

COVID - How to Walk with God

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[0:00] Good morning, Kelly. Hebrews 10.23 is excellent as an encouragement to God's people. Thanks for that.! He who promised is faithful. And we're going to come back to that actually in a little bit.

Alright guys, it's been about two minutes. It's a little bit after 10.15 now. I see that more than 20 groups and households are on here. So we're going to get started.

So, good morning everyone. I hope that the Lord has blessed you this week and that you have found encouragement even in the midst of this trying time.

So I'm just going to give you a quick update on how Shoreline is doing, how we can be praying for one another and what's coming up. And then I'll bring you something from God's Word that I hope is an encouragement and a challenge to you.

So let's dig in. First, how is Shoreline doing? Well, as I've talked to our church family this week, more and more people seem to be feeling that they're cooped up right inside.

[1:08] And so for families, what that means is that there's a lot more life on life. For people who are on their own right now or in much smaller households, it feels a little isolated.

And so be in prayer for each other that our experiences of this quarantine are very different. And so the challenges you might be facing are different than what your church family is facing as well.

And so with more time spent at home, I know for my family, that means that there's more opportunities for us to be parenting and more opportunities for parents and children alike, both of us, to grow in patience.

And so to serve children, to serve parents especially this week, Shoreline bought last week a digital church license to Paul Tripp's parenting conference.

The link for that went out in a Shoreline email last week. If you didn't get it and you want it, please just go to the Shoreline website, hit the contact form and let us know about that. And nearly everybody that I spoke to this week mentioned feeling cooped up in the midst of the quarantine.

[2:19] And there's no denying that this is difficult. So again, will you please, you're going to keep hearing this encouragement from me. Reach out to your church family, right?

The biggest encouragement that I can give you right now is to be the church to one another, which means reaching out, phone call, a text, an email, a video call, whatever it is that you can handwrite a letter, right?

To reach out to one another to be the church. And so bear one another's burdens with each other. Pray for one another, either apart or actually over the phone with one another, right?

Be an encouragement to one another. And to help that, this week we've revised the church directory just as an update to facilitate more connection between our congregation.

So stay tuned this week to see how that's coming out, how you can get access to it so that you can continue reaching out to one another. And friends, someone reached out to me yesterday just to see how I was doing.

[3:22] It was a big encouragement to me. You know, there are a few ways right now that we can physically serve and help each other. But that moment of connection from someone who has the same Lord and belongs to the same body of believers is such an encouragement to me.

And I'm certain it is to our whole church family. So keep doing that. This week, I saw an article by, and if you are, if you're on YouTube right now, if you click down the description, there are a whole bunch of links that might be helpful to you.

One of those is an article by Alistair Groves. And if that name sounds familiar, he is the guy who led the marriage seminar at Trinity Baptist Church back in the fall. So some of you are familiar with his ministry, and he's the executive director of the Christian Counseling and Educational Foundation. Really awesome organization. Great guy as well. He wrote a few years back about feeling confined. The name of the article is Moms Stuck Inside, as he took over for a series of days as the sole parent of his children as his wife was traveling.

The article at first seems pretty elementary, but give it some time. If you feel cooped up inside, this might be a significant help to you. When he gets towards the end to the part of Christ, our Lord, sharing in our experience of confinement, I pray that you will be blessed and encouraged by that in the midst of you feeling constricted and constrained here.

[5:02] And so while we feel confined, we can also sometimes feel helpless. Like we can't really contribute to what's going on. We can't be of any help. And so trained elders and deacons are looking into opportunities to give and to serve locally and what that might look like for us as a church, even as we love and serve our neighbors by staying in this social distancing circumstance.

So stay tuned for details about that. We'll be giving you more information about it as the week progresses. And let us know if you're aware of opportunities for generosity or for service that our church family might be a good fit for in the days that are coming up.

Now, speaking of service, beyond our local area, Shoreline is making an impact nationally. And I'm just checking this real quick.

Okay. Our church budget contributes to the Southern Baptist Convention's cooperative program. Which this week donated more than 172,000 of the N95 medical masks, plus other personal protective equipment to local hospitals and medical facilities nationwide.

And so your giving at Shoreline is actually supporting all of those same things across the country. And so when you hear on the news anything from Send Relief or the Cooperative Program or SBC Disaster Relief, that means that your giving is currently making an impact across the nation.

[6:37] And so people at Shoreline normally give in three ways. One could be through online. One could be through your bank. You can set up an auto draft or an auto check.

And then others place your offering the giving box on Sunday. If you'd like to keep contributing and you normally give in the offering box, go to Shoreline.com or ShorelineCBChurch.com.

