

A Christian Response To The Global Crisis

How we, as Christians, respond in times of crisis is not just vitally important for our own faith and for our witness of the gospel, it's important for the wellbeing of those around us, who may be struggling with doubts and fears in what is a very distressing and anxious time.

A Measured And Faithful Response

I want to speak plainly to a disturbing trend currently being observed amongst some, in response to the current pandemic facing the globe. It's a response that could almost be described as 'tone deaf'; that many seem to be unaware and unobservant to the fear and anxiety of the people around them and, unwittingly or not, are adding to that fear and uncertainty with ill-thought through posts or shares online. Or, even worse, they're well aware of the fear and are choosing to actively capitalise on it to promote apocalyptic predictions or outcomes. Whilst we shouldn't be ambivalent about what's going on around the globe, we also need to be measured in our response and very careful not to be contributing to or escalating the level of panic that people may be experiencing.

When people are struggling with an uncertain future, have recently lost employment or are concerned for the wellbeing of their loved ones, Christians have both a responsibility and a privilege to point the world's attention to the One who is still in control of all. Not only that, we can choose to positively redirect the conversation, using our confidence in the God of all the earth to comfort people's hearts and settle their fears.

For Christians, times of trouble, in this particular case, the

far-reaching effects of Covid-19, are, firstly, an opportunity to test and prove our own conviction; that there is One God and Father who rules over all things (Psalm 103:19, Daniel 2:21, Ephesians 4:6). We have confidence that the Father has an ongoing rescue plan for humanity and that He has given authority over to His Holy Son, Jesus Christ, who holds all things in his hand (John 3:35, Matthew 11:27). It can be difficult in times of crisis to remain convicted of this, but we must continue to have confidence in God's promises and in the power and authority vested in the name of Jesus. We acknowledge that, as Christians, we are not immune to these troubles and our prayer is not that we would be removed from this but that we would be protected from evil (John 17:15). It is our Christian ideals, infact, that enable us to see purpose in our suffering and recognise the joy which can overcome all troubles, even the love of an everlasting Father.

“The Christian ideal is not freedom from work, but strength to do it; not freedom from temptation, but power to overcome it; not freedom from suffering, but joy in an abiding sense of the Father's love; not absence from the world, but grace to make the world better for our presence; not holy lives driven from the world, and living apart from it, but holy lives spent in the world and leavening it.” – Ellicott's Commentary For English Readers.

Secondly, such crises are an opportunity to witness to the reality of a transformative gospel being outworked in our lives. We are to show good to all, as and where we are able (Galatians 6:10). We are to be thankful for those in authority and especially at a time like this, those in healthcare, who risk their own lives to treat and save others (1 Timothy 2:2). We need to remember to pray for them and assist where we can. We ought to show responsibility in following the direction of the government and officials, acknowledging measured concern for the situation we all find ourselves in and abiding by recommendations for the good of everyone (1 Peter 2:13). Now,

more than ever, is the time to show consideration and restraint and to lead the world by example. It is not the time (or ever!) for Christians to display greed or selfishness but to consider those who are our neighbour and to love them, as ourselves (Romans 13:8-10). And, particularly, it is vitally important to consider those who are weak and vulnerable amongst our communities, who have always found a special place in God's heart (James 1:27; Psalm 68:5).

Trust in God's sovereignty is not to be made dependent on human expectation of a particular timetable or outcome. For the present, it is enough that God's rule is expressed in and through His Spirit. | James D G Dunn

He Is A Good, Good Father

It is our commission, as Christians, to remind the world of a good, good God, who is actively seeking to overthrow the effects of sin in the world and restore humanity to full relationship with Himself. He is the One who rescues the poor who cries for help and the fatherless, who have none to assist them (Job 29:12). He sees the grief and anxiety of the afflicted and upholds the cause of the poor and the oppressed (Psalm 82:3). We need to reaffirm and speak this truth to each other and to the world! Christians are intended to be the light of the world, bringing hope to those who have none, especially in times of crisis and trouble.

"You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden." – Matthew 5:14, BSB

As Christians, we are emboldened to stand together now in faithful response, banishing exaggerated fear and pleading the cause of those who are afflicted and defenceless in this crisis. We need to pray, to worship and to continue to connect in all the ways that are possible to us right now. Most of all, we need to continue to point the people of the world to

Jesus, who told his much loved followers: “Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. Trust in God and trust in me also” (John 14:1).

If you are feeling anxious or fearful about the current situation, I want to encourage you to lay your burdens at Jesus’ feet and to share that anxiousness with him. If you want prayers for you or with you, please don’t hesitate to get in touch.

We have hope, as Christians, that God is actively working to restore all things to Himself and that one day soon, the earth will be filled with His glory and all tears will be wiped away (Habakkuk 2:14, Revelation 21:4). It’s our responsibility and privilege to share this hope with the world and comfort their hearts in times of trouble.

“But for you who obey me, my saving power will rise on you like the sun and bring healing like the sun’s rays. You will be as free and happy as calves let out of a stall.” – Malachi 4:2, GNT

Let’s pray for our communities, our country, and for the world, that God will bring healing, peace, and restoration to our lives, if it is His will and that this incredibly strange situation might provide opportunity to impact hearts for good, for His glory and His kingdom.

