

Canadian Baptist Ministries Sunday

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Preacher: Dennis Shierman

[0 : 0 0] Well, hello. I'm thankful for this time that we can spend together, even though we have to do it in this way. I am sorry that I can't be there in person at your church.

Many of you I know and many I have met, and I long to be able to continue our relationship, but this will have to suffice for today.

I am thankful that Kent has opened up his pulpit for me to be able to share this morning. And I'll be sharing from two scriptures from the Old Testament, Psalm 29, 11.

The Lord gives strength to his people. The Lord blesses his people with his peace. And then to go along with that is in Isaiah 41, 10.

Can we pray?

[1 : 0 6] Father, we thank you for your presence, even though we are separated. Would you be with us, we pray, Father. May we hear your words. May we be encouraged. May we know that you indeed are righteous.

That you indeed strengthen your people. You want to bless your people. And Lord, most of all, you give us peace and hope. Thank you. Many of you I have said I know and I've had the privilege of being able to be with.

But there are some of you who I do not, may not know. And I know that Kent has asked me to share a little bit about who I am. Well, I'm Dennis Sherman, married to Judy Sherman, who many of you know.

Judy and I have been married for some time now, back in 1980, actually. We have four children and four probably the best grandchildren.

I know all grandparents say that, but we have five wonderful grandchildren who we find a rich blessing for us. For close to 30 years, we have ministered under Canadian Baptist Ministries.

[2 : 1 4] And now for me, I'm ministering here in Western Canada after being in Toronto for a while in our central office, representing in the position of global discipleship.

Our scent teams, our engagement with our Canadian churches globally, but also here in Canada. I've come back in 2010 because I was asked to come back to the position of being Western Rep.

I did this position when we came back from the field in 2004. And then, like I say, in 2010, went on to Toronto.

And then in 2016, because of a call my wife had and received from a church here in Altidore, she is pastoring, and while we are separated, we continue under Canadian Baptist and are privileged to be able to minister.

Before that, we had the privilege with our four children to be in Indonesia for three years. And then our first love, of course, was Bolivia. And many of you and some of you have engaged with us over the years in Bolivia.

[3 : 21] Some of you have actually traveled there. And we count it a privilege to be able to continue that relationship and still be connected in many ways to that country, even more because of my work and now all of Latin America and beyond.

Well, I've come full circle. I've come back to Canada. And one of my passions is the engagement of the local church. And I just am really privileged to be able to share this morning with you our time together.

I want to do a couple of things. As you know, I'm passionate about CBM. I'm passionate about what we're doing. What God is doing with our partners, your partners, here in Canada but also overseas.

We live now, as many of us know, and we're reminded daily and sometimes hourly that we live in turmoil on certain times. These are uncertain days.

How is that for an understatement? Everywhere you turn, people are talking about it. It's on the news. It's in everything that we read.

[4 : 28] It's everywhere. Some are mildly concerned. Others, full-blown panic. Uncertainty almost always arises, raises stress and anxiety.

In our time together, I hope to be able to encourage you and to help us focus on God and what he has for us in this time of uncertainty.

I believe it is good to focus on God's faithfulness. God is a caring God. And we can trust his faithfulness. We can trust God's faithfulness in any uncertain time or any uncertainty.

We really are living in a time that has, well, for many of us, we have never seen. And yet we hear of sad situations and awful news daily.

We do witness and hear of good things, though. And I must stress that. Good things that are happening in the world because they are in the midst of the turmoil. And we hear how the Lord is using the situations.

[5 : 33] He is using the circumstances to help us and his people around the world to build this kingdom. Bring people closer to him and ultimately to worship him.

Many of you have been touched by this pandemic. And I would actually say every person in the world today has been somehow connected to it. Happy or sad?

Unhappy. Bad trauma and feeling of hopelessness and sadness. Many, and we often ask the question, why do we suffer?

It's probably one of the toughest questions we face as believers today. It is something that touches each one of us sometimes very deeply in different circumstances, not just this pandemic.

