**When the World is Turned Upside Down**

2 Chronicles 20:5 – 15

**Proposition:** Our difficulties are God’s opportunities.

**Application:** Pray frequently, pray intensely, pray specifically.

**Introduction**

The Greek myth of Pandora’s box describes how the gods had given Pandora a locked jar she was never to open. Driven by her human weaknesses, she opened it, releasing the world’s misfortunes and plagues. Scientists tell us that Covid-19 did not escape from a jar in a laboratory in Wuhan China, but that it entered the human population from an animal source. Regardless of the source of this virus we are now in the throes of a pandemic.

The purpose of the Public health measures is to put the plague back in the jar, but these measures are causing an economic calamity that may exceed the financial crisis of 2008. The trouble with human nature is that although we may know where the answer lies, we often don’t turn there for fear of what the answer might be. We have the tendency to believe we have what it takes to solve world problems or get through any personal crises. But what happens when we find ourselves in a crisis beyond our control? What happens if our solutions cause greater problems down the road? The text we are looking at gives us an answer! This passage shows us what it takes not only to survive but to thrive *when the world is turned upside down.* What we will discover is that our difficulties are God’s opportunities.

**Read** 2 Chron 20:3 – 15

1. **Prayer** (20:3 – 13)

***Our Response to Crisis*** (20:3, 4): At the time of King Jehoshaphat’s reign, Israel was thriving. The nation was doing well economically. They were enjoying relative peace and safety. All of the sudden, Israel was faced with a crisis that plunged the nation into chaos. The normal response when facing a great crisis is fear! But notice Jehoshaphat’s first response when threatened with this daunting problem. Before he did anything, before he put into effect protective measures, before planning a war strategy, before working out an economic plan, he turned to the Lord for help. He viewed the national crisis as an opportunity to seek the God of Israel. Never was there a suspicion in his mind that God was not able to deal with this crisis.

**Read** Prov 22:3.

Not only did Jehoshaphat turn to the Lord as his first response, he called all of Israel, family by family, to seek the Lord with him. Why did he call all of Israel to the altar of prayer? Because all of Israel faced the same crisis.

We are in a global crisis right now. We are living through a pandemic. Not only are we in danger of being infected with this virus, many of us have suffered job loss and are facing financial decline as a result of the massive world response put into action by public health officials to control the rapid spread of this virus.

**Transition:** What should our first response be when we come face to face with a fearful problem? What do we do when we are confronted with danger? Our first response is to seek refuge in the Lord by turning to Him in prayer. Since this crisis also affects our families, we should bring our family with us to the altar of prayer.

***Our Relationship with Him*** (20:5 – 7): The reason why we have the privilege to pray is because of the amazing phrase *our God.* The phrase *our God* points to the fact that, through faith in Christ Jesus, we are in personal relationship with God. He is not just *the God of heaven and earth,* He is *our God.*

***He Rules the World***: Not only is He *our God,* He is *our Sovereign God*. The elements of nature, the nations of the world, the governing powers, the financial markets, are all under His command and control. He has complete authority over all things that happen in heaven and on earth. In these anxious times nothing can stand in the way of His deliverance!

**Transition:** When our world is turned upside down, our first response is to seek Him. As we come to the altar of prayer, we are to bring to mind His past deliverances.

**Remember His Past Deliverances** (20:7): The Lord has a perfect track record of faithfulness. He has proven Himself before. He will prove Himself again. He has done great things for us in the past. He can be trusted to do great things for us in the present.

**Illustration:** Some of you may recall *Operation Desert Storm*. In August of 1990, Saddam Hussein ordered the invasion of Kuwait. He then defied the demands of the UN to withdraw from Kuwait. Saudi Arabia and Egypt were alarmed by these actions and called on the United States to come to Kuwait’s aid. By mid-January 1991, the Gulf War began with a massive U.S.-led air offensive known as *Operation Desert Storm*.

I remember watching this play out on TV. In those days, I hosted a Saturday morning prayer meeting with a few Christian friends. On February 16th of 1991, during one of these prayer meetings, we read Psalm 46.

The ninth verse in this Psalm says, “*He makes wars to cease*.” That morning we prayed to Lord that He would bring an end to the Gulf War. Twelve days later, on February 28th, President George Bush senior announced that the Gulf War had ended. I know many people around the world prayed for this war to cease. And the Lord heard the prayers of many including the prayers of our small group of men.

