

After The Coronavirus (Covid-19) Decrees- What Do You Have Left?

Contributed by Rick Gillespie- Mobley on Mar 20, 2020

Scripture: 1 Samuel 27:1-7, 1 Samuel 29:1-11, 1 Samuel 30:1-31, 1 Peter 2:9-10

Denomination: Presbyterian/Reformed

Summary: The Coronavirus decrees can never take away from us, that which is most important, which is our relationship to God through Jesus Christ.

After The Coronavirus (COVID-19) Decrees- What do You Have Left?

3/22/2020 1 Samuel 27:1-7 Romans 8:28--39

Sometimes life throws us some real punches. There's not a soul here today that hasn't received its share of blows from the orders, edicts, closing and suggestions being given out by our government officials over COVID-19. Just as we duck to dodge one punch, another comes to take its place. One thing we can be sure of, is that there are more blows yet to come.

Our losses have been real no matter what our ages. Young and old athletes didn't get to play this season when they had been looking forward to it all year. High school track records that were going to be set, will never enter the record books by the people who would have set them.

The loss of your high school senior year is a tremendous blow for many of our students. There were scheduled proms that will never happen. Valedictorians, Salutatorians, MVPS and the like will never be named. The graduations that bring us together as a family tradition won't be there this year.

We were to celebrate the 100th birthday of one of our members today, but that won't happen, and she won't turn 100 again. Weddings have been cancelled after all those hours of planning, scheduling and spending money. Even funerals are being told to be put on hold. Jobs that we thought were secure, have been snatched out from under us. Surely we thought if we had our own business, we could determine our economic future.

We thought if we got sick, we could go to the doctor's or to the hospital. We were certain, that our church would always be open, but many are closed. These are just the tip of the iceberg of the many problems staring us in the face. Some of us have no idea how we

will pay our bills when we are looking at our last paycheck this coming week.

Whether we know it or not, there is an emotional pain and frustration building up inside each of us. We can't have loss after loss and not be hurting. We can't even plan our lives two weeks out, because for the first time we are realizing we really are not even in control of our own lives. At a time when we probably need to hug each other and cry the most, we are told to practice social distancing.

This could lead us down a path of despair, of fear, or of anger. But I want to challenge us. Instead of focusing in on what we have lost, we need to see what it is we have left, that God can still use on our behalf. Sometimes we can miss out on something because of a failure to search and to find what we have left.

Do any of you remember as a kid wanting to buy some cookies or some ice cream but not having any money to do it? I can remember as kids back in the 60's, my brothers and I we would look in every nook and cranny of the sofa to find us a coin or two. We'd look in the closet on the floor, and we'd check every old pocketbook we could find. We rejoiced just as much in putting together ten cents as someone who had won the lottery. We found out there was often more left than we had first thought.

There are some blows that the virus has thrown, but they have not put a dent or taken away what God says about us. God's word declares 1 Peter 2:9-10 (NIV) 9 But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. 10 Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.

My friends, who we are is based on our relationship to Jesus Christ. The decrees related to the coronavirus, doesn't stop us from be a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation or a people belonging to God.

Even if the next decree is to stop worship services, that still does not change who we are in God. It still does not dismantle the church because Jesus said I will build my church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. We simply have to rethink how we do worship. There were no church buildings for the first two hundred and fifty years of the church's existence, but they were faithful in worshipping God.

We still have the same job to declared the praise of Him who called us out of darkness into his wonderful life.

When Jesus called us to come and follow him, Jesus never said, his goal was to make us rich and to give us everything we wanted as a sign of his appreciation for us joining his team. What Jesus promised us was an opportunity to know God the Father as Jesus knew Him.

Jesus knew the Father as faithful, as trustworthy, as dependable and as able to take care of him even in the face of death. That is why Jesus' dying words, were "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." What is it that you need to commit into the hands of the Father who calls you his beloved child today?

Jesus told us up front, that following him was not going to be an easy task. As a matter of fact he told us our peace is going to have to be found in Him, because in this world we will experience trials, troubles, and tribulations. Nobody gets an exemption. If you live long enough, you will suffer either because of the sins of others or because of your own sin.

We make plans in our attempt to create a safe space for us. There's nothing wrong with planning for the future as long as you know that plan is subject to change with our without your approval. If I save enough money, I will have a safe space for retirement. If I get that job with that income, I'll have a safe space for me and my family's level of comfort. If I marry that person I will have a safe space from loneliness.