We believe in a God of love and of power. So why doesn't God use his power to keep bad things from happening to us? Why is there so much that is wrong right now in the world?

[6 : 36] But the reality is that all of us will experience times in our lives where we are faced with tragedy, with calamity or crisis that leaves us asking this question, why?

And that leads to a deeper question we have about suffering. Does God know our suffering? And does God care?

And if he does, why does he allow us to suffer? To be honest, I can't answer that question. I really haven't found anybody that has.

I wish I could. I feel the agony in watching people I love suffer and, yes, even die. I long for answers. Unfortunately, I do not know the answer to the why and to why we suffer.

But I do know the answers to the questions, does God know and does God care? Because without faith, there is no hope.

[7 : 43] And without hope, life is empty and meaningless often. But in Christ, we do have hope. A truth and good to be.

We suffer spiritually when God seems distant and we feel alone. If anyone can understand our suffering, it is Jesus. Whatever situation we face, whatever difficulty or pain or sorrow, whatever we suffer, he knows.

He understands and he cares. Jesus does not promise to take away our suffering. But he does promise to be with us in the midst of it. I will never leave you or forsake you are his words.

So, the answers to those questions are that God does know. He does care. He cares so much he is willing to come and be one of us.

And then to suffer and die for our sake. And so in the midst of tough times, in our midst of suffering, God indeed is with us. As we read in Psalm 29 about him giving us strength and the Lord giving us blessing and giving us peace.

[8 : 57] I am reminded of something that has happened in the last recent days. We have all heard of the devastation in Lebanon when the explosion happened.

It was something that was not anticipated nor wanted. But it happened and there has been great devastation. If that explosion was not enough for them, there was much more uncertainty before it even happened.

Lebanon has recently been more, had more than its share of challenges. Let me put it in context for you if you don't know. Lebanon has recently been in a serious refugee crisis.

As Lebanon has hosted around 1.5 million Syrian refugees. Such that one in four people is a Syrian refugee.

And one in every three is a refugee. As a result, Lebanon today has the highest per capita concentration of refugees in the world. There was a huge liquidation crash that started in August of 2019.

[10 : 04] Whereby Lebanon banks restricted withdrawals of cash. Such that the depositors no longer could access their own money. A series of about 100 forest fires broke out on October 13, 2019.

And spread over a large area of Lebanon's forest. And if any of you have been to Lebanon, and I have, and I've seen those cedars that Christ walked in 2,000 years ago.

There was a big fear. They may be tempted. Or they may be burnt. Deepening economic crisis led to an uprising in October of 2019.

As Lebanese people hit the streets in peaceful non-segregating and non-religious demonstrations. Leading to sit-ins in major parts of the country.

In a unified call to bring an end to the current political system and the political issues. This was followed by and off and on clashes that are still going on today.

[11 : 05] With the uprising came roadblocks, increased restrictions, bank measures, crippling economy. The country as a whole was closed and businesses and people were laid off.

Not to mention downward spiral, the local currency. Well, February of 2020 came COVID-19. And a lockdown effective on March 15th with further impoverished the Lebanese people.

It was and is devastating. How can you react when that happens and that goes before? Well, if that wasn't enough, something happened that killed 178 people.

The crisis left 50% of the population living below the poverty line. Out of every three Lebanese unemployed and one-fifth saw their salaries being reduced. It was bad.

And then along came something that was even more devastating. Those 178 people killed by the explosion. That explosion on the 4th of August this year killed those 178 people.

[12 : 20] But more, it injured over 6,500 people. Displaced about 300,000 people, including 80,000 children.

And severely damaged some critical health infrastructure and medical system. An explosion that killed that people. All those 6,500 people that could not get help because of the medical system being destroyed.

The port, which was Lebanon's main gateway for imported goods and food, included as well as the country's only green silo, which was also destroyed in the explosion, leading the United Nations to war against another impending humanitarian crisis.

