

# When God Stops the World

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**Bible Verse:** Luke 13:1-5

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## **Truth Community Church**

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On August 12, 1866, Charles Spurgeon preached a sermon titled, "The Voice of Cholera," and he gave a biblical perspective on that dreaded disease that had broken out in London. It took many lives. It disrupted life in England and he took the opportunity to give a biblical perspective on the matter and it's a powerful sermon, you can find it easily online to be able to read for yourself. I want to do something similar today as we respond to this battle, if you want to call it that, with the coronavirus. My text is different, my points are different, but I'll be quoting Spurgeon some along the way here today.

Our text comes from that passage that I read earlier and for the sake of emphasis, I want to read it again from Luke 13:1-5. We just really need, my friends, we really need to have this text sink deeply into our minds and deeply into our hearts because I'm rather convinced that this is at the core of what the Christian church needs to do to respond properly to what are the events that are happening all around us and throughout our world. This is the theme which we are to emphasize here even though it's hard to find it being spoken of in very many places, if any at all.

Luke 13:1 says,

1 Now on the same occasion there were some present who reported to Him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mixed with their sacrifices. 2 And Jesus said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galileans were greater sinners than all other Galileans because they suffered this fate? 3 I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. 4 Or do you suppose that those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them were worse culprits than all the men who live in Jerusalem? 5 I tell you, no, but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

Notice the emphasis on repentance in this very brief passage from our Lord Jesus. Twice he says in these five verses, "I tell you no. People are thinking wrongly about these events that," he says to his contemporaries in that day, "no, people are thinking wrongly about this event. Here's the lesson, here's the message that you need to hear in these times in response to these deaths, you need to hear that unless you repent, you will all likewise

perish." Jesus pivots from the discussion of the day to the eternal matters that are truly and really and actually at stake in everything that is happening.

When I prepared the notes for this message a little earlier in the week, nearly 80% of the United States population was under some form of stay-at-home orders for public health reasons; that number is going to increase in the days to come. Authorities have, as you well know but just to kind of recapitulate in terms of remembering and bringing into one place into our minds everything that has happened in the past three or four weeks, and to preserve this for future review by others as well, authorities have ordered widespread business closures. Athletic events, universities and theaters have all been shut down. By one estimate this week, air travel in the United States has declined by 95% compared to this same time last year. Public gatherings of more than 10 people have been banned. A federal relief package of over \$2 trillion has been signed into law to ameliorate the effects and already our representatives are talking about adding to that package as well. There's no money to pay for this, it's just financed by public debt. This state of affairs was utterly unthinkable simply one month ago, 30 days ago no one was thinking about this and now all of life has been turned upside down, shaken and disturbed in a way that we simply could not have imagined. Life has changed. Period. That is an indicative statement that no one can contest and it will not return to normal anytime soon.

It seems as I have private conversations, as I observe what's being said in the media to the extent that I can stomach it for any period of time, it seems that everyone has an opinion about the state of affairs. A few are afraid of what this virus might do to them or to their loved ones. Some are speaking about the disruption in relationships that it understandably brings. Others more inclined to think about it in terms of public policy and all that. There are some that defend the actions of our government in taking these public health measures. There are others that dispute the risk and have their own reasons that they find persuasive to contest what is being done. Others are speaking greatly about the economic disruption and what's happening there and how will our economy recover, and the people are losing their businesses and losing their jobs. Those are certainly matters that affect individual lives, but they dispute the necessity, let's say, of the national disruption. There are those that dispute the necessity of these public health measures, others defend them, and some fear for their future constitutional rights. "This is a violation of the United States Bill of Rights," they say, "and our First Amendment rights are being compromised and infringed upon by these orders that are coming from the public government." And some are willfully disobeying them, professing biblical grounds for doing so. Now look, gathering all of these people up and not making any judgments on one side of the issue or the other on any of those things that I have mentioned, you and I need to understand this and this is just the way that it is, that's the only way I know how to say this to you on this Sunday morning, April 5, you and I need to understand this: these friends mean well in everything that they say, and in the sphere in which they're speaking, they're wanting what is right according to their perspective, but what you need to understand is this, is that everyone that is speaking along those lines has an entirely misplaced focus. We are talking about all the wrong issues at this time.

