

## ENCOURAGEMENT IN A TIME OF CRISIS

As it relates to the recent Coronavirus Pandemic; the world, America, our local communities, our families, and we as individuals are currently experiencing a life event that has never occurred in our life time. I know there are some folks here this morning that are dealing with fear of the unknown, and are being challenged by concerns over health, finances, worry for the elderly of our church and of their own families. We are also being challenged by the government directed isolation of sheltering in place; following recommended social distancing guidelines; and some find themselves, through no fault of their own, to be out of work.

**It is imperative that as believers, we cannot surrender to fear, anxiety, or worry.** In the words of a Zach Williams song: **“Fear He Is A Liar.”** The world lives in fear, but as Christians we must look to the peace and power of God and become the living hope to each other and to the lost. Faith can be an significant antidote to fear, nothing strengthens our faith like the promises of God.

**Listen to these words of God as He spoke to Isaiah in Isaiah 41:10**

**“ So do not fear, for I am with you;  
do not be dismayed, for I am your God.  
I will strengthen you and help you;  
I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”**

In spite of these trying times, this morning I want to turn to God’s word and consider 6 powerful encouragements, or promises, that God has for us, **They are words anchored in His love and Our hope.**

So let’s get our Bibles opened up and see what God has to say to us today:

### **1. JESUS WANTS TO CARRY OUR BURDENS**

***Matthew 11:28-30***

***<sup>28</sup> “Come to me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.”***

Jesus knows our struggles, fears, and anxieties and He assures us He is more than willing and able to carry those burdens for us. When we acknowledge His authority over every aspect of our life he has promised we will find rest, He will give us calm and peace in the storms of life,

### **2. BAD NEWS DOES NOT CHANGE THE GOOD NEWS**

All too often we have a tendency to take our future for granted. We plan for vacations, careers, retirement, what we are going to do this week, or even what we are hoping to do today, etc., In doing so we assume our lives will pretty much go as we planned. Let us we heed the words of **James 4:13-16** **“<sup>13</sup> Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” <sup>14</sup> Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then**

vanishes. <sup>15</sup> Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.” <sup>16</sup> As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil.”

James tells us that we act in arrogance when we place our plans ahead of the plans of God!

When we selfishly put our plans ahead of God’s plans, we can lose sight of the fact that our goal **should NOT be first and God second**. Our goal should be the pursuit of the eternal kingdom of God.

Paul tells us, we have a King in Jesus Christ who died to set us free of our sin and gives us the **immeasurable riches of his eternal inheritance that is demonstrated through His grace and kindness toward us in the here and now (Ephesians 2:7)**

**We cannot allow the current circumstances in our world to change that truth!**

With that said: Turn with me Romans chapter 8 and listen to the encouraging words of Paul. Words of promise and truth:

***Romans 8:31-35 and 37-39***

***<sup>31</sup> What, then, shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? <sup>32</sup> He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all—how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? <sup>33</sup> Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. <sup>34</sup> Who then is the one who condemns? No one. Christ Jesus who died—more than that, who was raised to life—is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. <sup>35</sup> Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword?***

***<sup>37</sup> No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. <sup>38</sup> For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons,<sup>[k]</sup> neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, <sup>39</sup> neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”***

**The good news is still the best news and no amount of bad news or life’s challenges will ever change that!**

Jesus never promised us a rose garden, at least as it pertains to this life. Rather, he told us that our lives would be burdened by difficulties and struggles, physical, emotional and spiritual, because we are in a daily battle. Christ has not left us defenseless. It is in times like these that we need to heed the words of Paul.

## **Ephesians 6:10-18**

***<sup>10</sup> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. <sup>11</sup> Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. <sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. <sup>13</sup> Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. <sup>14</sup> Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, <sup>15</sup> and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace.***

***<sup>16</sup> In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup> Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.***

***<sup>18</sup> And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people."***

We need to people who stand on the words of Romans 8 and Ephesian 6 with confidence knowing that nothing comes to us that has not first traveled through the mind of God

### **3. DESPITE THE CHALLENGES OF THIS LIFE LET US CONSIDER WHAT LIES AHEAD**

#### ***II Corinthians 4:16-18***

***<sup>16</sup> "Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. <sup>17</sup> For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. <sup>18</sup> So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."***

Paul is telling us that life's struggles and afflictions have a purpose, they are not pointless. God uses our hardships to make us more like Jesus, and for us to trust that He is to be our go to source for comfort with the confident assurance that He keeps His promises.

We need to be people of **patience, placing our trust in the Lord**. Our families, our neighbors and Christians brothers and sisters will need help, prayer, and encouragement. In many cases our energy, finances, and even our faith will be stretched to their limit. But never fear, **GOD IS IN CONTROL**

**For now, in this moment in time, we are all a work in progress!**

It is important for us to remember, God is not surprised by the issues we face as it relates to this Coronavirus Pandemic. He knows there will be circumstances that will be out of our control and cause potential anxiety and fear. Despite that reality, according to **Galatians 2:20**, Christ will not let us go through these experiences alone because He is with us and in us

#### 4. THERE IS POWER IN FELLOWSHIP!

**Hebrews 10:24-25**

***<sup>24</sup> And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, <sup>25</sup> not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.***

You and I were designed to be social creatures. We are intended to be in fellowship with each other and with the Lord. It is when we are in fellowship, that we can be encouraged and strengthened in our Faith and our Hope.

God did not design us to live **in isolation or hide the hope that is in us (I Peter 3:15)**. We are all in this together and as followers of Christ, you and I have been given the gift of God's Holy Spirit that empowers us to live lives of **"joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control."** (Galatians 5:22-23)

#### 5. AS BELIEVERS, WE ARE TO BE THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

***Matthew 5:13-14 "We are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. <sup>15</sup> Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house."***

We have not been called to be passive agents to the world. Rather, we are to be active participants, specifically, we have been called to be LIGHT. We are to be the encouragers, those who bring light into the this dark world, hope to the weary, and salvation to the lost.

#### 6. THERE IS POWER IN PRAYER

It is in times like these that we need to pray the promises of God. Prayers that remind us of His never ending love, His forgiveness, His grace, His mercy, His continual awareness of what is happening in and around us, His power, His wisdom, His healing, and His presence: continually reminding ourselves of the price He paid to set us free of sin and to adopt us into His family!

Let me leave you with two last verses of encouragement: **John 14:27 <sup>27</sup> "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid."** Joshua, Chapter 1:9, it states, ***"Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go."***

I would like to leave us with the following picture in our minds as we head for our homes this morning: we are running a race, it's a marathon, not a sprint, and as we round the corner heading down the straightaway, look up and see the approaching finish line, and see Jesus clapping and cheering us home!