

August 1, 2021 What Are We To Make Of All Of This? Pt. 2
Psalm 90:3-6

Dearly Beloved;

First, good news! Barbara continues to be disciplined about the exercises assigned as part of her rehab programme at Belleville General Hospital. This week she began by walking around the block, cane in hand. She also began walking around the house without her cane except when she must go downstairs. I have been trying to limit her stair climbing and descending. That is over as she was specifically directed that it is time to put weight on the new knee going up and down stairs. Up till this time she was directed to put that kind of weight on the untreated knee. Progress. Thank you, Lord Jesus. She has also taken back control of meal preparation. Needless to say, I am grateful that she is comfortable doing that. It involves as all the ladies know, time on your feet, and working your knees.

There is also tough news. I heard Dr. Tam say, on Friday morning, that a 4th wave of Covid-19 is almost inevitable. I should not be surprised, but I was initially. The fact is, we are where we are in the battle with Covid-19 because so many of our people have been vaccinated. There are many nations where 1% of the population or fewer have had a vaccination. I am grateful to God that we live where we do in Canada.

If there is a bright side to the news that there will be a 4th wave, it is that it will not be as severe as any of the first 3 waves. The reason is the level of vaccinated folk in our province and our nation. This is one more reason, to urge

anyone you know who has not sought, or been able to organize an appointment for vaccination, to do so. If you can assist someone to get a vaccination, remember, we all benefit when our neighbours have had their shot. In the meantime, keep your mask handy, and wear it in crowded situations, and indoors with people whom you do not know very well.

We are back to in person worship at the Church. For the balance of the summer we will remain in the Church Hall, because it is cooler, and we can open the windows, which makes it a second best outside experience. God bless you, whether you are attending in person, reading this message, or viewing the video of The Sermon From The Dining Room Table. I praise God every day for your remaining involved through the challenges of these times.

WHAT ARE WE TO MAKE OF ALL OF THIS? Pt. 2.

I saw a cartoon in one of the church publications I receive. Two men talking. The one looks suspiciously like a prophet. He is holding a scroll, and he says to his friend, "The locusts arrive next Friday!" I have to tell you I did not laugh. It is funny, the reference to the plagues that God brought upon Egypt because the Pharoah and his advisors refused to let the Hebrew slaves go free to serve their God. On the other hand, it is very sobering, the idea that the hand of God might be upon our nation among others, our world, from east to west, bringing judgement as the price we pay, for ignoring HIS word, and not recognizing HIS power, His grace, His love, HIS ever present Spirit, His Son, Jesus Christ, who is Lord.

This is true: the vast majority of people, even in our own land, simply pay God little heed. His Word the Bible? Gathering dust and unread. The historicity of Jesus life, HIS teaching, HIS ministry: ignored, in many cases ridiculed as the superstition belonging to the past, or an attempt by a power-hungry church to enslave the masses. People give a lot of reasons, some of them a little on the crazy side for denying the presence of God and HIS redeeming love. What does Psalm 90 tell us? In the plainest of terms it begins by reminding us God is, has always been, and will always be...the ONE, HOLY God, the creator of all that is, the ancient of days, which is just another way of saying, HE was before creation occurred, and HE will be, long after this generation has passed away.

Beginning at verse 3, Psalm 90 declares the Lordship of God, the God who is Father (to Jesus and has adopted us because we believe), the God who is Holy Spirit...we sense HIS presence even though we do not see HIM as we see one another, the God who was in Jesus, touching lives and bringing healing, and words to live by, faith that changes our very nature, and ultimately redeeming us on the cross at Calvary. Never forget this: Jesus birth in Bethlehem, HIS ministry in Galilee and Jerusalem, His crucifixion and HIS resurrection are undeniable. There is more hard evidence about those basic events that there is that Julius Caesar crossed the Rubicon, and became the head man in an Empire that shaped the world.

Verse 3 says that our mortality is not by chance. It dares to make the claim, that God decides when each of us will come to the end of our days. "You turn men back to dust," a clear reference to the fact of Genesis 2:7, "The Lord God formed the man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." Do you remember what Job said when catastrophe upon catastrophe fell upon him, reducing him to a sick man on the edge of dying.... "the Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the name of the Lord."(Job 1:21) KJV.