So that should give you the links in the description of this video as well to get set up with another giving option. And if you're in need right now, on the flip side of that, well, please let us know so that we can serve you.

Shoreline has a benevolence fund, a church family to lift you up and serve you. So please let us know if you're in need. Now, speaking of needs, here's how you can pray for your church family this week.

First, as I've mentioned already for families, those who are constrained together right now, who are feeling the need for growing in patience. Will you pray for the families at Shoreline that they grow closer through this circumstance, not tear each other apart?

[7:42] And for those who feel isolated, will you pray that the Lord is a present help to them in this time and that so too would be their church family? Pray for your whole church family to learn patience and dependence on the Lord in the midst of this confinement season.

Pray for the families that are expecting children. We have several families at Shoreline who are expecting children. And this is a very, this is a frightening time to give birth and to welcome little lungs into the world when a great respiratory illness is sweeping the land.

So please pray for the comfort of those families. Please pray that those families would have safe and healthy deliveries. And pray that our church family would be a support to them in this time.

Pray also for those who are serving in the medical community. There are several healthcare workers among our church family and extended past that. We know many. Pray that the Lord would use them as not only to serve our country and our community to heal this disease and prevent its spread.

But also those who are Christians among the medical profession would show a kind of hope and joy that is not typical among the epidemiological community there.

[9:05] And so these are some of the needs that you can be praying for. So let's go to the Lord in prayer right now before we jump into hearing something from his word.

So Lord, we ask today, Father, that you would be a present help to those who are confused and going through hardship.

Father, Lord, that you would be a present help to those who are confused and going through the Lord. Father, that you would be a present help to those who are confused and going through the Lord. Whether that's feeling isolated or feeling that sort of cabin fever. Father, I pray that you would be a strong and wonderful comfort to them, to us all.

And Lord, will you help us to be a church family to one another? Father, that for those in our extended circles who are not Christians, Lord, that as we're talking with them on social media, that as we are calling them, emailing them, Father, that we would be beacons of hope.

That we would not lose hope, Father, and that we would offer it to others. Father, as we approach the truths of your word today, Father, will you help us to learn and to grow, to grow closer to you?

[10:24] And Father, that this would be a service to our joy and to your glory as we grow closer to Christ and into his image. We pray all these things in his name.

Amen. I'm just going to check my settings real quick before we keep going. Looks like we're all set. Okay. Last week, we talked about living by faith and not by sight.

Right? And what that meant was humbling ourselves before the Lord and saying that God can see more of our situation and that he can see better than we can.

Right? And so that we are going to walk by his guidance, not by my own perceptions of what's right or wise or good. Right? And so I'm going to walk in light through a hardship or through a temptation or anything like that in light of what he has declared to be true.

Not by what I can make sense of by my own perceptions in any circumstance. And so walking by faith, that means that when looking for wisdom, I humbly say that my own wisdom, I know because of his word and also by my experience, right, is colored by my own foolishness.

[11:37] And so instead of walking by my own wisdom and trusting in myself, I'm going to walk in the light of his word. Right? When we are looking at temptation, walking by faith means humbling myself and saying, right, my heart sees pleasure and gain from this, this temptation to sin.

Right? But he, I know he sees more and he sees better. He sees truly. And with holy eyes, not sin stained eyes. Right?

So I'm going to trust him that holiness is better than what my heart is desiring in this moment. And that when things are uncertain and hard, like they are in the midst of a pandemic right now.

Right? When the news reports are grim and when my own fears are morbid and all the forecasts are just downtrodden. Right? When the forecasts are downcast. Right? When that's what we can see, the walking by sight.

Right? We look to God and what he says in his word. And we trust him that he is sovereignly ruling the world, that he is wisely governing all things.

[12:43] And that though we have grave concerns. Right? In this life, our lives are hid with Christ who has conquered the grave. Right? And so last week, that's what we talked about when we talked about walking by faith.

And this week, we're talking about its twin. Walking with God. So walking with faith, walking by faith, now to this week, walking with God.

As an introduction to that, this week, as I've spoken with our church family, as this pandemic is dragging on and on, I'm hearing more about people's fears.

And not just about fears of coronavirus itself, but how the coronavirus is shaking other things loose as well. Right? Normally, when life is more stable, many of us can keep a lot of our fears in check. Right? Because we can just kind of keep everything nice and contained. But the instability of a pandemic and quarantine destabilizes everything. Right?

[13:46] And it unmasks other fears that are below the surface. Right? And so what do we do when fears rise? What do we do when we're hurting? When things are uncertain like this?

