



Trumpet's Sound

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In this issue...

COVID-19: Blessing or curse . . . 3
Pastor Harry Kiujian

Psalm 1 5
Don Stormer

The Golden rule (2) 7
Raffi Chaparian

Care or control 10
Rex Dearlove

**How to respond to the
Coronavirus pandemic 12**
George Hawke

God's work in Gyumri 15
Ashot Gyurjyan

Cover photo: Selected



Praise points

- Praise the name of the Lord in all things, for He is good.
- We are thankful we can continue our food distribution.

Prayer points

- COVID-19 has spread all over the world and is now in Armenia. Pray for the people of this country.
- Please keep our ministry in your prayers even though we have had to stop all meetings and Bible studies.
- Pray for our workers who keep praying and encouraging needy families by phone.
- Pray for safe clearance of the shipment soon to arrive in Armenia from USA.
- Please pray for the much needed funds to continue our ministry.

*The costs of the publication are covered by the gifts of believers,
who donate out of the generosity of their hearts.*

COVID-19: Blessing or curse

It is the LORD who goes before you. He will be with you; He will not leave you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed. Deuteronomy 31:8

We are facing interesting times in history and in our lives. Are these just happenings? What does God have to do with COVID-19?

If our God is the creator God, He has everything to do with it. He is not Lord unless He is Lord of all. If He is God of all, why are there so many deaths and why is there so much fear?

We may look at this in two ways:

1. The Bible makes it clear that in the end times there will be many disasters

Matthew 24:6-9 reads "You will hear of wars and rumours of wars but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains. Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me."

All these will happen to make us aware of the truth, to help us to come to Him, and to help us see that all that is written will happen.

There was the flood in Noah's time; Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed because of the sins of the people. Many look at what is happening today and think God is punishing them. No: God is warning them about what is coming. Yes: punishment will come and there will not be anywhere to escape.

2. The wages of sin is death

People of all countries, all races, and all nationalities know about sin. They have all turned their backs on God. Talking about religion is

forbidden, praying in public gatherings is forbidden, reading the Bible is forbidden, teaching the children about Christ is forbidden, and talking about sin and its nature is also forbidden. There is no respect for God, or for the Lord Jesus. How would you feel if people rejected you and cursed your name?

2 Timothy 3:1-5 reads "But mark this: there will be terrible times in the last days. People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God – having a form of godliness but denying its power. Have nothing to do with such people."

The Bible gives a good description of how we are today and how far we have walked away from God. So what should we say? Is this virus a curse that has come upon us? No. God is merciful and loving. This is a warning to help us realise our need, a warning to help us come to repentance. The door of grace is wide open to all who will come to find refuge.

This is your day to find peace in Christ. Unless you change, there is no salvation, but all who come to Jesus in repentance become the children of God.

Yes, COVID-19 is a curse for sinners and a blessing to all who will come to Him in repentance. May the Lord help us all to come to Him in faith.

HK

If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.

(2 Chronicles 7:14)

Psalm 1

Psalm 1 contrasts the activities of the man who is blessed, with the man who will not be able to stand before God in judgment.

The godly man

The psalm opens with a beatitude; the man is blessed who doesn't walk in the counsel of the wicked. The second psalm closes with another beatitude. Those are blessed who take refuge in the Lord. Three things are true of the godly man:

- *he doesn't walk in the counsel of the wicked*
- *he doesn't stand on the path of sinners*
- *he doesn't sit in the seat of scorers*

We see a deterioration in the path of the person who is snared by the ungodly. A person who is trapped by the wicked first walks with them. Next, he stands in their company. Finally, he sits with them. We also notice that the character of the people to whom the psalmist refers is deteriorating. The ungodly may consider himself a good living person; he is better than the sinner. But the sinner would also claim to be better than the scornful. He may do some wrong things, but he doesn't scorn another man's faith. But in God's sight all are sinners. The ungodly man who lives without reverence for God is seen in verse 6 to be under God's judgment.

The godly person is described as someone who delights in the Lord's law. This means he knows God's holy standards and seeks to obey His will. Therefore he meditates in God's law continually. He ponders the truths he reads in the Scriptures, allowing the message to penetrate deeply into his whole being.

