

Series: "Corona...Corona"

Sermon: "When it Rains, it Pours"

Text: Psalm 46]

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- Good morning, good afternoon or good evening! I thank you for taking the time to listen to this sermon whenever and wherever you are.
- More people, not as closely tied to Fellowship Bible Church of Colorado Springs, are listening. Some are asking what we believe. They want to know, "Do you have a statement of faith on your website somewhere?" Little do they know we barely have a website!
- In lieu of that doctrinally "all nailed-down" form of description, for now, let me just make a few statements that will give you an idea of who we are and what we think God's Word tells us to care about as we are walking around in this world "imaging Him" for the glory of His Name.
- We believe what we believe based on Scripture and this is not all we believe but it is a taste of it:
His is the NAME above all names. We live to glorify His NAME not our own!
The Lord is risen! He is risen indeed and is the only source of true LIFE.
Everlasting LIFE is a gift...by God's grace alone, through simple faith alone, in Jesus Christ alone!
We can't GO to church...We ARE the church!
The church does not exist for its own sake but for the sake of the world God loves!
In Christ, we are held together even when we are forced to be apart.
- Ok...if you are still listening, let me begin by reminiscing. I guess when one signs up for Medicare that automatically turns on the reminiscing part of one's brain.

Series: "Corona...Corona"

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RGGJR/FBCCS/6-7-20 UNEDITED

- Growing up in Detroit, I remember something you probably don't even realize Detroit is famous for. Rolling up the car windows, I believe on Fort Street before passing the Marathon crude oil refinery leaking the strong rotten egg odor of *mercaptan* or maybe some sulfurous by-product, we would also see enormous mountains of salt piled high.
- The Detroit area has a salt mine over 1000 feet below its homes, buildings and streets. The mine has over 100 miles of subterranean roads spread over 1500 cavernous acres. Some of these roads and caverns predate industry which used to make Detroit famous.
- This next part is a bit sketchier but I think I remember it. Somewhere near those salt piles, highly visible to the elevated street we were traveling was a gigantic blue billboard sign picturing a little eight-year old girl holding an umbrella and a slogan I have never forgotten. ***"When it rains it pours!"***
- The Morton Salt Company, now owned by a German company discovered that adding magnesium carbonate to sodium chloride (salt) kept the crystals from clumping when the humidity was high. Today they add calcium silicate for that same effect.
- Along the way, it was discovered that they could also add a taste-free iodine compound to table salt. That addition helped nearly eradicate thyroid issues caused by an iodine insufficiency.
- My interest is in their slogan. ***"When it rains it pours!"*** As a young kid I understood it was touting an innovation that made it less necessary to bang a salt shaker on the table to make the salt pour out.
- As I got a bit older, I realized the slogan had another, less concrete, meaning. Very often in life, it seems that difficulties come in ***clumps***. It doesn't simply rain one problem. It pours multiple problems at

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Sermon: "When it Rains, it Pours"

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RGGJR/FBCCS/6-7-20 UNEDITED

once. I'm not sure I could absolutely prove this statistically, but emotionally it sure seem true and feeling that it is true is powerful even if the numbers don't add up.

- It may be that when we are faced with a very difficult problem in life, **a rain**, we become more aware that life is less controllable than we like to think. This may open our eyes to other issues, **a pouring rain storm**, we have been able to sublimate by convincing ourselves there is less chaos around us than there actually is.
- **OR**, it may be that God indeed works to grow and purify our faith in Him, in *concentrated* ways because, for many of us just one chaotic problem isn't enough to shake our faith in our own autonomous ability to **do-fix-and-control** life.
- This Morton Salt slogan has been vividly on my mind for a couple of weeks now. It took me back to a well-known Psalm that I talked about with you many weeks ago and I want to talk about again in this sermon—**Psalm 46**.
- It is a popular Psalm. In one Bible of mine, I have notes from Eric Smith, Josh Billings, and one other preacher (I'm not sure who) from when they taught about the Psalm and I was listening to learn from them.
- Verse 1 of Psalm 46 tells me immediately why this is such a popular part of God's Word for me and others. It reads...
v.1 God is our refuge and our strength, an ever-present help in trouble....
- Can't beat that idea with a stick! Who doesn't want to hear that God is there for them as a protecting refuge and an empowering strength when we need help in life's troubles?
- Believing this—trusting God for this truth being a reality—means we can live through trouble like verses 2 and 3 describe...

Series: "Corona...Corona"

Sermon: "When it Rains, it Pours"

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vv.2-3 Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging.