My prayer is that you won't mask it with distractions or allow fear to run rampant in your life or turn towards anger. But that you would approach this biblically in the light of the gospel.

Well, how? Right? As in many circumstances, the Psalms are a wonderful guide to us. Right? The Psalms give us an example of how God's people work through all the circumstances of life.

Praise, thanksgiving, hardship and fear as well. Right? And what do they instruct us to do? Well, if you look at Psalm chapter 1, the introduction of the Psalms, the one that sets the whole tenor and tone of the Psalms.

What is it about? It's about the man who dwells on the law of the Lord, who recounts and recalls his word, his wondrous works and his instruction and his promises.

[14:51] Right? We look at God's word. Right? And see that how God has revealed himself. We see the testimony of who God is, what his very nature is.

And as we do, as we contemplate these things, we find a comfort to our souls. We, friends, we belong to this God. Right? So as Psalm chapter 1 says, on his word, meditate day and night. And that's what Christian meditation is. It's different than the Eastern varieties of meditation, which really are clear your mind. The Christian version of meditation is actually filling our mind with the things of God as an anchor for our soul.

So I'm going to read here. So as Philippians chapter 4 says, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely is commendable.

If there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. As Colossians 3 says, if then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

[15:57] Set your minds on things that are above. Right? What a help we have in Christian meditation. In setting our minds on the truth of the word.

In contemplating the glory of God. And as I've spoken with our church family these past few weeks, I've heard what you're doing. Right? Or asking prayers that you would do this very thing.

That you would be meditating and resting in the truths of scripture. And so I'm really excited to know that mostly our church family, as far as I can see, we're doing a good job at least seeking to meditate on these great truths of scripture.

Our congregation seems to be doing well with filling our hearts and our minds with the truths of God's word. And so I want to help us as a church family take the next step.

Right? Because while the Psalms are filled with meditations on God's goodness and his glory, that's not all the Psalms do. Because meditation isn't an end in itself.

[17:02] It's a profound help that grounds our souls in truth, in beauty, in God's word. But if we stay there, Christian meditation can become theoretical, abstract, all in my head, a mental exercise.

And the Psalms are filled with wonderful truths about God. Again, meditation. But the Psalms are also filled with direct address to God. Right?

Living our lives before the face of God. And so we are commanded to contemplate all the truths of the Bible, but we're commanded not only to remain inside ourselves.

We're meant to get out of our own heads and into the throne room of God. Right? The Psalms don't only declare and meditate on the goodness of God.

They also go straight to the God about whom all those things are true. Right? And so that's the transition. Moving from walking by faith in all that we've learned and driven deep into our souls through meditation, into walking presently with our God.

[18:08] Right? And so meditating on God's word ought to drive us into his arms. Now, perhaps that sounds good to you, but how do you do it?

What are the steps? How do you actually, you know, take this and put it into practice in the life of a believer? So let's consider a truth and how meditation on that truth can turn into a life lived with God.

So here's a great truth. We know that our God is everywhere, always present. Right? The Psalms say, you know, where can we go to escape his presence?

He is everywhere. Now, we call that the doctrine of omnipresence. God is omni, all presence, present. Right? And so that's an amazing truth to consider on its own.

But what's more, for Christians, for his children, God is not only present at all times, but he is present as our father, prompting us by his Holy Spirit to cry out to him as father.

[19:14] Now, we can contemplate the beauty of that. Right? God is so great. Right? He is everywhere. We can't escape his gaze. And he's so good.

There's nowhere I can go where my father does not see me and isn't present with me and is not there as my comfort. Right? And as we consider that, we can find our hearts are warmed by it. That's meditation. But it hasn't come to fruition until we actually cry out. Until we actually run to him and say, our father in heaven, hallowed be your name.

Right? Think of parenting in an earthly sense. Parents, your children turned you in need a lot. Right? You're with them. Right now, it feels like you're omnipresent with them. They're not going anywhere and neither are you.

You're always on top of each other. You feel that way. Well, they have needs and you're with them. And so they run to you. Right? They need instruction. You give it to them. They need comfort. You give it to them. Having an ever-present heavenly father isn't different than that.

[20:22] You need wisdom. Ask for it. You need instruction. Go to him in his word. You need comfort. Ask him for it. Right? Live like you know this promise never to leave or forsake you is actually true.

Don't just contemplate it. Go to him because he's there. That's what it looks like to turn meditation on the things of God into walking with God.

So Christianity is never less than doctrine. But you can know all kinds of doctrine and still not have a rich fellowship with the living God. What is saving faith?

Do we entrust ourselves to a series of principles and doctrines? No. Now, certainly we believe doctrines and principles, right, from the scriptures.

