



Sermon for May 16, 2020 Sacramento Woodside SDA Church Pr. Vincent Saunders, Jr., M.Div.

It happened in Lodi in March, a church gathered for worship after the Governor of California issued a stay-at-home order. During the service, the police entered and disbanded the gathering. And this case reveals the real tension within this current crisis. "Are churches essential?" Recently the case was ruled on by a federal judge who upheld the governor's authority to close religious gatherings.

## Where's God When it Hurts?

⇒ “If God were good, He would wish to make His creatures perfectly happy, and if God were almighty He would be able to do what He wished. but the creatures are not happy. therefore God lacks either goodness, or power, or both.” this is the problem of pain, in its simplest form.” - C. S. Lewis *The Problem of Pain* pg. 11

Hurt and pain are situations that can often make a person wish for the alternative, death! There are stories of amputees, or survivors of accidents who grieve the loss of their limb or their loved one and hurt so badly that they wish that they themselves had lost their life!

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Let's consider for a moment, the black death plague of Europe in the 14th century.

“The plague that raged through Europe in the 14th century changed just about every single thing about medieval society and indeed in large measure, it produced the modern world we live in today.” - Dorsey Armstrong Ph.D. Purdue University

The black death was also known as “the great mortality”, “the great pestilence” & “Blue Sickness” in England, and struck a Europe that was for the most part Christian (Catholic), agrarian and feudal (bonds of service, support, loyalty, protection & hierarchy).

**Question:** Will the same be said of COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 in 600 years should the Lord delay?



It was so bad that funeral rights that were scheduled for one bier bearer would have a following of two or three biers with multiple family members on each cart. When the cemeteries filled up, trenches were dug on church grounds to accommodate the burials.

One recent story of a mortuary overflowing to capacity and resorting to rented trucks gives us relevance.



It is when we are experiencing pain, loss, grief, & instability that doubts arise about the character of God, His will, and plan for our lives personally!

It's hard to fathom, but pain is actually a gift, without it we would not realize that something is terribly wrong. It's true of symptoms in our bodies, our emotions, and our humanity.

In these times, the temptation to distrust God becomes great, and I fear that is the biggest challenge to humanity during crises like this.

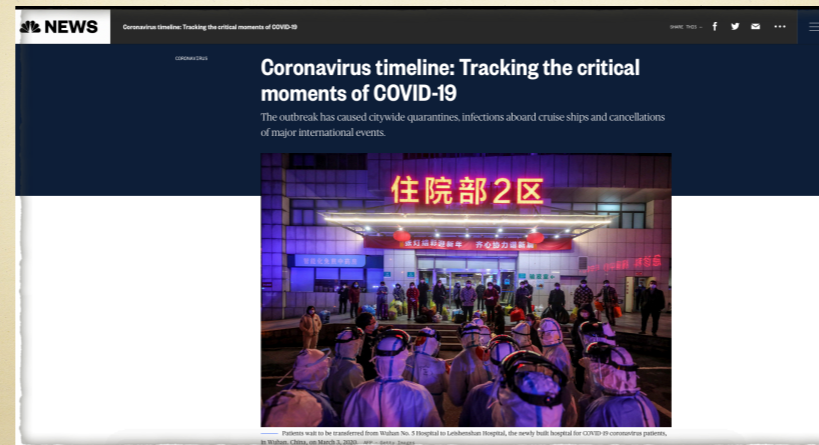
## We Gain Perspective

⇒ “I think it's important to put this on the table: this virus may become just another endemic virus in our communities and this virus may never go away.” - Dr. Mike Ryan, World Health Organization