And that was shortage of food. And is today. Not only in Lebanon, but around the world. I'll have a little bit more on that.

The economic situation, as I said, left to inflation and a high unemployment. Education systems were hit. Many people were not sure what was going to happen.

[13 : 27] CBM, Canadian Baptist Ministries, who you were a part of, went to our partner in Lebanon, the Lebanese Society for Education and Social Development, LSEDS.

And they came to us as well and said, you know what, what can we do? They've had such a huge impact in Lebanon. And they wanted to do more.

Lebanon, through its food security programs and schools and refugee programs, have done extremely difficult work, working with refugees and uncertain times. The people did not want to give up.

They wanted to stay focused on what God was calling them to. And they knew that God would not give up on them. They had hope that there was something they could do. They didn't know what it was going to be.

So when the explosion happened, it really was a hard situation for the church in Lebanon. And the LSESD. What could they do when they had already come through and continue with all these crises?

[14 : 29] I have to tell you something. I was impressed when we heard, and some of you have, what happened days, hours after that explosion.

We were simply amazed and astonished. Many people had lost everything, their homes, and they had nowhere to go, no hope. Talk about uncertainty. Well, the church had decided that they would fix their Bible school, a building less than one mile from the epicenter.

This very explosion that damaged so many homes and put so many people in the situation of not having anywhere to go had brought families into the building that they fixed and repaired, helped them with shelter, food, and clothing.

They called upon the church, and they called upon their people, and they did call upon Canadian Baptists to say, what can we do together? Many of you have responded incredibly to send funds of more than a quarter million dollars to that country to help with basic needs in feeding families, food assistance, winterizing, those homes, bringing blankets, 3,000 blankets, days after, fuel, mattresses, rehabilitating 150 homes in that area, and now they're saying they want to do another 150.

Class included labor, administration, all those things. And they turned to the situation that was so dire, around the medical and the psychological, and to those children who had to live with some of that.

[16 : 08] The list goes on and what they were able to do. But what is exciting here is that God gave them hope. They didn't throw up their arms and say, man, we've lived through all these devastating things, uncertainty, the refugee crisis, with the food shortage, and all these other issues that they had to face before that explosion.

No, they turned to Christ. They turned to God. And they knew that He was going to bless. They knew that He was going to bring them forth with the knowledge of what it was going to be. Give them wisdom.

And it happened. Let me share a quick video for you. Nibel Costa gives a little bit of an update in the background of what is going on there.

It has been two weeks since this devastating explosion took place.

We have walked the streets, saw the damaged building, visited the injured and the homeless. And every morning we realize how difficult this situation is and how heavy the load is.

[17 : 19] We thought as Lebanese, we are resilient. But this time, we cannot be resilient because we are tired. However, we always remember, we are the children of hope.

We are the children of resurrection. And every time, He holds us up and gives us strength to continue this journey. In the middle of this, we're experiencing something new.

We're experiencing God doing what He does best, redemption. Life is coming out of something that's very bad and very evil. We're seeing the church that's springing into action, the church that was silent and in hiding during the civil war today.

They're on the streets being the hands and feet of Jesus. We're seeing transformation happen at ABTS where everyone is helping and caring for the people that we're hosting, families that have become now homeless.

relationships are being built and God is being glorified in the middle of this. In addition, it was encouraging to see that churches come together to pray. Pray for the hurting the churches in Lebanon and the leaders of Lebanon.

[18 : 28] We are BBS students and we decided to come here to help the families that lost their homes in the huge explosion. We are arranging clothes, toys, towels, toothbrushes and everything the family needs and we are distributing food also and arranging food and giving it to people in Marm Khay, Jamaliyah, Latrafi.

We are not only looking into responding to the arising emergency needs from the Beirut explosion through food assistance, but we are also looking into responding on the long term with hygiene kits and winterization projects since there has been a spike in COVID-19 cases and many people have lost their homes and the winter is coming up soon.