- The metaphors in these verses are similar but still different and that caught my attention. It could be that the Sons of Korah who wrote the Psalm were only writing with a normal, artistic, Hebrew parallelism when they talked first of the chaotic disaster of an earthquake and then added the element of another chaos—flood waters.
- Both disasters—both chaotic troubles—are capable of shaking and destroying always thought-to-be securely solid mountains. Both disasters shake what was always presumed to be foundational and unmovable—unshakeable and indestructible in life.
- The Sons of Korah may not have directly intended it in their poetic parallelism but I can't avoid it. "***When it rains it pours!***" When you are living through a mountain breaking earthquake along comes a mountain shattering flood.
- It doesn't just seem to rain a little destructive chaos. No, it pours a storm of chaos threatening what has always felt stable—and dare I say it this early in the sermon? ***Felt TRUSTABLE!***
- You've heard me insert the adjective "***chaos***" umpteen times already in this. Why? Because I want you to think back to our early studies in *Genesis* and the idea of "chaos" there. In the NIV of *Genesis 1 verse 2*, the English translation reads "*formless and void.*"
- You probably recall that is translating the Hebrew words *tohu* and *bohu.*" We had lots of fun with those words but the gist of the conclusion was clear. God took something that was not equipped and working in a way that would produce glory to his name which would mean LIFE for all Creation and he "created" it into the perfect setting for humans to fulfill their created purpose of "imaging

Series: "Corona...Corona"

Sermon: "When it Rains, it Pours"

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RGGJR/FBCCS/6-7-20 UNEDITED

Him"—and thus spreading righteousness and LIFE—throughout the entire earth.

- Humans said no to this purpose. At least they said "no" to trusting God to fulfill it in his way by his wisdom through them. They struck out on their own with autonomy from God that became more and more ambitious in order to make of themselves gods—to be significant and claim life on their own.
- This sinning brought the impact of the *chaos* back into the created system with great force through the creatures created to be the most responsible to move creation from wasteful chaos to purposeful glorifying of the Creator.
- This allowed the *tohu and bohu* of purposelessness and destruction to encompass people, families, tribes, and nations as they expanded on the earth. Rather than spreading the glory of God—rather than lifting up the NAME in a world designed for that, humans generally lifted up their own names and wasted their purpose for living.
- OK, we have already covered all of that in some detail, so that should remind us what we need to remember to understand things this morning.
- Let me ask you something. *If Adam and Eve would have chosen faith instead of autonomy and the rest of their human offspring would have followed in those footsteps instead of in footsteps of sin, would there have been earthquakes and floods, like we read about in Psalm 46:2 and 3, for humans to face? Would human life still have been susceptible to facing difficult problems in life? Would it still possibly have "rained" and sometimes "poured?"*
- I would say the answer to that question is yes. In their assignment to fill the still chaotic earth outside of Eden with the Name of the LORD, they would have faced problems. Many of the problems would be

different but there would still have been problems aligning all of the earth with God's purposes.

- Why can I conclude this? Well, for a number of reasons but perhaps the easiest is because there was already a glorious creature who had said "no" to God before they did. This creature would not make God's purposes easy.
- The difference, had Adam and Eve not sinned and humans had all chosen faith in God versus autonomy, would be that humans would all adhere to the reality of verse 2 in Psalm 46. No one would ever be afraid when the problems came.
- The reason they wouldn't be afraid was because of what they knew and absolutely believed about God was true in verses 4-9...

***⁴There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,
the holy place where the Most High dwells.***

***⁵God is within her, she will not fall;
God will help her at break of day.***

***⁶Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall;
he lifts his voice, the earth melts.***

***⁷The Lord Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah***

***⁸Come and see the works of the Lord,
the desolations he has brought on the earth.***

***⁹He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth;
he breaks the bow and shatters the spear,
he burns the shields with fire.***

- In short, the reason trusting agents of God's created purpose in the world would never ever be afraid is because they absolutely believed God was in control no matter the mountains crumbling or falling into the sea around them.

Series: "Corona...Corona"

Sermon: "When it Rains, it Pours"

Text: Psalm 46]

RGGJR/FBCCS/6-7-20 UNEDITED

- They would have believed God is the source of stability and control in all of life's problems not the things that seemed stable around them.
- From the time and place perspective of the Sons of Korah writing this Psalm, God's stable control in the midst of chaotic problems in their world was evidenced by God's provision of a sustaining river of life, to his people, in his city that wouldn't fall because of God's presence in her.
- The actual problem in that day wasn't physical earthquakes and floods but politics and human conquering powers.
- But the Sons of Korah remind the readers in the midst of this turmoil there is evidence everywhere that God is more powerful and remains in control. *"Look! They say, all he has to do is lift his voice and the earth itself melts!"* He, God, easily deals with marauding nations and wars that feel like they are mountain destroying events.
- If humans trust God even as the quaking shakes and the rivers rise, he will be their needed protection—their "fortress" as the Sons put it.
- And then there is that admonition in verses 10 and 11 that I spent much time on before. It is necessary because humans didn't trust God and chose autonomy. We forget this truth and often need to be called to let go of our own ways and powers of making everything work so we can regain a sense of control.