Friends, step back and understand what has happened here. God has stopped the world. God has stopped the world. Everything about our normal daily and individual and national lives has been upended by what has happened in such a short amount of time that very people saw coming. God has stopped the world. There is only one question that matters in response to that understanding and that question is this: why would God do that? Why would God stop the world when we were in the midst of a time of booming economic prosperity and things were going relatively well, certainly throughout the United States we were in a time of great and prolonged economic prosperity, and then as a matter of just someone snapping their fingers, it all changed and it is all vulnerable now, and it will be a long period of time before it ever recovers, if it ever does. We don't know what tomorrow holds. We can't say that a year from now we're going to go to this and that city and have a profit, James 4. We don't know that. We don't know what the future holds, all we know is that everything that we had known beforehand has been taken away and I have before me an empty auditorium to testify to that every time that I preach during this time. Why would God stop the world? My friends, I want to dwell on this with you for just a moment, the importance of that question, to help you think through and to have by, I hope, the help of the Holy Spirit, to have that thought grip your mind because that is the only thought that will take you in the direction that you need to go in your thinking and in your understanding of what is happening around us here today.

Listen, everything else is ultimately temporary and incidental to the answer to that question. Look, I practiced law, I studied law, I studied constitutional law under Warner Chapman and Patrick Baude at Indiana University. The matters of constitutional law are things that have been precious to me throughout all of my life but I'm here to tell you this morning in a different capacity as a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, that the words of James Madison and the founding fathers of the United States government make no difference to what is actually happening here. Those words can do nothing to protect your soul in the midst of what's happening. They give you no answers to this ultimate question, why would God stop the world, you cannot find the answer to that question in the pages of the U.S. Constitution, in the reports of MSNBC or Fox News. What is dominating the thoughts, let alone to mention what random people think on social media, right, regardless of what all these people say, they cannot answer this fundamental question: why would God stop the world?

That is the question to ask and the economic impact of these changes pales in comparison and into insignificance in comparison to the implications of that question. The issues and the disputes over these public health measures absolutely falls into insignificance compared to the significance of the question: why would God stop world? The pages of the U.S. Constitution, as much as Americans, some of us revere those in a human sense and respect them, is what I mean by that, the U.S. Constitution has no answer for that question and therefore is impotent to answer the fundamental question that is at stake. And since those things are true, what I've just said about all of those things, since those things are true, they should not be the primary focus of believing people in this time. We must come fundamentally back to the word of God with a desperate sense of urgency to say, "God, what would You have us understand and what should we know, how should we respond, what should we think in the midst of this?" There's going to be no answers

coming to us from the conflicting opinions of pundits through all of this. We don't know what the future holds. There is only one sure place for truth for us to turn to and that is the word of God. Only Scripture can give us clarity and direction at this time.

Now in that text that I read from Luke 13, Jesus was addressing two contemporary events that were the subject of much public discussion in his day. It seems that Pilate, the Roman governor over the region, had killed certain worshipers at the temple during their acts of worship, and so somehow their blood was mingled with the sacrifices that they were making at that time. It was an abhorrent way to die. People were saying, "Where they worst sinners than others because this happened to them?" What a miserable way to die that was, and what a seeming indication of divine judgment it was. Separately in an event that has no other historical confirmation or record of it, 18 people died in a tower collapse, perhaps a construction accident, and people met with a sudden fate that they were not expecting. And here's the thing that I want you to see about those two incidents, there's so much to see about it, but that the people who died did not see their deaths coming. They died suddenly, they died in a way that was beyond their control, and they were suddenly ushered into the presence of eternal reality without warning and without any time to respond, and on a human level even able to say goodbye to those that they knew. Their lives changed, their lives ended without warning at the hand of what took place.

Now there were left behind the living and the living who knew about these events and obviously became a matter of great public discussion. They had their own versions of social media, I suppose, in which opinions were exchanged back and forth trying to sort through the significance of what had happened. People wanted to speculate upon why this disaster had fallen upon them, why did those people die in that particular way at that particular time, and the speculation was coming that there must have been some kind of manner of grievous sin in them that called down a judgment from God upon them in such a spectacular way. It's reminiscent a bit of the three counselors of Job who speculated on the reasons for his suffering, calling him to repent of whatever sin he was hiding in his life that they didn't know about because surely God was judging him for sin and that was an explanation of his suffering. And the question becomes: did God single them out for a particular judgment because he was especially angry with them because they were so sinful? Was the suffering of Job a result of his own sinfulness? Well, if these Jews in the first century at the time of Christ had read their Bibles, they would have been cautioned against such thinking by reading the account of Job whom God himself declared to be a righteous man. No, God was accomplishing other purposes that were unseen to Job's so-called friends, and now Jesus speaks to his contemporaries and addresses their speculations about the events that were happening, and here is the crucial thing for you to see if you want to develop some measure of discernment and understanding in responding to the events that are happening all around us here today. Jesus did not accept the question in the way that it was framed. He rejected the question being asked and raised a different issue that was not being discussed by those who were alive. Jesus did not enter into speculation one way or another about the sinfulness of those dead Galileans, those dead people from the construction accident. Jesus didn't answer the idle curiosity of the crowds of the day. Jesus pivoted away from the dead to the living. He

pivoted away from the dead to the living and he used those two calamities to make a most essential point that applied to everyone that was hearing regardless of how they were affected by what was happening around them. He told them twice, he said, "Here is the way that you are to think about these events that are dominating national discussion," so to speak. He said, "You are to understand this, that unless you repent, you will also likewise perish." He tells the living what they are to glean from the events is a spiritual lesson for them to learn that is urgent for the benefit of their eternal soul. "Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish."