The godly person lives a fruitful life for God. He is like a tree planted by rivers of waters. Two things are true of a tree with sufficient moisture: it bears fruit and it doesn't wither. A person like this prospers in all he does. In spiritual matters these people maintain vitality in their

Christian lives. Because they continually meditate on the Word of the Lord they are faithful and fruitful servants of their Master.

We know there is only one person of whom this was absolutely true. Our Lord Jesus didn't seek the wisdom of the ungodly, nor did He stand with sinners planning unrighteous actions. He didn't sit down with scoffers to join them in their mockery. Yet He went into the homes of the outcast tax collectors and prostitutes to bring them the message of salvation. He showed them the love of God and brought them the peace of God in salvation. In this He has left His followers an example to follow.

The ungodly

The psalmist immediately shows how vastly different the ungodly man is. He is summed up in one short sentence. He is "not so". There is no stability with him. Where the godly man is like a tree planted by streams of water, the ungodly is like chaff that is blown away. There is no stability nor anything of permanent value with him. "Not so" contrasts the whole of the ungodly man's life with that of the righteous person. They are different in basic interests and in the fruitfulness of their lives.

When the psalmist looks ahead to the time of judgment, he sees no prospect for the ungodly man. He will not be able to defend himself in the judgment; sinners will not be able to join the congregation of the righteous. In a coming day there will be people who will say "Lord, Lord, did we not do this or that" only to hear the Lord say that He never knew them. They will depart to everlasting punishment. Now is the time to turn to the Lord in repentance and faith. If we do so, we know that one day we will be part of the congregation of the righteous.

God's omniscience is declared. He knows the paths taken by both the righteous and the wicked. He knows the end result of the path the wicked tread. What they do leads to eternal loss of well-being. This is not cessation of existence, but continued existence under the judgment hand of God.

My friend, where will you spend eternity? Today you may repent and believe. Tomorrow may be too late.

The Golden rule (the application)

Matthew 7:13-29

The Lord had been teaching the beatitudes, and the truth about murder, adultery, divorce, false witness and lying, revenge, love, tithing, prayer, fasting, heavenly treasures, making God a priority in life, righteous judging, and the Golden Rule. Now, in concluding the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 7:13-29), He cautions and challenges the people with the application of His teachings. Jesus did not want the people just to hear the truth, but to apply it in their lives. The Bible teaches us not to be only hearers of the Word but to be doers also (James 1:22).

Until Jesus came, the people had heard and learned the false, or human, way of man-made religion, the broad way. What He taught them on the mount was different from what they had learned. He taught them the truth in the way God intended; He taught the narrow way. Therefore, at the conclusion of the Sermon, Jesus challenged the people to make sure they lived by what they just learned from Him, and to put away what they had falsely learned from the Pharisees.

However, Jesus was not saying that if you do these things, you will go to heaven! Not at all! In fact, it was the Pharisees who were teaching that if people followed their false teachings, and man-made religion, they would go to heaven. However, what Jesus said was that a person who entered through the narrow door, who is Jesus (John 10:9), would be saved; there is no other way of salvation (Acts 4:12). One must first be saved by receiving Jesus; this is entering through the narrow door.

After salvation, one must make every effort to live by the teaching of the Sermon on the Mount, which is the narrow way. In addition, because the person is saved, he has the ability to live up to this teaching. In fact works, behaviour, and a godly lifestyle are a direct result of being saved. That is why Jesus said that you will know them by their fruit (Matthew 7:16a, 20). Not only here in the Sermon on the Mount but,

in general, the Bible teaches that a genuinely saved person will have fruit to testify to his or her salvation (James 2:17, 26). Therefore, you and I must enter the narrow door and live on the narrow way. We are saved through faith in Jesus and then we follow His commandments!

After challenging the people, Jesus cautions them to beware of anyone who teaches anything different (Matthew 7:15). There are many who will come in His name, but they are wolves and their only purpose is to destroy God's people and God's work (1 John 4:1). The Bible has many such warnings to you and me, using different terms and examples to warn us about such people: false brothers (2 Corinthians 11:26); false apostles (2 Corinthians 11:13); false teachers (2 Peter 2:1).