It is a short distance between Psalm 90 and the Creation story in Genesis, and the thoughts of Job to ask...is the hand of God not upon us in this plague of Covid-19 in 2020-2021 and continuing? Part of me fears it is. For this reason: the alternative is to confess that God is not in charge of the world, the unfolding drama of mankind, and to say it is simply an evil scourge that came out of nowhere, and will eventually become a distant memory without consequence. Well there have certainly been consequences. More than 4,000,000 people have died world wide. Our own nation has lost young people, old people in abundance, and people in the midst of the best days of their lives. And we will be talking about the Pandemic of 2020- to whenever it ends, if it ends, for the rest of our lives.

And just when some of us were beginning to think the genius of man had found a magic bullet, comes the news of variants, that are more deadly than the original, and can even

make those of us vaccinated sick, unless we live very carefully. That is the news that is beginning to break.

Do I say this to scare you, to make you fearful? Not at all. There is another side to the story, as sure as there is a “heads” and a “tail” on a modern coin. If this pandemic is the hand of God taking away lives, why were not some of us taken away? Jesus said, “He (God, your Father in heaven} causes his sun to rise on the evil, and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.” The King James Version uses the phrase, the just and the unjust, the saved and the unsaved, the faithful and the unfaithful, the good and the bad. What does that mean in this context? Well it means that there is collateral damage when judgement falls from heaven...unless God Himself intervenes. I am certain, among the 4,000,000 plus who have died world-wide, there must have been at least one believer, and probably numbers of them.

Why were you spared? Why was I? Why is my son still well? Why my daughter? We have to assume there is still work for us to do, some heavenly reason for which we have been shielded. A lot of careful people have fallen ill. Some of the careful have died. The reality of the portion of the Psalm I have read this morning is that our lives are in the hands of God. HE decides when we have done enough. HE calls us, to still put our shoulder to the wheel. To struggle, to labour on, like Job, offering praise to the name of God in the midst of terrible times and serious circumstances.

There is a reason for which people have been reduced to dust and ash. And there is a reason you and I have been spared. Psalm 90 says God sees time very differently than we do. We think an hour can be too long if we are in pain or sick, or circumstances we would rather avoid. A thousand years in God's sight is like a single day is to us, or the working of night shift. Lifetimes are like grass. It springs up refreshed by the dew and the rain and it withers away in a short time or cut down in the harvest of hay. Life is short even when it seems to us it has been long. I never expected to outlive my father. I have. I'm in my 77th year. My father died in his 76th. If I remember correctly, my father-in-law died when he was 75. Why have we been given more time, when others have not?

The only answer I can offer is the grace of God. And the fact that HE still sees us as capable of serving HIS high, and holy, and faithful will. That is part of what I make of this. I have been asked several times by several members of the Presbytery of Kingston when I will really retire. I think some of them think it is time. I think Jesus still calls me to serve where I can, how I can, and when I can. I am not a hero. And I do not have a desire to die with my boots on, to be carried out of the church at death's door. And it is not just me. It's you. Like Moses, like Aaron, like Joshua, like Miriam, like Ruth in her time, we are still counted worthy to serve the Lord. Jesus calls us to take up our crosses, our pains and limitations, and to follow HIM. That in part is what I make of all of this. So be it, praise God. And Amen

Let us pray;

Lord your mercy is life giving water. It refreshes us and gives us new strength. Your love for us in difficult times, like the course of this pandemic, causes us to want to live for others, to be with others, to encourage others, on whom you have poured out your grace and favour. Receive our praise. Grant that we may see the day when we can sing before you as we used to do...the Psalms, the Choruses, the Hymns of Praise. Bless your church Lord, not because she covets power or wealth, but because she holds to YOUR word and YOUR will. Grant that we might serve YOU and our neighbour. And Lord if this virus is a plague of judgement, we pray you would heal our nation and cleanse our hearts. In Jesus name we pray. Amen