they would get what they wanted from the spirits. That is witchcraft. Is that what you do with God? The Apostles did not invent what they believed in. Find me anywhere in the Bible where an apostle tells God what to do. You won't be able to. Their life is based on a relationship with God. The apostles prayed humbly, fervently, consistently and passionately. At times, God did not answer them the way they wanted him to. Paul asked for God to remove his thorn in the flesh, but the Lord said no because his grace was sufficient. Is there room for God to tell you no? Are your prayers attempts to control God? We desperately need to be people of biblical faith. We need to trust that God hears us. We need to persevere in prayer. We need to cry out with passion, but always letting God be God. That is faith.

### **c) Obey the government and take all precautions that come from wisdom:**

One church in Madrid was recently raided by police and their illegal service closed. I can understand people wanting to meet, but in the end, they bring shame on the Gospel by disobeying the authorities. They put their people in danger by bringing them together. This is not faith. God has given us the government as our authority, and we do not have permission to disobey it without very good reasons. That is a bad testimony. The Psalms, the Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes are all examples of wisdom literature. That means they are books that you learn what it is to be wise. If God just wanted us to be careless and call it faith, why would he give us instructions on how to be wise? God is a God of wisdom, not only Laws and Faith. Wear a mask. Don't be with people unless you have to. Stay home. Pray for the government. That is wisdom. Not only does the coronavirus reveal the desperate need to get back to the Bible, but it reveals God's anger at sin.

## **3. God is angry at sin**

There are many immature people who are angry with God because of evils like the coronavirus or tsunamis or wars. God has not hidden why these things happen. Romans 1:18-23:

***<sup>18</sup> For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. <sup>19</sup> For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup> For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. <sup>21</sup> For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. <sup>22</sup> Claiming to be wise, they became fools, <sup>23</sup> and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images . . .***

You cannot even begin to imagine just how angry God is with human beings. There's no doubt why things like the coronavirus happen on earth. They are the anger and the wrath of God with the people who suppress the truth about God. They can clearly perceive that the world they live in cannot be an accident, yet they pretend to be ignorant or even arrogant saying that God does not exist. The coronavirus is also the anger of God against the sin of people who exchange God for other things. Could you imagine being able to see inside the hearts of human beings? Can you imagine knowing that they exchange you and treat you as not even worthy of saying thank you? The

coronavirus is the anger of God. Our whole universe is dying. Stars are dying, people are dying, and all creation is dying in one way or another. It has always been this way. The universe we live in is cursed by God. There will be no avoiding catastrophes while we walk on this earth. Here is what you have to understand. All of the pain and sickness and death you see now on earth is just a shadow of the pain and sickness and death that will come upon people. That means that all of these tragedies are intended to point to a greater tragedy. The coronavirus is like a shadow of death. It is when you die that you will meet the real death and the judgment of God. All of these things now on earth are just shadows, the reality is coming. What will you do when you meet the anger of God that cannot be avoided? You will not be able to quarantine yourself from the presence of God on judgement day. I know many of you listening were not even thinking about God until this crisis happened. You are wise to be afraid. You are wise to want to get right with God. Not only does this virus reveal the anger and wrath of God, it reveals our only hope as well.

#### **4. The Gospel is the only hope for any of us**

Every human being has to answer the question of what happens after we die. Everybody gives an answer, even Atheists. According to the Bible, that God created us, has a purpose for us, has given us a conscience, and a concept of morality. All of these things are pointing to a day of judgment. You are not your own. Your purpose is not up to you. Right and wrong are not ultimately decided by you. Revelation 20:11-15 speaks of this day:

***<sup>11</sup> Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. From his presence, earth and sky fled away, and no place was found for them. <sup>12</sup> And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Then another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, according to what they had done. <sup>13</sup> And the sea gave up the dead who were in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead who were in them, and they were judged, each one of them, according to what they had done. <sup>14</sup> Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. <sup>15</sup> And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.***

None of us can escape that day. We are all on a journey that leads to this point. Some will try to argue with God that they did not have enough evidence, which is not true. Some will try and prove that they were good only to have God show them every thought word and action that offended him. There is no hope in our own goodness. We are sick. God has said that if we turn on earth, then he will listen. But after death comes only the judgment.

I recently heard a story of a pastor. He was living a very sinful life as a lost person who was not a Christian, and he met the salvation of Jesus. Sometime after getting saved, he fell in love with a girl and asked her to marry him. She agreed, and they began to plan the wedding. On the day of the wedding, before the bride came down the aisle, the groom stood up and addressed the crowd. He explained that because he had lived in so much sin, he had decided to go to the doctor and be tested for any sexually transmitted diseases he might have. He explained to the crowd that he had decided to tell his fiancée clearly about his past before they got married. He told her about the medical tests that he had gotten and all his past sins. He said to her, "I understand if you would like to call off our wedding. I know it is almost impossible for you to accept someone like me." She shook her head

and told him that she clearly wanted to marry him. She said, "I forgive you, and I accept you just as you are." As he told the crowd, they teared up. He said to the crowd we all have a disease called sin. It has made us sick and has separated us from God. We are ashamed in front of him. We are afraid he will reject us, but if you just turn to Jesus and ask for his forgiveness as I did from my wife, Jesus will cleanse you and accept you. He will bring you into a relationship with himself, and you will live forever. The love of God is revealed in that he has made a way to be with him forever.

Everyone of us will die. We will be buried 6 feet under the ground, or we will be cremated. We are one breath away from dying. The greatest gift God can give you in this time is to bring you face to face with just how fragile you are. Many people are searching for security and certainty at this time. They want to feel safe. They want to be assured that nothing will happen to them. The Gospel can be that safety and security. It offers something far greater than earthly safety or security. If all I give you is safety and security for 20, 40 or 60 years, then I have given you a good thing. But could you imagine something far greater? Could you imagine me being able to guarantee you safety and security for all of eternity? That is what God has done for us in Jesus Christ.

Jesus has come to earth and has brought the power of heaven with him. He did many amazing things. But he said that the greatest thing he was doing was coming and dying to give his life as a payment for ours. God is a just God and he must punish sin. Your sins need to be paid. Jesus said that as he died on the cross, he was going to pay for all of our sins. By doing that he secures a relationship with God that is here on earth and will last for an eternity. By his resurrection Jesus promises a new world that will also be resurrected in which there will be no death or crying or suffering or pain. Those are the old cursed ways of things. Because Jesus died and rose from the dead, they will pass away. And we will live forever with God and each other. But for those who reject God's gracious gift and turn away from Jesus, they must make their own payment for their sins by suffering punishment separated from God's loving presence, only to receive the anger and justice of God. Are you ready for the day? There is no hope that can really give us security now. Only the Gospel promises us that there is another better world that God is going to make for us.

### Discussion questions:

1. When you read the story of 2 Kings 6:16-17 and the servant of Elisha, what do you learn?
2. Habakkuk says, *"Look among the nations, and see; wonder and be astounded. For I am doing a work in your days that you would not believe if told."* How might God use the coronavirus for good?
3. Why did God give a written revelation like the Bible? Why should we pray and think according to the Bible and not our own thoughts?
4. Reading Romans 1:18-23, what is causing the wrath of God to be revealed?
5. Revelation 20:11-15 speaks of judgment day. What can you learn from this passage?
6. How would you share the hope you have in God with someone else during this time?