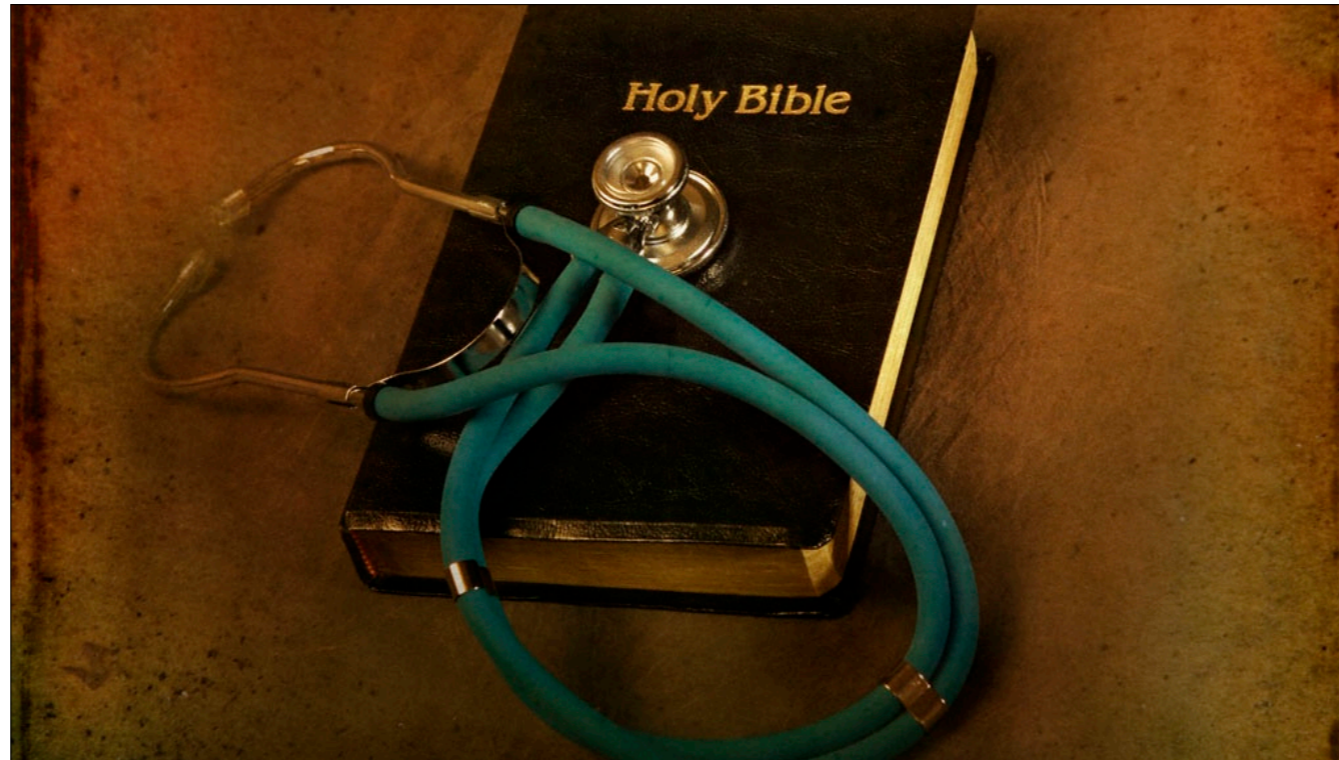


Dr Mike Ryan, director of the WHO's Health Emergencies programme, was asked yesterday how long it might take before we emerge on the other side of COVID-19. 'I think it's important to to put this on the table: this virus may become just another endemic virus in our communities and this virus may never go away.' Dr Ryan told the Geneva press conference.” - By ROSS IBBETSON FOR MAILONLINE

# COVID-19 Timeline



<https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/coronavirus-timeline-tracking-critical-moments-covid-19-n1154341>



What does the Bible say about the current state of affairs of the world? Does it have answers to our questions of pain, suffering, and death?



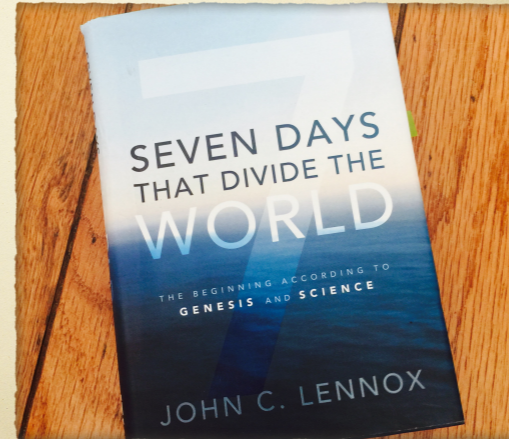


A timeline for the greatest outbreak in the universe is hard to determine, but we do know one thing: “God saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good. And there was evening and there was morning, the sixth day.” (Genesis 1:31 NAS95)

Earth was created without a single blight! Not even a microscopic germ or virus! Hard to imagine, isn't it!

## Seven Days that Divide the World

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“Nevertheless death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offense of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come. But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many.”

(Romans 5:14–15 NAS95)



The biblical record is filled with pain, suffering, and death of God's people, and the result of that fall is evident today. And the law of causality is at work...