The God of peace can make wars to cease. The God of nature can make pandemics vanish. The God of the nations can reverse economic downturns. All things are in the hands of our God. Let us not take lightly the power and privilege of seeking our God in prayer. As we pray let us recall His past deliverances.

***Responding to Covid-19*** (20:9): The plague Jehoshaphat refers to comes with suddenness and without warning.

Plagues have the potential to cause ruin such that the world order is changed. I have never witnessed anything like what we are seeing today. Yes, there have been assassinations, riots, mass murders, terrorist attacks, recessions, but not the virtual closure of society, not the standstill of the global economy. To top it off, there has been a toilet paper panic, not a historically recognized sign of the last days. The world has not faced a challenge like the coronavirus outbreak since World War II. Not only are we at risk of infection, this pandemic has also brought out the vulnerability of the world financial system. Already, many have lost jobs. As I talk with people about this pandemic many are saying the world will never be the same once the crisis ends. And yet this global crisis presents an opportunity for us to seek a closer relationship with *our God.*

During the American civil war, Abraham Lincoln called for a day of *"humiliation, fasting and prayer."* Is the Lord calling us to take Lincoln’s advice to heart? Is this pandemic a time to seek the Lord through humiliation, fasting and prayer?

Despite the danger of this virus, despite the likely transformation of the world order, the Lord is concerned with the well being of His people. Our well being is linked to seeking Him as individuals and as families.

***A Helpless Christian and a Mighty God*** (20:12): In life we should expect dangers. King Jehoshaphat came face to face with life’s greatest emergencies. Notice he did not underestimate the danger. Notice he did not succumb to fear. This verse highlights the helpless Christian and the mighty God.

*We know not what to do,* describes our helplessness. *But our eyes are on You,* describes our strength. When looking to the Lord for strength, we must first recognize our weakness.

During personal, national or even global crises, our first impulse is to look with an anxious heart to the means and resources the world has to offer. When all is said and done where does our help come from? Our help comes from the Lord who made heaven and earth. Our help come from our God who has infinite power.

Declaring *we have no power and that we have no plan* is an admission the Lord wants us to make in a time of crisis. It does not matter to the Lord that we have no power or plan, because when our eyes are on Him, we find He is all Sufficient. We need to learn the lesson of the *insufficiency* of our ways and the *sufficiency* of His way.

Learning this lesson should cause our fears to flee.

**Read** Ps 91:5, 6

1. **Promise** (20:14, 15)

***Not Fearful or Dismayed*** (20:15): Jehoshaphat knew he was facing a great crisis that threatened the well being of his nation. Yet the command from the Lord was to not be afraid or dismayed. The expression “*be strong and courageous*” is invoked when there is every reason to feel weak, inadequate, overwhelmed and discouraged. That is how we may feel with the very real threat of Covid-19. But let us be strong and courageous.

**Read** Deut 31:8; Josh 10:25; 1 Chron 28:20.

***The Battle is the Lord’s:*** By taking the battle out of our hands and putting it into His hands we are kept from fear and despair. We can *be strong and courageous* because the battle is not ours! Instead of making this present crisis our battle, let’s make it His battle.

If the battle is His, then the outcome will also be His! In one sense we need to abide by the measures to flatten the curve but in another sense, we desire to see God’s will done through these measures. Let the Lord take control of the things we can’t control. Let’s make this pandemic and economic instability God’s problem to solve. Let our prayer be “*Lord, this is Your battle. Let Your will be done so that You may be glorified.”*

**Conclusion**

The battle belongs to the Lord. The outcome of the battle belongs to the Lord. And yet He calls us to have a role in His battle. What is our role? Enoch and I have been seeking the Lord asking Him to make known to us what our first response should be as a church family in such a time as this. We believe the Lord is calling PBC church to commit this week to pray. He is calling us to pray frequently. He is calling us to pray intensely.

He is calling us to pray specifically.

**Read** 2 Chron 7:13, 14

God promised something special to Israel when they humbled themselves to pray and seek His face. Although God originally made this promise to Israel, it is clear that all who call upon the name of the Lord may pray with the same confidence of a hearing.

During times of global uncertainty and escalating fears, we need to seek the Lord. In light of this, we are calling the church to commit to pray more intentionally this week (Mar 30 – Apr 2). For specific details on how to make this happen in a coordinated way please visit our website.
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