J. C. Ryle makes a comment in his commentary on this passage that men are happy to discuss everyone's death except their own. Men do not naturally want to talk about their own mortality and the reality that we are all marching toward, these are my words now, not J. C. Ryle's, that we are all marching toward an appointed day at the judgment throne of God. That is the only thing that matters here, beloved, and I raise my voice for emphasis trying to do something to pierce through the fog of all of the misdirected commentary that is taking place here in the world around us. Christ comes to his contemporaries and challenges their false sense of security. They're talking about this as an outward matter of speculation when instead they should be considering things inwardly based on revealed truth and what it means for the future outcome of their own eternal souls. From outward speculation, Jesus directs us to inward self-examination and that is the point, beloved, that we are to glean from what is happening around us. In the process, Jesus also rebuked their spiritual pride. He rebuked their spiritual pride. The mere question were these Galileans worst sinners than others was an expression of spiritual pride and smugness by those that were expressing it, and they completely missed the point that, yes, you have been spared from this particular calamity but you would face and you will face eternal judgment if you yourselves do not repent. Oh, I am so glad I finally have the opportunity to say this in the platform and the form that God has given to me, however limited it may be.

J. C. Ryle went on to say this about the text, he said, "Jesus took the opportunity to speak to them about their own souls. He told them to look within themselves and think about their own standing before God. What if these Galileans did die a sudden death, what is that to you? Consider your own ways. Unless you repent, you will perish in the same way."

Now beloved, the collapse of our economic system and our public health crisis, all of these things have happened suddenly in terms of time, almost as rapidly as that tower fell upon the 18 2,000 years ago. It came upon us suddenly and without warning as quickly as the Roman authorities struck down those Galileans in the very act of their worship. These things have happened suddenly and they impress upon us this, that we are not in control of our own lives. We truly cannot shape the course of our own future. We are not, contrary to the poet, we are not the masters of our own destinies. We are not the captains of our own souls. We are vulnerable. We are sinful and we are in danger of judgment unless we repent.

Now some in our day as I speak, some have lost their jobs, some are sick, some are dead in the outworking of these things. Everyone has been affected and no one really likes it. No one likes it at all. But do you see, my friends, that that doesn't matter? The fact that you don't like it doesn't matter and the more pressing issue to dwell upon is the fact that you do not have the power to change it yourself, and that none of us do? Youth does not exempt someone from the consequences of this. The consequences of the virus and the economic impact are affecting the wealthy and the social elite in proportionate measures. We are not in control and the disruption is designed to provoke us to finally ask questions of eternal significance. That's why God has stopped the world. And how can we discern the meaning of these changes? Jesus' words prepare the way for us to benefit from it all and I'm going to walk you through four simple points that will help you process and to work through this for yourself and then be able to turn and minister to others as well. Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish. What are we to think in our day now that God has stopped the world?

Well, first of all, I want you to understand and what I want you to do is this, I want you to remember God's hand. Remember God's hand, by which I mean that we should not think about what is happening around us in purely natural terms. We should not think about this solely in terms of what was the geographic source of this virus. We should not think about this solely in political terms about what this might mean for the presidential election, or what we think about the state governors who are issuing orders. This is entirely the wrong realm of thought to go into. These are secondary causes that are simply a reflection of the prior plan of God and what he is doing in our midst. Natural causes alone do not explain this crisis, they do nothing to help us have a true biblical understanding of what is happening around us. I wish I could get on about a dozen Twitter feeds and say this thing but I'm not on Twitter and I don't plan to. What a waste of time. But natural causes alone do not explain our crisis. We need to be thinking about other things.