How can you and I be aware of such people? There is only one way; it is by knowing the truth, the Word of God, the Bible. When you and I know the Bible, we can inspect people's fruit and know if they are false, lying, or deceitful (Matthew 7:20).

Unfortunately, there has always been a large market for false teachers, apostles, and prophets, because there will always be those that are not looking for the truth, but only for what is pleasing to their ears (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

Therefore, you and I need to be alert and vigilant, because the adversary will come in sheep's clothing to destroy us (2 Corinthians 11:14). We need to be careful even when a person says "Lord, Lord". They may use the name of Jesus, and say they are saved, but not live according to the Bible. In fact many claim to be Christians, to be saved, to believe in Jesus and the Bible, but who don't live according to the Bible. Jesus warns us to be careful of such people and stay away from them. Unfortunately, such people will remain in churches among genuine believers, pretending to belong to God, but when the judgment day comes, Jesus will say to them "depart from Me". In the parable of the tares (Matthew 13:24-30) they experience judgment.

Finally, Jesus ends His teaching by presenting two foundations. One foundation is solid and immovable rock upon which the wise man built according to the directions of the great architect, the creator of

heaven and earth. When a person follows the instructions taught on the Sermon on the Mount and the Bible in general, then the building will stand throughout eternity. The other foundation is very superficial and unstable. One who builds on this is considered foolish because he is not building according to the great architect. When a person does not follow the instructions of the Sermon on the Mount and the Bible in general, the building will not stand forever but will be destroyed.

You and I are builders, whether we know it or not. We are building our spiritual temple on one of the two foundations. We are either building on the solid rock, Jesus Christ, which will lead to eternal life, or building it on our own righteousness, man-made religion, or a false understanding of the Bible which will lead to destruction and hell. Which type of builder are you? What is the foundation that you are using to build your spiritual temple? We need to make sure that we are wise and are building upon the only foundation, the solid rock, Jesus Christ, to have everlasting life.

When Jesus finished His teaching, people were amazed at what He had said, because He was teaching with authority, and not like the scribes and the Pharisees of that day. Do you know why that was so?

- Jesus believed in what He was teaching
- Jesus lived what He was teaching
- The scribes' teaching was based on traditions and other philosophies
- Jesus was not preaching a man-made deceiving philosophy but the Word of God, as did the apostles (Colossians 2:8)

Raffi Chaparian

"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly.

Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus."

(Revelation 22:20)

Care or control

Daffodils have begun to flower in our driveway. Maybe that doesn't sound remarkable but these daffodils are real survivors. They have survived the winter frosts, marauding rabbits, the lawnmower and wheels of passing cars. Those lumpy, unattractive bulbs buried in the earth never looked as if they had much promise, especially in the demanding environment of our driveway. Yet, miraculously, there they are, looming fresh and full of impudent optimism telling us that God did have the final say about death and winter. I use the term miracle not as a flight of poetic fancy but as a sober description of what I believe happens in a garden. A garden is a place of miracles, and perhaps that is why gardening, and the gardener, are images that both Christ and Paul used to help us understand the ways of God among men and women.

The traffic that goes on between God and us is full of the miraculous. It must be, for it takes nothing less than the miraculous for God to transform the ugly in our lives into something beautiful. Paul saw himself as a gardener and the people he worked amongst in the decadent city of Corinth as God's garden. "For we are God's fellow-workers; you are God's field, His building" (1 Corinthians 3:6).

Gardeners work with the miraculous, and so do we all when we seek to encourage the process of growth in one another's lives. A garden is a place of work, a place of growth and it is a place where you cannot make things happen. Only God can. In a garden you discover both your limitations and your work. I believe there is a vital principle here for all of us who are involved in the work of God's church. A good gardener recognises that he or she cannot make things happen. In the same way, all we can do is seek to create an environment where God can do His work in our lives.

If you listen to the language of the world today you will hear the language of control. Advertisers use language to control and manipulate us to buy. The next time you are in a bookshop, take a look at the

section generally headed “inspiration-motivation”. You will see many books offering techniques on how to control and influence others, make life go your way, win arguments and sell things to people who really don’t want to buy them. This language of control seems very attractive even to churches. It is beguiling to think there is some three-step technique that will sort out people’s problems, help them become powerful, dynamic and spiritually bullet-proof.