In addition to that, we are currently doing minimal rehabilitation for homes that have been damaged, but we are looking into a more comprehensive approach for home rehabilitation to aid those who have been affected by the explosion.

CWAM has created a company box. This box contains 15 days worth of activities that help build children spiritually, plus helps them to reduce their stress and every day there is a challenge that helps us to follow up on the kids.

Although our hearts are broken, but our skilled therapists are still committed to continue serving the children in our community. We are currently preparing the playground with activities to help these children come, share their thoughts, enjoy some activities and express their feelings.

[19 : 56] We know that it's not going to be easy because what happened is big and traumatic, but we also know that our Lord is good and together we rise again. are■ He will hear the story of his ability.

He will hear the verses of his son, his Messiah did it. He did it. Nibel Costa said we are the children of hope, and indeed we are.

Indeed they have demonstrated that they are. What an example for us. If this doesn't give you hope, I really don't know what is. I get so excited when I see this, And this one example, what is happening in the world today because of their hope in Christ.

In the midst of crisis uncertainty, the Lord provided. He would be there, walk with them, and give them that what they needed. They could have concentrated on the uncertainty and the hopelessness.

And instead they prayed to our God and asked him what they should do. And they did it. They trusted. He would do it. Carry it through.

[21 : 19] Carry them through the tough times. It's not over yet. But a lot of positive things have happened for sure. They still walk with Christ in that. We do need to remember that God does work all things out for those who love him, who trust in him.

And he works to the glory of his kingdom. He does continue to give us strength, peace, and blessing. He's done it to Lebanon and he does it here as well.

One of the greatest characteristics that should be embodied, the Christian church and the Christian people, as we serve and act as servants, of giving and helping others, is this.

Helping to give hope to others. Numerous scriptures talk about this. Give, and it will be given to you. Give, and it will be given to you.

A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and runneth over, will be poured onto your lap. For with measure you use, it will be measured to you.

[22 : 26] God wants us to receive blessing. He desires that for us. We shouldn't give back. We shouldn't be expecting something in return.

What we should do is respond because God is good to us. As Christians, we do not have to look far to see the greatest example of what it means to help and to serve others.

We all know that Jesus Christ was that example. Jesus' entire life, although it was brief on this earth, exemplified the act of helping others when he touched the healing and the sick.

When he got on his knees and washed his disciples' feet. And when he laid down his life to give hope to those that didn't have hope. Since much of Jesus' life, ministry has dedicated to serve.

Because of Jesus' life and ministry, Since much of Jesus' life and ministry was dedicated to serving and helping others, it only makes sense that these characters should be also an important part of our lives and our ministries.

[23 : 42] Especially in uncertain times. There's another real big issue that's facing us today. And that's, of course, the virus. The pandemic. Corona. All the questions that we have and the uncertainty.

It's deadly. Am I going to get it? How long will it last? Will I be the one that gets sick? Here is one I have heard many times.

Why would God allow coronavirus to come upon this earth? We have enough to deal with. We didn't ask for it. We don't want it.

I can't answer that. I can't ask why the Lord sent it. But I can say he will use it to his glory. And to bring more and more people to him.

It's happening today. And I will say this. I am not sure about what I just said. I don't like that. Even for me, this is hard.

[24 : 48] This has been a hard time. I've always found my joy and privilege to serving the Lord in my ministry and along the way. But I must confess that I'm not very happy right now.

God knows that I'm a very sociable person. If you know me, I love to be with people. I love to have people around me. I am now often, many hours and a long time working in my home office, alone.

I'm on Zoom, many, many hours a day. Phoning and talking to people and talking to field staff. Engaging in a wonderful, meaningful way. But I'm not with people.

I'm not sure how that church can help with this. But they are. We're facing it as people. And that's why we're meeting today. We're still meeting. We're still seeking Christ.

We're still finding the hope and the caring that needs to take place. His faithfulness is true. And he will be glorified through this.

[25 : 56] Even though we cannot be together. It's painful. It's not easy. I have real hope in the church today. Here in Canada and around the world.