Finally, “Have courage, and be kind...” | Cinderella

Jesus: King Of The World

The final pages of the Old Testament come to a close with the prophetic words of Malachi, written around 460-430 BC. We find the people of Israel have returned from nearly 130 years of exile and are back in the land of their ancestors. Yet the nation is vastly diminished. The temple has been restored under the leadership of Nehemiah but it is a much smaller building than the previous, gloriously constructed temple of King Solomon's days. The royal line, although still in existence, no longer occupies the throne. Israel is a shadow of her former glory; a vassal state under the domination of the Persians, the great world power of the day. Ezekiel's prophecy against Israel – a result of their rebellion of God's sovereignty and their faithlessness as His witnesses – has been utterly effective:

“You profane and wicked prince of Israel, whose day has come, whose time of punishment has reached its climax. This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Take off the turban, remove the crown. It will not be as it was: The lowly will be exalted and the exalted will be brought low. A ruin! A ruin! I will make it a ruin! The crown will not be restored until he to whom it rightfully belongs shall come; to him I will give it.” | Ezekiel 21: 25-27, NIV

Demoralised and disloyal, the people of Israel continued to go about their religious obligations but they had completely lost faith in God and doubted His love for them. They believed that nothing good ever came from following God and forgot, as they had many times before, His blessings and favour of them as a people. They had no confidence He even cared about their future.

This final book of the Old Testament offers a glimpse into the hearts of those who had been specially chosen by God as His

witnesses to the nations around them. Even with the perspective of their glorious history and events like the Great Exodus from Egypt, they had completely given in to apathy. They had neglected God's promises; and spiritual lethargy and a corrupt priesthood spread unfaithfulness, cancer-like, throughout the nation.

Malachi's words are the last message from God to His people and, for 400 years after, there will be silence.

God's Announcement – I Am Arriving!

It is to this vast length of silence that God finally speaks, announcing His impending arrival into the story of not just Israel, but the entire world. The work that God had been at for a long time was about to culminate in a tiny, obscure town in the middle of the demoralised and now Roman-occupied nation of Israel. The glory of God was about to be revealed to all humanity.

John the Baptist, God's messenger, bursts onto the scene, "preaching a baptism of life-change that leads to forgiveness of sins" (Mark 1:4). But there was more.

"As he preached he said, "The real action comes next: The star in this drama, to whom I'm a mere stagehand, will change your life. I'm baptising you here in the river, turning your old life in for a kingdom life. His baptism—a holy baptism by the Holy Spirit—will change you from the inside out." | Mark 1:7-8, MSG

John was simply the messenger. The 'star in this drama' was none other than God's own son, Jesus Christ. He was coming, not only to save people from their sins but to be God's perfect image-bearer and to restore God's righteous rulership. Jesus had been prophesied to be king of the world ([Luke 1:30-33](#), [Matthew 21:5](#), [John 12:13](#), [Luke 19:38](#)) and his message of good news would totally change people's lives.

God's Kingdom And The Arrival Of The King

We were created intentionally and with purpose, to be the image-bearers of God, the king of the earth. We were destined to be like Him and enact His will throughout the world. The first humans, Adam and Eve, were given the authority and privilege of ruling over God's good creation, filling all the earth with His glory and accomplishing His purpose. This is where we first see the concept of God's reign – His sovereignty – displayed (Genesis 1:26).

However, instead of partnering with God, Adam and Eve sought to undertake this rule on their own terms, setting in motion the destructive cycle the world has been subject to ever since. The story of human history is really the story of human failure in accomplishing God's purpose, and God's continual involvement in the chaos and mess that we have created, to save us from ourselves.

For centuries, God's story of liberation and redemption – part of His 'Kingdom Mission' – has been enacted, over and over again in the history of the world. Firstly, with covenants made to [Abraham](#), through whom God promises to bless all the world (Genesis 12:1-3, Genesis 13:14-17, Genesis 15:1-21, Genesis 17:1-11). Then with Abraham's descendants, those who came to be known as the people of Israel, who were intended to be God's witnesses to His Kingdom Mission.

"But you are my witnesses, O Israel!" says the LORD. "You are my servant. You have been chosen to know me, believe in me, and understand that I alone am God. There is no other God – there never has been, and there never will be. Yes I am the LORD, and there is no other Saviour." | [Isaiah 43:10-4, NLT](#)

Finally, God personally steps into the drama in the person of His Son; [born as a human like us](#), yet expressing and embodying the entire fullness of God's nature (Matthew 21:37, Matthew

1:22-23, Isaiah 7:14, John 1:14, John 14:9, John 12:45, Hebrews 1:3, Colossians 2:9). The relationship between humanity and God, broken in the Garden of Eden, was going to be reconciled. God's good creation, damaged by Adam and Eve's disobedience, was going to be restored. Not only that – God's Kingdom Mission – that all the earth be filled with His glory – was finally breaking through into the kingdoms of mankind. It had been advancing for centuries but finally, it had arrived and the message was clear. God was still king – He has always been king – and His reign, fractured early on in human history (Genesis 2), was going to be properly reinstated through His Son, Jesus.