Gardeners are not into control. They recognise that they cannot make things grow. Good gardeners will care for the garden, but realise that they cannot control or impose growth. As we seek to promote growth in one another’s lives, it is vital to find the borderline between care and control. A caring gardener works wisely to his or her limits, creating an environment where God can work His miracle of change and growth. But a controller says “I am going to make that growth happen”. The controller doesn’t really leave any space for God to work His miracle of growth and change, because he or she holds deep doubts as to whether God really is at work in society and in lives today. To them the phrase “co-workers with Christ” is a pious-sounding truism, not a simple description of what really happens. On the other hand, the carer believes God is already at work initiating growth. The controller believes nothing will happen until he makes it happen. It is a tiring, faithless and ineffective way to live. The gardener’s role is in providing the environment where God will cause the miracle of growth to occur. Jesus could see what His Father was doing and worked in with it. “My Father is always at His work, to this very day... The Son can do nothing by Himself; He can only do what He sees His Father doing” (John 5:17).

When we avoid controlling and begin working with God, we will become good gardeners and see miraculous growth too. God is still in the business of turning unattractive bulbs into beautiful daffodils. I have seen it in our driveway.

Rex Dearlove



How to respond to the Coronavirus pandemic

Acknowledgement: The following article is based on a message by Dave Sheath of the Lakes Church at Tuggerah in NSW Australia and looks at how we can respond to the world-wide coronavirus pandemic.

Today Frank said to me “It feels like I’m in jail”. He is elderly and lives alone. But because of Government regulations, he is unable to attend the men’s social group at his local community centre. So he is now socially isolated because he has few opportunities for contact with other people.

God doesn’t want us to live in fear

They say that fear spreads from person to person faster than any virus. Panic also spreads more rapidly than any virus. Because of the coronavirus pandemic, there is panic buying at the supermarkets. This has led to shortages of essential items (like toilet paper!) and empty shelves. And people are constantly checking the news, social media and the internet for the latest on COVID-19. It seems to be never ending. And it makes us tired and worn out.

At this time there are so many fears and reasons to worry. But what if your biggest fear or worry could be taken away? The biggest fear for humanity is the fear of death. It looms over us all in the background. If we could remove the fear of death it would make an incredible difference. That’s what Jesus came to do. He came to remove the sting of death. He told Martha “I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:25-26 NIV). As we believe in Him, even if we die we will live beyond death. Do you believe that Jesus provides security in the face of death?

Jesus wants us to have comfort in the face of sickness and suffering and confidence in the face of death and what lies beyond it.

The Bible says “we [believers] also glory in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us” (Romans 5:3-5). This is counter-cultural. It says that we can have joy amidst suffering and uncertainty. This is because we know the true God and we know His promises and His power. We can trust our lives into His care. We are not in control, but He is. It teaches us perseverance and hope which builds character. And it is God who is building our character. So we put our faith in His promises which never fail.

God is in control

If you trust in Jesus, God loves you. And He will act in your best interests in every situation of your life. It doesn’t always feel like that. But no matter how out of control life is for us, it’s never out of God’s control. He wants us to trust Him in such circumstances.

In the face of death Jesus said “I am the resurrection and the life”. He is God come amongst us, because no one else could make such a claim and be credible. In the face of the uncertainty around coronavirus and how it forces us to face our mortality, we can feel scared and out of control. We don’t have the answers. And we lack self-confidence. This is a good time to investigate the claims of Jesus by saying I am not in control of my life in the way I would like to be, but maybe Jesus is. And maybe His promises are true. It’s a time to rethink the claims of Jesus. Jesus brings real comfort in death because He is the resurrection and the life.

The resurrection of Lazarus showed that Jesus had power over death (John 11:43-44). He doesn’t just heal the sick, He raises the dead. Likewise, at the rapture, believers will be resurrected to live with God in heaven.

We are living in a world gripped with fear, anxiety, insecurity and uncertainty, but Jesus has come to address our fears and calm us in the midst of them. For all who trust in Him, He removes our greatest fear, the fear of death. David said “Even though I walk through the

darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you [God] are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4). Knowing Jesus makes all the difference to how you die. You know that you are going to a better place. You know that Jesus is the resurrection and the life.