***10"Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth."***

***11The LORD Almighty is with us;
the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah***

Series: "Corona...Corona"

Sermon: "When it Rains, it Pours"

Text: Psalm 46]

RGGJR/FBCCS/6-7-20 UNEDITED

- The Sons of Korah say beautifully, "*When the earth of life is quaking—when the seemingly stable mountains of life are covered and eroded by floods, God is still in control. He will be exalted and not ever defeated.*"
- We can trust him to be with us and to provide all the protection we need to glorify Him.
- Last time I preached this I showed you a clip of the destructive earth quake that struck Mexico City in 1985.
- This time I am struck that the psalmists added a flood as if an earthquake wasn't enough. This time I am thinking, "*Hey! When it rains it pours!*"
- Why? Maybe because in order to shake us from our belief that we can make life work and regain control from the chaos of *tohu* and *bohu*, God knows one life-disaster at a time is often not enough.
- Let's called the Covid-19 pandemic an "earthquake" for many peoples' lives. The stability of "normal" life was shaken by a virus with unknown destructive capabilities. The shaking and quaking was certainly magnified both by political posturing and power grabbing and by a new voracious, instantaneous media that seems to care infinitely more about "clicks" than truth and ethics.
- No matter, the real quake might only have been a 3.5 on the "Richter Scale" of life-destructive power, these other factors combined with the sense of an unknown shook many, many peoples' lives as if the real power was an unheard of 9.0 actual quake.
- The world's response? "Do-fi-and-control!" Bring out the experts. Crank up the programs and the rules. "Science will save us!" "Faith will save us!" "We can fix this if we will just come together around what I personal believe is the answer!!"

Series: "Corona...Corona"

Sermon: "When it Rains, it Pours"

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RGGJR/FBCCS/6-7-20 UNEDITED

- We must: Quarantine! Give up rights and freedoms! Track each other's' movements. Take this drug. Don't take that drug! Don't you dare not wear a mask! Don't you dare wear a mask!
- President Trump is saving us all! President Trump is murdering us all with a special focus on killing "people of color!"
- Everyone is going to die! Only old people will die! Models show one million Americans will die from this virus in the next few months. Actuals show closer to 100,000 have died.
- Social distance at all costs to save the world's population! AND, keep in mind, abortion clinics are essential even for so-called elective procedures but knee replacements are not. Liquor stores are essential but churches are not. Riots are essential even if they break the 6 foot rule but saying good bye to a dying parent is not—"you can't go in there!"
- No matter which side you take on any or all of these dichotomies, I hope I have riled you up a bit.
- I suggested before and the need has only become more critical over the months of the Covid-19 invasion. ***"Be still and, and know that I am God...the LORD almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress."***
- As I said before, this is no call to throwing our hands up and saying we will do nothing. It is a call to standing on something solid before we throw our hands up and fall off the floating, slippery, spinning log we were trusting to stand on for stability in our life.
- ***"God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble."***
- OK, been there, done that Covid-19 faith thing. I can handle that earthquake so I can get back up on my slippery log of confidence in people, experts, governments, science, and humanity to deal with chaos. Back to "do-fix-and-control" as I have put it before.

Series: "Corona...Corona"

Sermon: "When it Rains, it Pours"

Text: Psalm 46]

RGGJR/FBCCS/6-7-20 UNEDITED

- ***"When it rains it pours!"*** says the little eight year old girl with the umbrella on the Morton Salt canister.
- Now, George Floyd, a black man, dies with a policeman's knee on his neck in Minnesota and, well, we'll call the resulting angry demonstrations and eventual destructive riots in cities across the United Sate's "the floods" on top of the earthquake.
- I have lots that I could say about this situation but, frankly, no matter what one says it will be wrong by somebody's standards of justice and proper, civil existence. My goal is not to convince you my understanding of the details of this *"rain upon pouring rain"* is correct.
- I will point out that we have not been unaware of racism and inequality until this moment when we discovered it. Nor have we failed to recognize the lasting results of destructive civil unrest in the lives of those supposedly benefited by the truth they scream.
- I lived through the heart of a so-called "race riot" in Detroit in 1967. At that point, the city was immediately supposed to divide based upon color of skin. In human thinking, that was all that mattered.
- I was reminded of that as some of the same areas around 12th street that were never really rebuilt since 1967 were again involved in racial confrontation. Once again, people shouted that skin color was what mattered most.
- I was surprised to find as I researched the 1967 riots that 24 years earlier in 1943, in approximately the same areas of the city of Detroit there had been deadly riots. Once again the color of one's skin was what humans told people made a difference.
- You may shout, *"See, Raleigh that proves 'institutional racism!'"* You may be right. But please don't think that over the last 77 years no one else has pointed that out and attempted to deal with it.