Like Jesus told his contemporaries, we need to pivot away from the public general discussion and think more deeply and more discerningly about what is happening, and you cannot begin to understand what is happening in the world around us until you remember the providence of God. Ephesians 1:11, we've referred to it many many times from this pulpit. Ephesians 1:11 says that we have been, speaking about Christians, we have "been predestined according to His purpose," his purpose, the purpose of God, the purpose of the Almighty, and what does the Almighty do? That verse goes on to say that he is the one "who works all things after the counsel of His will." He works all things after the counsel of his will. The Bible teaches us that God planned the outworking of history from before the beginning of time and everything that happens in the world now, he is directing, he is sending, he is orchestrating to accomplish what he determined that he wanted to do before the foundation of time. There is a plan of God at work and God is working through this national crisis to accomplish his purposes and everything else that people are fascinated with, the economics of it, the public health matters of it, the constitutional matters of it, everything, all of those things, the personal effects that it has on us, all of those things are subordinate to the will of God and the purpose of God that he is working out in what he accomplishes, and until you somehow factor that into your

thinking, you have completely misdiagnosed the problem, you are completely missing the discernment of the issue at hand.

God has planned and God directs everything that happens. My friends, that applies to the global realm of events, it occurs to what we consider to be the incidental events in the course of life. Matthew 10:29 says that the hand of God is involved even in the fall of a sparrow. Well, do you see, my friends, that if God is so involved at the detail level of the sparrows that die, of the numbers of hairs on your head that it says also in that passage, if he's involved in what we consider such insignificant details, that the lesser proves the greater, if he's involved in that level of detail, then he is involved in the greater things that are happening and that means that the fullness of this entire coronavirus crisis and calamity whether you think it's going to be serious medically or not is utterly irrelevant to the fact that all of the consequences of this are coming to us from the hand of God. The God of the Bible is at work in everything that happens.

Now how does that apply, then, to us today? How does that apply to a public health crisis? What Charles Spurgeon said back in 1866 is just as real, true and vibrant to us today as it was 154 years ago. Spurgeon said this, I quote and I agree, "We believe that God sends all pestilences. Let them come how they may. He sends them with a purpose. We conceive that it is our business as ministers of God to call the people's attention to God in the disease and teach them the lesson God would have them learn." So for today, what that means for us is this, is that God has sent this coronavirus problem and all of the attendant circumstances and consequences to us with a purpose. This is all coming to us with a purpose from God that Scripture calls us to think about, meditate on, and try to discern what it is the purpose of God in these things. What is the lesson that you and I should learn from the fact that God has stopped the world? What should we think? It is time, it is past time for all of us to put our hands over our mouth and rather than speaking out our human opinions based on isolated pieces of information that we have about this, it is time for all of us, all of us to put our hands on our mouth and adopt the position of a learner at the feet of Scripture to see what God would teach us.

What is the lesson that he would have us learn? Well, you need to stay with me. Look, look, look, the depth and the mind of God are beyond us. Isaiah 55 says that his thoughts are not our thoughts, and his ways are not our ways, for as the heavens are higher than us, so the thoughts of God are higher than us. That means that we are not going to be able to express the purpose of God in a Twitter tweet, we're not going to be able to understand and to express this in a 30 second sound bite or anything like that. The totality of this is such a rebuke to our superficiality and our desire for quick and easy answers, and so we are rejecting that, we are pushing that whole mindset away from the table of this pulpit today to be able to think in a more earnest and in a more serious way, and it requires some effort, it requires some time, and it requires some humility to be able to do this but that's what we're going to try to do. This is the one path forward in your thinking that will actually bear spiritual fruit in your life and that's what I desire for you here today.

We've said that you have to remember God's hand in it, and that immediately raises a question: well, what is this God like? Who is this God who is directing all things? What

is it about him that we should think? You see, we need to be asking vertical questions first. For some of us, we need to be reminding ourselves of things that we have learned in the past, others of us, this is an opportunity for us to learn in the schoolroom of God as he reminds us powerfully about who he is, and we only find that through the word of God, not in our foolish speculations about what the circumstance that are around us. We have got to stop being like the Jews of the first century speculating about current events, humble ourselves and come back to the word of God.

What will we find if we do that? Well, one, we've already seen that we remember God's hand, we see that his hand is in details big and small, and so we're already humbled and intrigued to pursue that line of thought which certainly isn't being represented in any media discussions about it. But secondly, we need to come to this, we need to remember God's holiness. We need to remember God's holiness. God is not like us. God is morally pure and God is separate from evil. He is separate from sin. In Habakkuk 1:13, it says this, it says, "Your eyes are too pure to approve evil, And You can not look on wickedness with favor." Your eyes are too pure to approve evil and you cannot look on wickedness with favor, and the holiness of God whose hand is in all things, my friends, that matters. The fact that the God who has planned all things and is directing all things and is sending all things to us, the fact that he is holy has a significance for us about the way that we should think about the world around us, especially at a time like this and I want to take you to a familiar passage of Scripture to give us a sense of the majesty and the transcendent splendor of the holiness of God in Isaiah 6.