If I have kids, I'll have a safe space for someone to help look after me when I'm old. If I make that team, I'll have a safe space of acceptance at school. If I can get in with that group, I'll have a safe space of friends. We're all looking for some kind of safe space to live our lives. The coronavirus has shown us that our safe spaces can all be an illusion.

David had a safe space called Ziklag. David was a young man who had faithfully served the king. The king was so impressed with David's ability and anointing, that he placed David over his entire army. But the king became jealous of David, because the people boasted of what David had done in battle as compared to the king.

They said, "King Saul has slain his thousands, but David his tens of thousands." The king determined to kill David, and he pursued him ruthlessly throughout the country. David knew the only way he would find safety for him and his family was to leave the country and go into the land of the Philistines.

The king had branded him as a terrorist. He knew the king would not cross the borders into enemy territory. So David struck up a deal with one of the Philistine rulers, and the ruler gave David the city of Ziklag. David had finally found him a safe space in which to live. No doubt some people referred to him as David of Ziklag.

The problem with safe spaces is that we can put our identity in them and if we lose them, then we think we have lost everything. Where you live is nowhere near as important as the fact that you are alive.

As a Christian, we are to hold lightly to everything that we claim to be our own. Everything that we have, we will either lose or leave it behind, except for our relationship to God. We have to know that first and foremost, we have been called to be a child of God. That is our identity, and we cannot lose it.

Sometimes that which we hold closest to our hearts, we will lose, and it will hurt. It will hurt badly. But you are still a child of God with access to God's hope, God's strength and God's power.

Why do you think God wants you to be in the kingdom of God? It's because God wants to be in a relationship with you, and God wants you to want to be in a relationship with Him. Sometimes it is not enough to just have somebody with you. You want the person "to want" to be with you. Otherwise you will say, "if you really don't want to be here you can leave."

We come to God, to get to know God. God wants to show Himself through all the circumstance of our lives, and not just in the five minute prayer time that we call devotions.

God wants to reveal Himself to us right where we are everyday of the week. That means even when we are in a crisis. Even when we're having an attitude problem. Even when what we love is taken away. Even when we don't get what we really wanted to get. God is going to be there with us and God wants us to know He is with us.

The issue is not so much the coronavirus crisis of today, but rather are we open to being aware of the presence of God with us in it. If we are, we are going to want to be pleasing to God even in this circumstance. We know that our lives are not simply about us, but about what God is doing in and through us.

Our problem comes in wanting God to remodel our lives, but God is saying no. God is going to rebuild our lives, and that may mean going all the way back down to the foundation and making sure it is laid properly. That means demolishing a whole lot of stuff. Are you open to being rebuilt today with what you have left? Maybe God wants to do the same thing with our church. This may be our opportunity to see if we are really founded on Jesus Christ as a congregation.

David and his men had been called by the Philistine leader who had given him the city of Ziklag, to join in the battle against King Saul and David's own people. David responded of course he would go to fight, but he had to have been praying, "Lord what on earth am I going to do in the battle. I can't fight against my own people."

The other Philistine leaders didn't want David and his men to go to war with them, because they felt David and his men might jump ship, and help King Saul in order to get back in on his good side. They told David to go back to Ziklag.

No doubt David and his men were thrilled to have avoided this conflict. I can see them offering praise and worship to God for this huge answer to prayer. They can't wait to get back to their wives and families in order to celebrate. It was three day journey back to Ziklag.

All was normal until they got close enough to the city to sense something was not right. There were no scouts from the city to welcome them in. No sound of animals baaing and mooing. There was a smell of burned wood in the atmosphere. The closer they got, the more blackened structures they ran into. When they finally reached the city, probably in a run and a panic by now, there is not a sound of voice or a living person anywhere in site. The city they had left was not the city they returned to.

Ziklag, the safe haven of their identity had been attacked and burned. It seems that the Amalekites knew that the nations of Israel & Philistine would be fighting, and the men would be off in battle. It was the perfect time for them to attack the outer cities and carry off their wealth and to make the people their slaves.

Everyone's family members were gone, as well as all their possessions. What started out as regular day had become a day of disaster. All the men weep and cry out in pain over the loss of seemingly everything. When we lose that which is dear to us, we want to put the blame on somebody or something? We want to make somebody pay for this?

Some of the men decided to blame David. "If you had not of made us go be with the Philistines, we would have been here to protect our families and this would not have happened to us."

