



Beloved,

We tried to live-stream the public worship service on Sunday. However, so did many other congregations which demand caused most platforms to crash.

So most of you would not have known, but the Call to Worship was from Job 1:20-21 as it speaks to our current cultural context in face of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Then Job arose and tore his robe and shaved his head and fell on the ground and worshipped. And he said, "Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return. The LORD gave, and the LORD has taken away; blessed be the name of the LORD."* Job, this greatest of all people in the east, has his world rocked. His investment portfolio vaporizes due to terrorist attacks and diabolical disaster. His employees who work for the Fortune 500 Job Development Company are all killed in the onslaught. Then a tornado strikes the home in which his ten children are feasting and consequently all perish. Job cannot theorize any rationale for his existential crisis. He has no light to illumine any rhyme or reason. *Nevertheless*, he worships in the dark. For God is still God and God is worthy of worship.

In addition to teaching about worship, the narrative of Job shows the gospel good that could result from the COVID-19 health emergency. The man contracts a rare plague which covers his body *"with loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head"* (Job 2:7). Scholars are uncertain of Job's exact illness. Some medical doctors assert that he has several. Job suffers "painful pruritus (2:8), disfiguration (2:12), purulent sores that scab over, crack, and ooze (7:5), sores infected with worms (7:5), fever with chills (21:6; 30:30), darkening and shriveling of the skin (30:30), eyes red and swollen from weeping (16:16), diarrhea (30:27), sleeplessness and delirium (7:4; 13-14), choking (7:15), bad breath (19:17), emaciation (19:20), and excruciating pain through his body (30:17)" (Hartley, NICOT, 82). The symptoms convince Job that his illness is incurable and death inevitable.

Job's plague and the COVID-19 coronavirus, indeed, most crises, work to cause a person to rethink reality and reflect on one's life. This is especially the case for the socially elite, healthy and wealthy of the ancient world like Job who never experienced hardship (Job 1:10). His enviable lifestyle is comparable to that of Americans today—the most prosperous population in world history, many of whom who haven't experienced suffering, in addition to having modern healthcare readily accessible to them. For such folk, the plague of Job and threat of COVID-19 could be a very rude awakening. Indeed, as a result of his plague, Job despairs. During the bitter experience, he questions the meaning and purpose of his life. *Why did I not die at birth, come out from the womb and expire?* (Job 3:11). His experience of suffering compels friends and observers to question his character and conduct. *"Remember: who that was innocent ever perished? Or where were the upright cut off?"* (Job 4:7). Though their primitive worldview causes them to wrongly and cruelly imply that Job's suffering is deserved due to his own sin, they still raise the universal issues of ethics, justice, salvation, and destiny.

The COVID-19 health crisis may present one of the greatest gospel opportunities of our time. So let us not waste it. Let us pray that God in His kind providence will employ COVID-19 to shatter the false worldviews of our fellow citizens thereby making them receptive to the gospel. And let us *"always be prepared to make a defense to anyone who ask you for a reason for the hope that is in you"* (1 Pet. 3:15).

Blessings,
Jeff