Turn there in your Bibles with me, Isaiah 6:1. As you're turning there, a passage where another great public event had taken place and there were consequences to what was taking place in the realm of the nation at that time. In Isaiah 6:1 it says this, "In the year of King Uzziah's death," the king had died and now life was up for grabs, the prophet says, "I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, 'Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory.' And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. Then I said, 'Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.'" The prophet was undone in the presence, the manifest presence of the glory of God. He realized that the glory of God was completely inconsistent with who he was as a man and was completely inconsistent with the nature of the society in which he lived. Society was sinful and he was part of it. His lips were unclean and the collective lips of society were unclean, and seeing a clear vision of the holiness of God made him realize that God was a threat to them; the holiness of God meant that their sin could not go unpunished.

No one escapes from this. Hebrews 4:13 says this, Hebrews 4:13 says, "there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." Beloved, God's eyes are greater than an x-ray machine, an MRI that sees right through us. God's eyes see through all of us. He sees all of our actions

and he sees our inner heart. 1 Samuel 16:7 says that he looks upon the heart and he sees us in our inner man, and he sees us from the perspective of his utter complete holiness that is separate from us and that is too pure to approve the evil that is within us. This has consequences. Oh, oh, oh, dear God, I say it reverently, oh dear God, this has consequences for us and for our nation and for the world in which we live.

What does God see when he looks at our country? And I'm just limiting this to the United States simply because that's where we live, but this applies throughout the whole world; it's just for the sake of convenience of reference I'll speak about our own country. What does the holy God see when he looks at our country? What does he see, my friends? Does he see a people that are collectively marked by the fear of God which is the beginning of wisdom? Does he see that? Does he see a people streaming to hear his word accurately taught? Does he see people streaming to hear the Gospel of Christ proclaimed? Does he look and see a people that are crying out with the Philippian jailer, "What must I do to be saved?" Does he see a people that are repenting of sin? That are earnest about the purposes and the word of God? Does he see any of that in our society? Please, please, to ask that question is to answer it. The evident answer is no. He does not see that at all when he looks upon our country. In fact, he sees the exact opposite.

If you were to take the 10 Commandments from Exodus 20 and just scroll through them very quickly like I am about to do, you will find what God sees when he looks upon our nation. What does he see? He sees that we have all manner of gods, not the God of Scripture, not the Lord Jesus Christ high and lifted up in our hearts. He would see that we have a society that easily takes his name in vain and uses the name of God and Jesus Christ as curse words, and joins them with other manner of blasphemies that are such an assault on the integrity of the throne of God. We have a society that has no desire to worship him as recent surveys have shown that church attendance is plummeting in this godless age in which we live. We are a people that do not honor authority. We do not honor the authority of our parents. We do not honor the authority of other authorities that God has established. We have a society with no desire to worship him. Our streets are filled with murder. Our streets are filled with the human refuse of drug and alcohol abuse, and yet we have plenty of establishments that profit off of their misery as they sell the things that would enslave others to their miserable lives. Our bodies, our eyes are filled with adultery. Just look at a supermarket magazine rack as you're about to check out, if you can stomach it long enough as a Christian to look at, and you see proof of what I'm saying. Where we buy our essentials, we find the adultery that people love and what they drink in with their bodies, with her eyes, with their iPhones filled with adultery. People steal. People lie. People covet. And we have an entire structure of society that affirms them and encourages them along the way. You know, my friends, I won't even mention the national embrace of abortion, homosexuality, transgenderism, pornography, and drunkenness. I won't even mention that.

What does Scripture say about all of these things? What does Scripture say to us about the perspective of God on these things? Well, a couple of New Testament passages help us. In Hebrews 13:4. Hebrews 13:4 it says this, "Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will

judge." His holiness looks on these violations of his commandments and says judgment is coming for that. In a somewhat longer passage in 1 Thessalonians 4:3-6 it says this, "For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual immorality; that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God; and that no man transgress and defraud his brother in the matter," why, he goes on to say why, "because the Lord is the avenger in all these things, just as we also told you before and solemnly warned you."

Beloved, the God who sent this pandemic is holy and you and I are not, and that is a bad combination. That is a very bad combination. Spurgeon commented in his day and I quote and I agree, that's why I quote him, "The masses of our people regard not God, care not for the Lord Jesus, and have no thought about eternal things. This is a Christian nation we sometimes say, but where shall be found more thorough heathens than we find here?" Where will we find more godless people than between the shores of the Atlantic and the Pacific, between the borders of Canada and Mexico, I ask you? I ask you where will we find more godless people than within the bounds of the 48 contiguous states and Alaska and Hawaii? I ask you, I ask you?