Series: "Corona...Corona"

Sermon: "When it Rains, it Pours"

Text: Psalm 46]

RGGJR/FBCCS/6-7-20 UNEDITED

- Money has been spent! Trillions of dollars. Experts have engaged. Programs have proliferated. Politicians have made their careers on fighting on either side of racial issues. Media has rejoiced (yes, I mean rejoiced!) when they have something so vital to put in the press, on TV or now online.
- Pictures of devastating floods—especially on top of pictures of extremely destructive of earthquakes—a combination we have today can hardly be ignored. ***"When it rains, it pours!"***
- So, at the risk of being misunderstood but trying to be real according to what I read in Scripture beginning at Genesis 1:2, I do not decry "systemic racism." I rise to cry out about the destruction wrought in this creation by ***"systemic chaos!"*** By the *tohu* and *bohu* of *Genesis* and beyond.
- Do I do this to escape personal responsibility or to suggest there is no answer—there is nothing I or we can do about earthquakes or/AND floods in life? Not at all. IN fact, just the opposite.
- I do this to proclaim human beings, no matter how smart, rich, powerful, expert, successful, or even good looking and famous on the internet—human beings don't have the answer to the chaos that underlies earthquakes and floods.
- Only God has the answer! Well, that sounds nearly as vacuous a thing to say as I said to the elders this last week as the answer to my question of "why I GO to church on Sunday." My answer was "To glorify God!" Great! That explains it. That really helps me see.
- MY point then and now was this: If we do not actually, really, literally, truthfully start with the foundation truth that only God has the real answer to the earthquakes and floods we are in trouble. Very quickly we will be trying to save a Titanic from sinking by bailing

the incoming water with "tall" size Starbuck's cups—not even "venti" size cups!"

- That is hopeless effort at trying to do something to feel good about doing something.
- If, we recognize that only God has the answer, then, first of all, like the Sons of Korah told us to sing, we don't have to fear. And, secondly, if God then says I want you to bail with that little Starbucks cup over in that corner of the boat, we can do it with confidence that God will be the power that makes that little, seemingly insignificant effort worthwhile in his overall bigger control over chaos.
- It is not simplistic to say: "**People need Jesus!**" That's not simplistic, that is foundational. Living life in chaos is not truly **fixable** by the government, human wisdom or even caring individuals. It is only truly "fixable" by faith in Jesus Christ from whom all real LIFE flows.
- Our smarts, insurance policies, wealth plans, properties, plans, politics, experts and even good looks may seem like answers, routes to regaining a sense of control but they are deceptions played upon by the evil one.
- And now as a novice mistake for a preacher who has talked to long, I must add a new idea in conclusion—never supposed to do that!
- Do you know why all that seething, burning anger is out there woven into these problems? Why people don't just disagree but hate each other's guts when they don't agree?
- It's because problems that are so big, only trust in the wisdom and faithfulness of God can fix, these parts of chaos and run amuck *tohu* and *bohu* too big for us to handle must be downsized to human proportions so we think we can tackle them humanly without God.
- How do we do that, with the cheers of the Lying Deceiver in our ears? We turn them into problems with people. White and black

Series: "Corona...Corona"

Sermon: "When it Rains, it Pours"

Text: Psalm 46]

RGGJR/FBCCS/6-7-20 UNEDITED

problems for example. Interestingly, God doesn't even bother to tell us for sure where skin color came from.

- Not his issue! It's our issue because then we can hate someone small enough we can win against.
- Finishing this new idea, what did Paul warn us about in Ephesians 6 when he addressed the evil God-opposing schemes of the devil? ... ***(O)ur struggle is not against flesh and blood but...against the spiritual forces of evil!***
- Finally, the Church of Jesus Christ is made for the task of confronting the chaos caused by dark spiritual forces opposing the glory of God. The church doesn't come first with, Starbuck cup sized answers but with the answer. People need Jesus! We move forward from that one stable foundation in Chaos!
- I know nothing much about other local churches but I know FBC, is positioned right now for mission built on that foundation of trusting God. FBC has known this and practiced it since its inception fighting for the grace of God in Jesus as crucial in a world of Chaos.
- We are still positioned for that mission—Sunday doors opened or closed—5590 N. Nevada Av or elsewhere or maybe all over(?). Let's pray and trust God even if the future sounds a bit crazy for us!
- ***When it rains, it pours!*** Why? I believe it is because God is still getting our attention and saying—you can trust me—absolutely!