When God gave His promises through Moses before the Israelites entered the promised land, He also gave the root cause of suffering and pain:

➤ ““But it shall come about, if you do not obey the LORD your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses will come upon you and overtake you:

➤ “Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the country.” (Deuteronomy 28:15 16 NAS95)



The cause of suffering led to the effect of ultimate suffering! “Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. “You are My friends if you do what I command you. “No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.” (John 15:13–15 NAS95)



The biblical record of humanity's struggles helps us to see our need of a solution outside of our capabilities.

“Doctors are working around the clock to bring COVID-19 under control.

Government leaders are working to bring our way of life under control.

Entrepreneurs and other culture creators are working to bring the economy under control.

All of our work should be aimed at the redemption of what's broken in our world today, in-line with the agenda of the One True King. But whether we fail or succeed, all our attempts at redemptive work have the opportunity to serve as sign-posts to the ultimate redemption of all things through Christ.” -COVID-19 Devotional Youversion

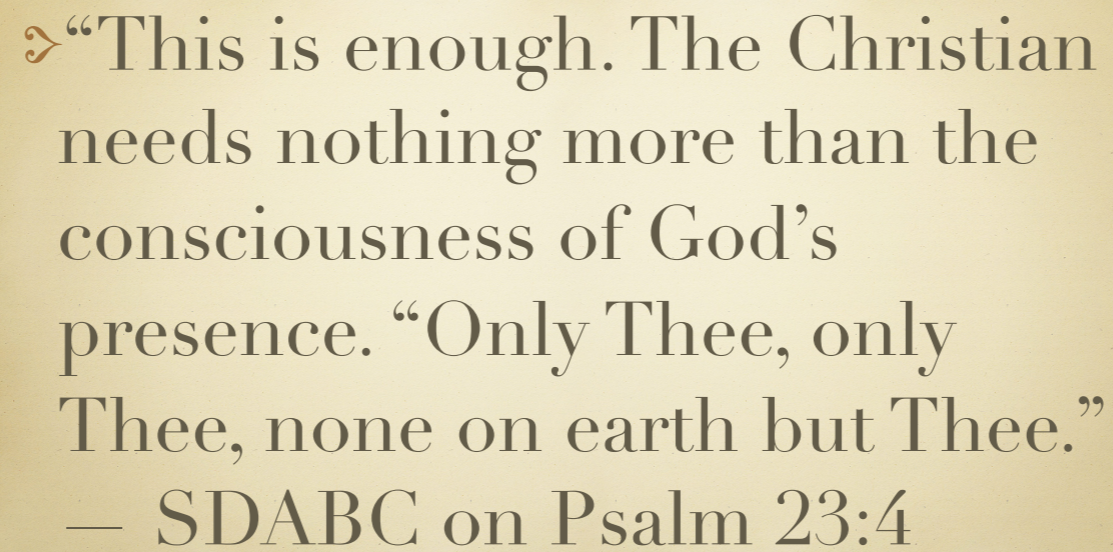


We must find comfort in the most famous Psalm of all time: Psalm 23

Verse - 1 - "THE LORD is my Shepherd [to feed, guide, and shield me], I shall not lack." (Psalms 23:1 AMP)

"Yes, though I walk through the [deep, sunless] valley of the shadow of death, I will fear or dread no evil, for You are with me; Your rod [to protect] and Your staff [to guide], they comfort me." (Psalms 23:4 AMP)





‣ “This is enough. The Christian needs nothing more than the consciousness of God’s presence. “Only Thee, only Thee, none on earth but Thee.”  
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“Do not fear, for I am with you; Do not anxiously look about you, for I am your God. I will strengthen you, surely I will help you, Surely I will uphold you with My righteous right hand.” (Isaiah 41:10 NAS95)

## Endurance through Pain

- Treat the root cause - Gospel Belief!
- Manage the Symptoms - Trust in God, seek Him in His Word, pray to Him as a Friend who cares and is there!
- Hope for the Cure - Trust in the all-powerful act of Calvary, live a life of forgiveness, Know that it will not always be like this!
- Be a good citizen - Glorify God where you can, remember the witness of the martyrs!

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➤ “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.” (Philippians 3:20–21 NAS95)

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∞ “Perfect goodness can never debate about the end to be attained, and perfect wisdom cannot debate about the means most suited to achieve it. The freedom of God consists in the fact that no cause other than Himself produces His acts and no external obstacle impedes them that His own goodness is the root from which they all grow and His own omnipotence the air in which they all flower.” - C.S. Lewis *The Problem of Pain* pg. 17

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“But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (Romans 8:37–39 NAS95)