God's hand is in everything that is happening. God is holy and as he looks on as he is sending this pandemic to us, he sees a massively sinful society and individuals within that society that are utter rebels against his will, that are utter objects of his righteous wrath. There is no other way to say it. We remember God's hand, we remember God's holiness, and we start perhaps if the Spirit of God would help us and work in your heart and in mine, then when we remember these things, then perhaps we start to drift away from our fascination with ourselves and the fascination of the temporary circumstances in which we live, and our foolish protests about our constitutional rights at times like this, to get to the issue that is far more important, the holiness of God and what it means for us. Collectively our nation should be saying, "Woe is me, we are undone! Look at what we are like in the presence of a holy God who sent this to us." I'm not preaching a seeker sensitive, friendly message today, am I? I'm not trying to be sensitive here today. I'm trying by the grace of God to give a biblical perspective on what's happening here and to take the words of Jesus from the first century, understand them and bring them forward to us. We are in danger of perishing and people are arguing about the most foolish of things as we do.

And how foolish is it and how serious is this? Well, let's go to our third point for this morning. We need to not only remember God's hand and God's holiness, thirdly, we need to remember God's hell. We need to remember God's hell. This is a time where we must remember the reality of eternal judgment that Scripture testifies to. This pandemic should cause us to consider the state of our nation and the state of our own souls, the state of your own soul, beloved.

Look at Psalm 5 with me. I want to take you to three passages here in this section of the message. Psalm 5. As you turn there, Psalm 5:4, echoing the words of the prophets that I quoted earlier. Psalm 5:4 says this, says, "You are not a God who takes pleasure in

wickedness; No evil dwells with You. The boastful shall not stand before Your eyes; You hate all who do iniquity. You destroy those who speak falsehood; The LORD abhors the man of bloodshed and deceit." That's what the holiness of God is like. That's what it tells us as he looks on sinful men, that his wrath and his judgment is aroused in the face of it all.

Turn over to a familiar passage in Romans 1. Some of these passages we just can't look at often enough because they are recorded in the unchanging word of God that will outlast the heaven and the earth, and we need to come to them again and again because it's the only thing that will refresh our mind and give us a proper perspective on what we are seeing. Romans 1:18. I should read through all of verse 32, I'll probably only read through verse 21. Romans 1:18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness." It's revealed. It's an ongoing reality now that the wrath of God is revealed against the sinfulness of men. And why is his wrath aroused? Verse 19, "because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened." The wrath of God is a reality that Scripture speaks to and, beloved, as I may well teach in the near future, Jesus Christ himself had plenty to say about the reality of eternal hell and eternal judgment. We need to look at that and we will do that soon here from the Truth Community Church pulpit, but we'll save that for another time. God has made known what his holiness thinks about the sinfulness of men and his present wrath, beloved, yields to a greater future wrath, an eternal wrath that is yet to come. This is the destiny, this is the outcome of our sins.

Look at Revelation 20:11. Revelation 20:11 as I find it in my own Scripture here. Revelation 20:11 looks forward to the future to that final day of judgment where unbelievers are gathered at the throne of God and receive their marching orders and receive their assignment for their eternal destiny and the Apostle John says this, "Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he," individually, "was thrown into the lake of fire." That is how serious a holy God looks on the sin of men and there's no protesting that this is unfair. God is eternal, God has given an eternal law, and he has revealed himself in the skies and in the Scripture. He has made himself more than adequately known for men to seek him but they refuse to do so. Some of you watching now, you refuse to do so. You refuse to bend the knee to him.

Just think with me here little bit. God is eternal and he's given an eternal law. What happens when we break the law and we're caught in it? We pay the penalty that the law requires. Just on a human level pay the traffic fine for speeding or whatever it may be. You pay the price of breaking that law. Well, my friend, my friend, I'm pleading with you to think about the seriousness of these matters and to wake up, and to wake up. I'm pleading with you to contemplate what it means that God's hand is in what's happening and that he is holy and that he has a hell awaiting those who refuse to repent. Understand when an eternal God gives an eternal law, there is only one consequence of breaking that law, it must be eternal judgment, unending, infinite judgment, and that's what the passage in Revelation is speaking of, being cast into some manner of a lake of fire for all of eternity without end and without relief as the consequence of having been a transgressor of the eternal law of an eternal God. There is no other outcome but that such transgressions must be punished. And when we look at our nation in the way that I just reviewed a few moments ago, you see that the greatness of America is built on a collapsible stage that is ready to sink, that is ready to break down under the weight of sin and to be cast into eternal judgment. That's the weight of it. That can be the only outcome unless you repent. There is no getting around this. God's word is true, God's word speaks to these things, God is holy, there is no escaping the consequences of our sin as we contemplate this apart from the Lord Jesus Christ.