But we entrust ourselves to a savior. Not simply to his philosophy and to his teachings. So take what you know about him and act in relation to him.

[21:27] Right? Do you know that he is a strong power? Then run to him for refuge. Do you know, Psalm 46, that he is a very present help in trouble?

Well, don't just find comfort in that fact. Find comfort in him. Do you know that he is a wonderful counselor? Then actually cast your cares on him.

For he cares for you. Ask him to reveal himself presently to your spirit as you walk through the valley of the shadow of death. These truths are all meant to propel us to actually go to our living God.

But it's been my experience. And you may have seen it too. That the people who are most Christ-like, who have the most peace, are not always the ones with the most biblical knowledge. But the ones who spend the most time with Christ in prayer. Because it matters what you do with biblical knowledge. Right? Do you internalize it?

[22:32] Good. Do you then, from that bedrock, run to your Lord? Even better. Right? And how is all of this available to us?

Friends, it's only available to us through the gospel of Jesus Christ. Think back to, we were talking about God's omnipresence before. The Lord is always present in all places.

But in what way is he present? Is he present as a friend or a foe? Well, it is only to Christians, to his children, that God is present.

Always as Father. Why is that? Well, the scriptures are clear. All have sinned. All have sinned. And all sin, whether we sense it or not, is a transgression of his law.

Is sin against him. And sin against an infinitely great God is infinitely great. And so the God who is everywhere present is present to every person as judge.

[23:36] Unless a peace is made. We will never have him as our Father. And that's what the cross of Jesus Christ is. Making, or God making that peace for us.

If we look to the scriptures, we can see in Colossians chapter 1, I'm going to read, Through Jesus, God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

Friends, God is always present. Everywhere. But the sinners, he is present as their judge. And Jesus, he's present to everyone as their judge.

And everyone has sinned, right? So Jesus, God the Son, in his cross, willingly took on himself the judgment that we are due. So that all who run to him for refuge will find mercy and grace. And the adoption makes it so that we can call him our Heavenly Father. We can be called children of God. And we can glory in that fact. And we can walk in it too.

[24:53] By going to the Lord as our Heavenly Father. And so friends, I pray that this has prompted you to not only consider the truths of your faith, but also that it is prompting you into walking with your great King and Father and Comforter and Counselor.

That you would find in him not only the proposition, the truth that he is a strong tower, but that you would actually go to him to be your refuge in this time. And so friends, let us not only be a church that knows the truth, but actually trusts in the truth and walks in it.

Friends, I hope that is a prompt and a help to you. Go to your Father in Heaven. Go to him. He is so good. You know these truths.

So know the Father. Know him. By his Son and through his Spirit. Let's pray. Lord, we're so grateful that you're more than a set of propositions to know about, but a God to know.

Oh Lord, you are so good. You are so great. I pray for that you would help each and every person who's on this stream today or watching it later as their quarantine schedule allows.

[26:15] Lord, that you would beckon us to yourself so that we might not only walk by faith, but walk with you. Lord, how great, how wonderful is it to be yours?

I pray that we would take you up on that. That we would walk with you through this strange hour in the life of our world. And Father, that as we do it, not only would we find great comfort and wisdom as we walk with you, but also, Lord, that we would offer it to other people.

And that others would notice something different about us. Because we walk with God. We walk with the living God. And Lord, I pray that that would birth fruitful conversations.

Conversations that draw other people into this living relationship with you, the living God. Father, I pray that there would be a great peace and comfort amidst our whole church family this week as we seek to live with you.

We pray all that in the name of Jesus Christ who bought us this opportunity by the blood of his cross. Amen. Well, friends, this is...

[27:45] Charlene doesn't really observe the church calendar as rigorously as some other traditions. But this Sunday is, for many traditions, Palm Sunday.

As we've been walking through the book of Matthew, we got to Palm Sunday back in November. And so if you would like to hear about what Christ did on this day during Holy Week as he entered the...

As he entered Jerusalem as the present king. As people actually reached out and touched him and waved the palm branches and laid down their coats. As you can get the link in the description of this video to go and hear that.

I hope that it's a blessing to you. I have so enjoyed preaching through Matthew's gospel. And I can't wait to resume doing that soon, I hope. Let's...

I love... This benediction. Now and always from Ephesians chapter 3. Amen.

[28:52] Now to him who was able to do far more abundantly than all we ask or imagine. According to his power at work within us by his Holy Spirit. To him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations forever and ever.

Amen. Friends, go in peace and go walking with your Lord and your Savior. Amen. Amen. Amen. desde desde