“From the days of John the Baptist until the present, the kingdom from heaven has been forcefully advancing, and violent people have been attacking it.” | Matthew 11:12, ISV

“The time promised by God has come at last!” he announced. “The Kingdom of God is near! Repent of your sins and believe the Good News!” | Mark 1:15, NLT

God's Upside-Down Kingdom

The idea of 'the kingdom of God' was consistent with the Jewish hope of a saviour and the arrival of the one who would be the 'consolation of Israel'. (Isaiah 52:7-9, Luke 2:25, Acts 26:6). The prophet Isaiah speaks poetically about the one who would bring peace, justice, and righteousness again to Israel. This national hero would be from David's royal line and Isaiah predicted that his kingdom would have no end.

“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone...for to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government

and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.” | Isaiah 9:6-7, ESV

“And he shall set up a banner for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.” | Isaiah 11:12, NASB

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.” | Micah 5:2, NIV

“Has not the Scripture said that the Christ comes from the descendants of David, and from Bethlehem, the village where David was?” | John 4:42, NIV

“Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.” | [Luke 1:30-33, ESV](#)

Yet God's kingdom was not going to arrive in the way that the nation of Israel expected. In reality, this kingdom had very little to do with Israel's nationalistic hopes of liberation from the Romans. This messianic saviour was also intended to be the saviour of the world and the righteous king of God's choosing. Israel was correct to expect him to be from David's royal family line but pitifully ignorant to think that he

would only be coming to overthrow the Romans and restore Israel's monarchy.

So while the nation of Israel expected a royalist and a revolutionary, one who would come to conquer and overthrow by violence and force, their saviour arrives instead in the humblest of forms, a small baby, born to an insignificant family. As this child grows into a man, he teaches of a kingdom of service and love, not of domination or force. This kingdom is about repentance and return to the one true king of the world. This kingdom will deliver humans from the worst kind of domination; slavery to sin and death, and bring them back to a whole and restored relationship with God.

This is not what the nation of Israel expected and even Jesus' disciples, his closest companions who knew him best, were dismayed and confused by his arrest, trial, and subsequent death, not fully understanding his purpose and mission:

“And they stood still, looking sad. Then one of them, named Cleopas, answered him, “Are you the only visitor to Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?” And he said to them, “What things?” And they said to him, “Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a man who was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people, and how our chief priests and rulers delivered him up to be condemned to death, and crucified him. But we had hoped that he was the one to redeem Israel. Yes, and besides all this, it is now the third day since these things happened.” | Luke 24:17-21

The Kingdom Of The King

Jesus came as the perfect example of what God is like. [The Word became a man](#), like us, that we might truly know and appreciate the depth of God's reconciling work on our behalf. In the person and ministry of Jesus Christ and his death and

resurrection, all families of the earth, of any nationality, are able to be blessed and experience the righteous rulership of God.

Jesus was born to be king and He is God's perfect king. He upholds the requirements of God's righteous laws and enacts justice on behalf of his people. His power is not demonstrated in ruthless coercion, but in love, poured out on the cross. His might is not revealed in political coups and military advances, but by redeeming humanity and transforming our hearts.

"We need to shed our unearthly and nonsocial and idealistic and romantic and uber-spiritual visions of kingdom and get back to what Jesus meant. By kingdom, Jesus means: God's Dream Society on earth, spreading out from the land of Israel to encompass the whole world." | Scot McKnight

As more people come to believe in Jesus and the power of his message, surrendering to his rulership in their lives, God's kingdom grows and develops, until one day it will fill the whole earth. One day, the relationship between humanity and God will be totally restored, [the earth will be completely filled with God's family](#) and the last great enemy, even death itself, will be destroyed ([1 Corinthians 15:25-26](#)).

"In the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever." | Daniel 2:44, NASB

This is a kingdom that has been advancing for thousands of years. It is the core message of the gospel, which confirms to us God's purpose with humanity and how God's Kingdom Mission can become our story too. And the king of this kingdom is none other than Jesus Christ, born to be king of the world!

“Hail, the prince of heaven comes, angel choirs sound the call, for this babe wrapped in a cloth is the incarnate word of God. All the kingdom and its power, resting now in this child, prince of heaven, Jesus: hope of the world.” | [Prince of Heaven](#)

“Something happens when people tell the story of Jesus and start living like he really is the king of the world. That’s when this gospel becomes the best news that you’ve ever heard.” | [The Bible Project](#)

The kingdom is also described in the Bible in other ways, such as ‘the kingdom of heaven’ (the gospel of Matthew), ‘the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ’ (2 Peter 1:11), ‘the kingdom of Christ and God’ (Ephesians 5:5) and ‘the kingdom of God’ (the gospels of Mark and Luke). You can read more about the kingdom in the article ‘[The Kingdom | Now, But Not Yet](#)’. You may also enjoy [this podcast](#), produced by The Bible Project: Jesus and the Kingdom of God.