So I have to ask you, my friend, I'm not simply talking about something national, am I? I'm talking about you. I'm talking to you. My friend, you're part of this evil that is around us. There is evil in you. You yourself are a rebel against God. What's going to happen to you? What's going to happen to you when this day of judgment comes? We've already seen you're not in control of life. We've already seen that things can happen and change so suddenly. We've read about men who died when they weren't expecting to when a tower collapsed on them, when government authorities burst in on them during their time of worship. What's going to happen to you, my friend? Are you so foolish as to think that you'll escape this? Are you so foolish as to think that these matters aren't weighty and serious? Are you so foolish as to think that Jesus and the word of God are bluffing when it speaks about these things and none of it will really come to pass? Ah, my friend, don't be that way. We all share a tendency that we want to deny and to contradict things that are very unpleasant to think about but don't fall into that trap of the devil where you dismiss these things that are true simply because they are too awful to contemplate. It's precisely because they are too awful to contemplate that you ought to be considering them and crying out and looking for a means of escape from this judgment if there is one to be had, because God's hand is in all of this and God is holy and God does have a hell that he has for rebels just like you.

And let me just say this, let me just say this. James Madison is considered the father of our Constitution, the United States Constitution, and those that are concerned about our constitutional rights during this time, my friend, do you understand even if they don't, do you understand at this time that the words of James Madison and the Bill of Rights will do you no good before the throne of God when he calls you to an account for how you've responded to his word? Do you realize that? That's why I say that it's so foolish to be

obsessed over the issue of constitutional rights right now. There are greater matters at stake. There is the right of God to vindicate his holiness against all the sin of men. That's the issue that we should be concerned about and what it means for you and what it means for you is that unless you repent, you will perish, you will perish miserably and eternally. The weight of it causes me to bow my head.

My friend, who will help you then at that day of judgment if it's obvious that you're not even in control now? We still have food and shelter now. That's not going to last and what's going to happen when everything is stripped away from you and you're standing before a holy God? If you can't control your life now in the present, what are you going to do before that great white throne judgment of God and he calls you to account for every evil deed and every evil thought that you have ever committed in the solar like glory of his holiness? How can that possibly go well for you and why would you possibly dismiss this when your own conscience testifies to the truth of what I'm saying to you right now? Why would you do that? Who will help you then if you are not in control now?

That brings us to our fourth and final point for this morning, our fourth and final point for this morning and it's this, it's that we should remember in this time, we should remember God's hope. We should remember God's hope. Friend, what will you do now, today in this moment, what will you do now that you are obviously not in control and that you are in the presence of such a great and holy God who has a hell for rebels just like you? What will you do? What will you do? There should be something in your heart by the help of the Holy Spirit crying out, "What must I do to be saved? How can I be delivered from this miserable condition in which I find myself?" There's only one place for you to go. There is one place for you to go. God will meet you favorably at the cross of Jesus Christ. It was at the cross where Jesus Christ did a reconciling work for sinners just like you, to make sinners just like you at one with a holy God. It was at the cross where Jesus bore the sin of men and suffered under the eternal wrath of God and suffered the eternal wrath of God, not simply under it. He bore it himself in his own body at the cross. God raised him from the dead. Christ did that as a sacrifice to satisfy the anger of God, to turn away the wrath of God from those who would come humbly to Christ in repentance and in faith and believing in him. Turning your back on your sinful life, your sinful worldliness, your sinful indifference to God and coming as a humble beggar of no resources of your own to Christ saying, "Christ, have mercy on me the sinner! God, save me the sinner! As the weight of all of these things comes cascading down upon my soul, Christ, I turn to You and I ask You for mercy that I don't deserve." That is the only hope for you in this and yet it is a sufficient hope. Jesus Christ shed his blood to cover the sins of people just like you for just such a time as this.

Now let's think just a little bit more here and have the word of God and the consequences of what we've said here today to help us think through what this means and why God sent this coronavirus into the world and into our lives and so disrupted everything about us. My friend, it might look like an act of judgment from God but that would not be thinking quite right about it. This coronavirus and all the disruption that it causes and all of the way that it dislocates the thinking of people and makes them question the foundations

upon which they had previously stood, for it to have that effect there's only one way for us to understand this. The sending of this coronavirus is an act of immeasurable grace from God. It is an act of grace from a holy God. It is an undeserved warning trumpet to men throughout the world that is crying out to them in an undeniable way, "You are not in control of your life. Death is real and death is coming and death is moving." The angel of death will bring his scythe upon you soon enough and God rather than simply doing that immediately as his offended justice would allow, instead of sending the judgment immediately and casting all of us into that eternal hell that have not trusted in Christ, instead of doing that immediately, he has sent us a warning, he has sent us a call, he has sent us a siren to wake us up from our spiritual slumber that we might in the brief time that is allotted, recognize our sin, recognize how we have offended a holy God and realize that God in grace has provided a Savior for such desperate criminals as you. And therefore this is an act of grace by which God is awakening people from their spiritual slumber and giving them a little bit more time to repent and come to Christ. Yes, this is an act of grace but this earthly calamity is foreshadowing a far greater eternal calamity that is coming upon all sinful men if they do not flee to Christ.