Some of David's men became so despondent that they wanted to organize a stoning party to put David to death. They couldn't see that David was hurting just like they were hurting, because his family was also gone. It's sad when our desire for revenge or to get even in our crisis, blinds us from seeing the pain and the hurt our own actions may be causing to others.

The Scriptures says, " David was greatly distressed because of this talk of stoning him, but David found strength in the Lord his God. The difference is that David chose to become aware of the presence of God. At this point he did not have anything more materially than the rest of the men. He had lost his status as the great leader, because they questioned his leadership and wanted him dead. They claimed to have nothing left.

Often times we think we cannot do the will of God because we have nothing left. Moses was trying to get out of doing God's will for his life, and God asked him, "what do you have in your hand." Moses said, "are you talking about this staff, this stick that I picked up to climb up here."

God was basically asking Moses "what do you have left." Moses saw a stick. That same stick was going to cause plagues to come on Egypt and bring it to its knees. That same stick was going to split open the Red Sea.

So often coming out of a crisis we underestimate what we still have left. You may have to start all over again. You may have to lose your home. You may have to let go of something or someone. But if you still have the presence of God, you are no poorer than you were before. There is still hope on the other side. It might be painful to get there, but you will get there. Online church is different way to do church, but if we are faithful, God will get us to where He's calling us to be.

David cried out to the Lord for his situation and he found some strength in the Lord. Next he found some other people who knew the Lord and sought advice from them in discovering God's will. How often do we go to the wrong people for advice when we find ourselves in a crisis? Don't go to people who will tell you what you want to hear, go to people who will tell you what God wants you to hear.

David got a plan together and he presented to Abiathar the priest to see if it was within God's will. Abiathar told him yes it is God's will, and yes you will succeed. David took 600 men to go and find the people who had destroyed Ziklag. But the plan did not go as expected. After a while 200 men said, they just could not go any further. They were too exhausted to continue the journey.

I want us to see that even when we follow the plan God has given approval to, there are still going to be some setbacks and moments of discouragement. But we must continue to journey. Coronavirus is still going to be punching at us for months to come, but we still have to pursue God. Stay with the plan God has given you, and let the Lord provide you the next step. Expect God to show up.

Once the 400 continued on, God led them to a man dying in the field. They gave him

some water and food, and the man was able to tell them everything they needed to know about regaining their families and their possessions. David and his men came upon a much larger army.

God allowed them to arrive at the same time this larger army was partying and getting drunk, completely unprepared for battle. God gave them a victory and they recovered all of their family members and more possessions than they had ever had before.

Having experienced God's grace and generosity, made David a more gracious and generous person. Being aware of God's presence, makes us more like God. When the army started home, the issue of the 200 men who did not make it into battle came up. Some said, "the only thing we should do for them is to let them take their wives and children and that's it."

But David said, "No. They stayed back and guarded our bags. They shall get the same reward from the spoils of war as all the rest of us. David also sent plunder back to some of the other elders in his home country and won their support for the day when he was to become king. David was willing to forget the things in the past, and look forward to a day that was coming.

We are all having to struggle with this crisis in our own personal way, but we are not alone. We are still the body of Christ with brothers and sisters willing to love and to care for us. This crisis, this disappointment, this loss that you suffered does not mean that God dropped the ball on you.

What you may need to see is that God has been there all along, but you did not welcome his presence because it did not fit your plan? God wants to work something in you through this knock down of a blow you have been given.

Being knocked down is not the same as being knocked out? Having a plan fail, is not the same as being a failure in life. Losing a lot does not mean, there's nothing left. God loves you just as much on this side of your trial as God did on the other side. Jesus prays to the Father on our behalf everyday. The Holy Spirit is the comforter who will lead and guide is into truth.

Are you willing to open your hands and let go of that which you call you own, so that your identity will be in God and God alone? Are you willing to press on toward the prize of the high calling of getting to know Jesus Christ?

This crisis can become the church's finest hour. For those of us who have not lost our jobs, we have an obligation to give something extra to help those who have lost their jobs. Will we sacrifice something extra because people are going to look to the church for help. We need more money in our Deacons Fund.

Jesus reminded us" Matthew 25:35-36 (NIV)

35 For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in,

36 I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me.'

Let's allow God to use COVID-19 as an opportunity for us to shine in our community for Jesus Christ as we have never shined before.