As God's people, as time has gone on, we have proven that we are there because Christ is with us. It's sometimes easy to blame and to get upset.

To react to the situation. But we as the church need to be the church in this time of crisis. I see the hope in those situations.

God is using each one of us. It's wonderful to see the church adapting. Looking at new ways of working and doing ministry. Being innovative.

Saying we're going to carry on as a church. We're going to step out with the love for our neighbors. For those in need. We're going to serve because we have hope that we can.

[26 : 57] We can be role models. By demonstrating good practices when they need to be done. I know that the church is suffering.

I know that there are many here even in Canada that say, will we ever open again? Let's continue to be that good example. Each and every one of us and then corporately together.

Be assured that God is with us. Like he is in Lebanon. Helping his people there.

Further the kingdom and bringing the good news of Jesus Christ. But more importantly. It's practical things. Even in the midst of uncertainty. Blessing.

Truth. God uses. CBM is partnering in about 16 different countries around the world.

[27 : 57] To many, many crises. It is only possible because of the churches. And people like you who care. Who care enough and significantly enough to help.

We say thank you. We say thank you because we're partnering together in that hope. And making a difference in the lives of those that we minister to.

We at CBM have had the privilege of having also to refocus. Many of our partners around the world to combat different situations have had to also respond in different ways.

I want to tell you that we actually are responding to COVID. And helping people through our partnership there. In Wuhan, China. Now we've had some people say to us.

Why would you actually concentrate back in Wuhan. Where that devastating virus has started. Or was started. It's because people there.

[28 : 59] Through the church. Through our seminary that we are involved in with our partner. Need our help. And need that hope. And I could go on with the list of things that are happening.

Some exciting things around Canadian Food Grains Bank. Which we are a part of. Has been able to match funding from the Canadian government. And food programs. And raising funding.

So that we can send it to places like the Philippines. Bolivia. Rwanda. And Wuhan. Not only to feed people. But to help them with the medical needs.

The schooling. And so on. So we have the privilege of being able to say. There is hope. In times of turmoil. And uncertainty.

So where does this leave us today? Great things are happening. We hope. I hope that this. Is. My hope is that you have been encouraged.

[30 : 00] Through a couple stories. Through examples. That you have heard. That you have heard. That God is certain. He is true.

It is good to see. And hear. How God is leading his people. Bringing them peace. Bringing them strength. And most of all blessing.

The church. His people. He brings it to them. What a great promise he gives us. Isn't it wonderful.

That we can say. God cares. Through this all. And that is our hope. My prayer is that you can say that today. Even in turmoil.

Uncertainty. Let us pray. Father. We thank you for your love. And grace. That gives us everlasting life.

[30 : 56] In spite of what we deserve. We do pray. That we are obedient. To the call. That you have placed on our hearts. To love. To serve.

And to do that to our brothers. Use us to help bring the peace. And the blessing. That is so desperately needed. In the world. Today. And thank you. For your reassuring words.

To us. Father. We pray now. Knowing. That these words. Are indeed true. That nothing frighten us. All things are passing away.

God never changes. Patience. Obtains all things. Whoever has God. Lacks nothing. God alone.

Suffers. Amen. Thanks for the opportunity. I. Would offer to you.

[31 : 51] That if you want to know more. About Canadian Baptist Ministries. I know that you have. Material there. At the church. I. Certainly can be reached. And you can go to our website.

Canadian Baptist. It's actually cbm.org. You can get my contact information there. If you want to talk to me. But there's some exciting things. That you can be a part of. That you'll be praying for.

And we would ask you to do that as well. Now let me give you the benediction. And send you forth into the world. Go out from here. As workers.

In God's upside down kingdom. Where the last are first. And the first are last. Where needs are met. In miraculous ways. And there is grace enough for all.

May the blessing of God. The love of Jesus Christ. And the presence of the Holy Spirit. Surround you. Sustain you. In these coming days. Go. In peace.