So we get a foretaste of what judgment is like, the terrifying, limiting nature of it while simultaneously having opportunity to respond and to escape from the wrath that is to come. Beloved, you must understand that that means that this is an act of grace from God if only people would ask the right question, why would God stop the world, and stop fussing about the temporary matters that are occupying 99% of the discussion around us. God has sent us an undeniable lesson in our weakness about our weakness so that we might turn to him for safety and for salvation that the world cannot provide. We must see the purpose of God in this crisis.

Spurgeon said, I quote and once again I agree, "If you ask me what I think to be the design, I believe it to be this, to wake up our indifferent population to make them remember that there is a God, to render them susceptible to the influences of the Gospel to drive them to the house of prayer and to influence their minds to receive the word of God." That is why this coronavirus has descended upon us. God in grace has sent us something designed to awaken us and make us susceptible to and receptive to his holy word which otherwise men would continue to have rejected and avoided.

My friend, God would have you awakened from spiritual slumber. You who are not in Christ, he sent this for your benefit that you might be rescued from eternal death and the question is now what are you going to do with this act of grace? In light of your sinfulness, in light of the holiness of God, in light of the hell of God and the certainty of future judgment, what will you do with what you have heard here today? Will you just again harden your heart against it? Friend, God has graciously sent you a warning not just in the coronavirus but in this message today. God has given you all the understanding that you need to respond and to be able to flee to him and he is willing and gracious and Christ lovingly extends himself to you even in this moment, calling on you and with full readiness and willingness of heart to receive you and to save you from the wrath that is to come. And friend, if you turn away, if you walk away from that, you have no one but your own sinful self to blame. If you find yourself at the judgment seat of God clothed in

your own rags of unrighteousness, you will have no one to blame but yourself because Christ sent you a warning, Christ sent you an invitation even today and invited you to come and he was willing to receive you and he's fully willing to receive everyone who comes to him. There is no limit to the readiness of Christ to receive sinners just now but, oh, what could only await those who hear all of these things as the Spirit gives you affirmation in your heart that what you're hearing is true and you say, "No, I will not have it," and you harden your heart against it and walk away. There will be no excuse for you. You will have no one to blame for the condemnation that comes down upon your head but yourself and God has sent you a warning, "Don't go down that path."

For a brief time longer, God extends his hand in mercy. He extends an offer of grace. He extends an offer of redemption that is free, that requires you to do no religious works to be able to receive it, that requires no preparatory work on your part. You don't have to try to make yourself better, indeed you shouldn't. Don't try to make yourself better, just come and recognize the fullness and the freeness of what is offered to you and this is the hope of God for you in the midst of all of this. How great, how free, how thorough is the promise? John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life," instead of eternal death. He's promised, he's warned, what more could we expect him to do? He's done so much more than what we are entitled to and yet we have a sense, then, of his grace and mercy that is extended in the offer.

This is almost the exact end of the Bible. There's a couple of verses after it but in Revelation 22:17 the Bible ends on this note, "The Spirit and the bride say, 'Come.' And let the one who hears say, 'Come.' And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who wishes take the water of life without cost." My friend, God has graciously offered you salvation today. Jesus Christ graciously calls you to repentance and faith in him for salvation and the complete forgiveness of all of your sins. It's a wonderful wonderful truth. It's a wonderful reality but, my friend, be warned, be warned that unless you repent, you will also perish.

Let's pray together.

*Dear Father, we simply ask You to have Your Holy Spirit bear witness to the truth of the things that we've said, to be gracious to the hearts of those who are unbelieving, that the Spirit of God might impart to them new life that they would repent and believe in Christ. For those of us who know You, Father, whose hearts echo and resonate with those closing verses about Your love for us, the reality of eternal life, that salvation is received without cost, Father, we thank You for the refuge that we have found in Christ, and even in the midst of this coronavirus and all of the consequences that it has brought, Father, we who are Your people bow before You and we acknowledge and we express our trust and affirmation that Your faithfulness to us is great. We are confident that we are not lost by Your hand in the midst of all of these things and so we trust in You, and we ask You to help us be faithful before You in our lives during this time, and faithful in our witness to You to those who are lost and dying. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.*

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