Conclusion

Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus. You'll be worn down and exhausted and feel anxious and powerless by what's on the news media and the social media; it will lead to panic. You need to hear something beyond what our world is telling us. You need a word from God. We need to keep fixing our eyes on Jesus, the one who has overcome death. Let's read the Bible daily. Keep meeting together. If we can't do this physically, we can do it virtually by using technology like the telephone or video.

This is the time for Christians to shine. Jesus is the light of the world. He wants us to be a beacon of light in this dark world. Christians have always shone in a crisis. God has given us a model of selfless love in the face of our circumstances. History shows that the obscure marginal Jesus movement became the dominant religious force in the western world in a few centuries. It was resparked by the Christians' response to the plagues that took place in Rome in AD165 and AD251. Many of the wealthy Romans and the pagan priests fled from the crisis in the city. But the Christians stayed and showed compassion, love and care. And they halved the death rate. It was incredibly compelling. Their own religions didn't offer anything in the midst of suffering and a crisis. But Christianity offered real help and real hope. Let's increase our kindness, compassion, generosity and love. Connect with people who are isolated. Be other-person centered in a world where people have panic, fear and crisis. Jesus has calmed our fears and given us a model of selfless love to imitate.

George Hawke



God's work in Gyumri

I want to share with you about God's work in Gyumri and the surrounding areas in which I and my family are involved with Armenian Christian Mission. When we first started our ministry here one and half years ago my understanding of this town and the community was different.

At first Gyumri seemed very strange to both my wife and me, and even to our daughter who was only 2½ years old at the time: different people, different mentality. Although we were among our people, we saw different habits. And, I must admit, it was difficult to get started because of unfamiliarity with the environment; we encountered different situations. Before our arrival in Gyumri we were told that there were many devout believers here, and a group of people we could serve. However, we were surprised. On the one hand I agree there was a group of people, but on the other hand, they were not as they were described. We could not expect much from them spiritually. During that time, we prayed for God's power and guidance in our lives and ministry. I know that many have also prayed and continue to pray for this important ministry and for us as we seek God's way for us. He holds His children in all circumstances. We are well aware that there is nothing we can do without the Lord Jesus Christ. Our brothers and sisters from Yerevan and Gyumri, as well as from distant lands, help us in our ministry. With their prayers, encouragement and visits, they are at war with us in this important work in which God has placed us.

About a year ago people in Gyumri were watching us very carefully, even when we met outside. I heard our neighbours asking each other about who we were and what we were doing. In time, though people continued to be cautious, they were more open to us. We strive to leave a good witness in the neighbourhood, and thus have the opportunity to share the Gospel with many people.

Speaking of blessings, I can say that God has blessed us, and some of our neighbours have started attending our Bible studies and even of-

ferred their help at those meetings. We have started to get to know Gyumri and the people better and to accept them as they are. Of course, God is helping us in all this. We have learned to look at certain situations lightly and not to be confused by them but to trust the mighty Lord who loves us. New people who had not attended church meetings before have joined our congregation and that makes us very happy and encouraged. We have begun to enjoy their love for God and for us.

Recently, we heard from families about testimonies of God visiting them through brothers and sisters of ACM. They saw that God loves them through the children of God. Until then, these families were very angry and more upset about life and lived with a bitter spirit. Now their lives have changed not only because of material help but through the Word of God. These testimonies have been a blessing to us and we want to continue the work of God; we believe we will see many fruits. We thank God for the work and the ministry of ACM and for the faithful children of God who have loved and raised up these neglected people and given them importance as precious creations of God. Beloved, we enjoy your fruits and wish to bear more fruit for the glory of God. Please continue to pray that we too may be a help to new souls.

“Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labour is not in vain” (1 Corinthians 15:58).

Ashot Gyurjyan

The continuing fall of the Australian dollar against the American dollar has caused us some financial problems and we are having to reduce some of our expenditure. Because we do not want to reduce the amount we spend on food and other support in Armenia, we have to look at other expenses. One of these is the cost of posting this magazine. We may have to stop posting the English version of our magazine. Please pray that the Lord will improve our financial position. You may still read the magazine online at www.acmaust.org/help/trumpet-sound-magazine.