

## **THE CORONA VIRUS – AND WHY IT’S NOT ALL BAD**

I feel led to communicate what’s going on in my heart and because we would normally be meeting tomorrow – I’m writing this today. (Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> March – The day before Mothering Sunday).

What’s happening in other parts of the world has finally caught up with us. It is unprecedented and has taken people totally by surprise – it’s almost like Boris Johnson has just announced that we have gone to war against an enemy virus that is both hidden, very contagious and that we have no natural immunity or defence against! Being on an island surrounded by water doesn’t offer any natural defence.

The Second World War lasted from 1939 to 1945 and was 6-long years of rationing, family separation and uncertainty, emotional and physical stress and the constant threat that Hitler would eventually win and absorb us all into his growing German speaking empire. I believe it’s unlikely that we will come out of this current crisis without having to accept some significant changes.

When you hear the government talking about social distancing for up to 12 to 18 months it kind of grabs your attention, and when you can’t get a Tesco or Asda (or whichever you choose) home delivery for weeks – you begin to wonder if this is just the tip of the iceberg and perhaps the lead-in to something much more significant or even sinister, regarding people, food and fiscal control.

However, what might be good about this crisis?

Well, I’m not preparing to give a sermon in the near future because the church has been closed for the sake of trying to do the right thing regarding those who are more vulnerable among us. But, what should we be doing instead of meeting together for Sunday morning worship and perhaps a Wednesday evening fellowship/prayer/communion service?

What are the pros and cons of a serious lock-down of society where you can’t freely meet together for church fellowship?

The cons are pretty evident by now already – some people I know have already lost their jobs, their rent payments are possibly not going to turn up on time, if at all, and the government have prevented Landlords commencing eviction processes for non-paying tenants for at least 3 months! They say that mortgage companies should offer a similar 3-month mortgage payment holiday but let’s wait and see what actually happens!

Today’s reality is that sometimes the basics are not available in the big supermarkets anymore if you turn up at the wrong time! Nola couldn’t get bread, milk or onions from Boston Tesco on her way back from work recently.

Pupils have been sent home because the schools closed after school on Friday! Daniel has worried me because while I was having my one-to-one piano lesson with him this afternoon while mum was still at work, I noticed that he was sniffing and wiping his nose! All of a sudden I realised the importance of social distancing – but realised that it might be too late by now anyway! Let's just hope it's a cold and sore throat, as he doesn't have a fever!

But, let me share some recent good news with you and hopefully encourage you that God is still good, still in control, and is working through and despite this situation:

1. *Hi Rob, I hope that my message finds you well. Just letting you know that Benjamin Thomas James Fisher (Ben) was born on Sunday 15th March at 5.24am, weighing 7lb 11oz. We are all well and feel very blessed. For obvious reasons we are not allowed to visit or have lots of visitors coming to see us but when things improve you will see us all. Love and blessings to you all Debs, Rich & Ben*
2. *Hi... not sure who it was who left the shopping on my doorstep.. with the note through my door. But I presume it was someone from CBC due to the nature of the note. Just wanted to say Thank you to whoever it was from both me and the kids. Very difficult times already without all current madness happening, relying on food banks to get by at the moment, so it was a help. God bless T.*
3. *Gary is self-isolating at home for at least 7 days following ringing 111 whilst shivering with a cough and fever! With a little help from me over the phone, he has found UCB radio on his smart TV and rang me excitedly today, to say that he was watching Channel 39 (that he just happened to 'stumble' upon!!) on the CBN Justice channel. It was an evangelistic outreach and was speaking about God's righteous judgement on the earth in these end times! Neither of us realised that the programme was there – but God did. It appears that this is yet another 'God-incidence' for Gary.*
4. *The new CBC Noticeboard has arrived and is very eye-catching! New A2 size posters have also arrived and they are attractive, professional, colourful and hopefully very effective. We asked God to bless the board last Sunday morning in order to draw people to Jesus and Salvation.*
5. *Someone in our fellowship has expressed an interest in becoming a member of CBC – and that is very encouraging!*

6. *Although we can't meet together on a Sunday morning at the moment and possibly for a LONG time – we CAN communicate using the telephone, text, email, WhatsApp, Facebook, Messenger, etc! And, we have a perfect opportunity to spend quality time with our families at home!*
7. *Although we can't worship together in a public place – we can still worship in our homes! We can be encouraged by Christian Radio, Music, and all those churches that broadcast on You Tube. Maybe its time to brush up your singing, or maybe get your musical instrument out again (at least not many people will complain!!)*
8. *We could minister to each other in various new ways – often just by saying that we're thinking of you – how are you? Some people are already good at this and others now have the opportunity to get better at it – maybe just by LISTENING to people!*
9. *We can still give our tithes and offerings via bank transfer – this might be useful unless you need “A CBC Offering Holiday!!” (Coningsby Baptist Church, HSBC Sort Code 40-42-07 Account Number 01090518) – and NO, Gerry didn't put me up to this!!*
10. *Reserved for YOUR good news and/or answers to prayer.*

We often don't value something until its taken away from us! So retrospectively, we can give thanks to God for all the things we may have taken for granted in the recent past. Things like jobs, schools, church, supermarkets, food, cinema, gymnasiums, swimming pools etc.

We should realise that the elderly among us are valuable, fragile and vulnerable, and now is the time to make sure they understand that they ARE valued – they won't know what you think and whether you care and want to help, if, you don't communicate it to them somehow. (Some seniors have laptops and mobile phones as well as landlines!)

We often think that the benefits system is more than adequate for those who can't or don't work – but that shouldn't stop us caring for those in difficult circumstances that may or may not be of their own making? If the Holy Spirit is prompting you – don't ignore Him!

So what is really good about this crisis? The Bible remains unaffected – The Word is the same today tomorrow and always and GOD knows exactly what He's doing and will ultimately use it for His Glory.

So, let's turn to The Word of God and see what God is saying to each of us in these difficult and trying circumstances:

**Romans 8:22-28** *We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently. In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And he who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will. **And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.***

The really good thing about what is happening is that many people are realising how vulnerable they are and are asking questions they may never have asked before. This is our opportunity to speak up, reach out and DO what the Bible says to do. If you're already saved then there's nothing to worry about except fulfilling the purpose for which you have been called.

There are people within our own fellowship and others who are not yet in any fellowship with God – all of them need prayer and encouragement. So, if you can – USE THIS CRISIS as an OPPORTUNITY to REACH the LOST and Bless The Least of The Brethren – In doing so Jesus says that you do it unto Him!

So having said I won't be preparing sermons in the near future – if this comes across as a short sermon – then I apologise, but go on – have a go and read it out loud – or even better, write your own, and perhaps put it on You Tube or Facebook with your own message to The World!

(That's yet another opportunity that has just arrived out of nowhere!)

Yours in Jesus' Name

Until we meet again, God Bless you and those you love,

Rob