

A Special Crisis Message from Pastor Marv

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Preacher: Marvin Wiseman

[0 : 00] Good morning. This is Pastor Marv Wiseman welcoming you to join us for this week's electronic sermon. It isn't coming from Grace Bible Church. It's originating from my basement where I have set up an amateur recording studio. Due to all of our churches and most business establishments being closed due to the coronavirus pandemic, we just don't know how long this extraordinary time will last until things are able to get back to normal. President Trump expressed the hope that by Easter Sunday, what will be just two weeks away, we can reopen churches and other public venues, but that is not a set date. It's just a hope for date. So how long it will be until this virus has its way with us remains to be seen. I recall an interesting story that occurred back in New York City in the 1930s. It was when Fiorello LaGuardia, after whom the LaGuardia New York Airport was named, LaGuardia was mayor at the time. And as I recall, the daily newspaper was hampered by a union strike and the papers were not being delivered. So in what the good mayor thought to be a compassionate gesture, and due to the kids and adults not having access to the weekly comics that were always a big hit in the paper, his honor, the mayor did something unusual. He got on the radio station in New York City, and in the absence of the Sunday paper and the comic section, the mayor read and described the funnies to the listening audience. And he had quite an audience, because in the 1930s, radio was the vehicle of communication. And of course, this was just to the absolute delight of all the children who feasted on the comic pages every Sunday.

Well, I'm not a mayor, and I don't have anything funny to read you, even though I am a big fan of the comics page, and I usually read the funnies first, because it helps bring some sanity to the way the real news we'll read thereafter. So, but, no, there's nothing really funny about this.

This is serious stuff. As serious as any you can imagine. It's an article that I recently contributed to a local publication called On a Mission.

This quarterly magazine is the brainchild of a local Christian lady, Carolyn Hayes, supported and encouraged by her hubby, Pat. It is an extraordinary publication and has something to offer for everyone in the family.

[3 : 06] History buffs, I think, will especially appreciate the two articles by Dr. Ski Shaner, who is one of our local dentists, who just happens to be my dentist. And Dr. Shaner features two presidents in this current edition, the April-May-June issue called Volume 3 and Issue 4.

My stars. I thought I knew a little bit about George Washington. After all, I did major in history when a student at Cedarville College, that was back before the Earth's crust hardened.

Anyway, I'd never dreamed our honored, illustrious first president ever faced threats of impeachment. Are you kidding me?

George Washington facing threats of impeachment? Well, I don't know if George had his own personal Nancy Pelosi lurking in the House of Representatives or not.

But sure enough, well, you can get the publication and read it for yourself. It's available at several outlets. But those outlets are not really functioning now due to this crisis of the virus pandemic.

[4 : 24] So, I'm going to play the role of Fiorello Lagardia, but I won't be reading you the comic page of the Undelivered Newspaper.

This article is one that I submitted to this issue of On a Mission as the fourth in a series with the overarching title of what everything is all about.

And it's serious. It's as serious as you can get. I must confess, as I have pondered this series, what everything is all about.

And granted, it is an audacious undertaking, but it is one that needs an airing. And another oddity about the article is that, in a strange way, what everything is all about reminds me of all things of a

chess game.

And why that is so strange is because I don't even play chess. But I do know a little bit about it. I know it's a contest, kind of like checkers, only it's much more cerebral than checkers.

[5 : 42] Maybe that's why I don't play it. Anyway, I do know that chess is a contest made up of moves and counter moves.

Each player trying to defeat the other and win the game through strategic maneuvers of his chess pieces. And the idea is to hem your opponent in so that he has no more moves available. And I guess that's what they call checkmate. And the winner is determined. Hmm. Moves. Counter moves.

And more moves to counter the moves. That's it. That's what everything in this whole world is about.

It's all about moves and counter moves. In chess, the pieces or possible moves are in 16 pieces.

[6 : 44] Each player has two knights, two bishops, two rooks, one queen, one king, and eight pawns. The different pieces are limited by the moves and counter moves they can make.

So, what does that have to do with what everything is all about? Everything. Who are the players in this cosmic conflict, this ultimate chess game of the universe?

Well, there is the king, there is the adversary who heads the fallen angelic sphere called demons, there are the angels who are not fallen but kept their first position or their first estate mentioned in the epistle of Jude, and then there's you, and there's me, the humans who number worldwide in the billions and throughout the millennia multiplied billions upon billions.

The contest is afoot even at the present time, very much so. all players are actively engaged but many, perhaps even most of the humans, are unaware there is even a contest taking place.

But there is. And the revealing of that contest in its origin, its events and principal players, is what the Bible is all about.

[8 : 32] The book is a story from beginning in Genesis to Revelation and the ending. It's called the story or the drama of redemption.

Milton, the poet, referred to it all as paradise, paradise lost, and paradise regained.

Someone was heard to quip saying, I read ahead in this book, this whodunit book called the Bible, and I got back to the back of the book and guess what?

Jesus wins. So, all of the viruses and the negative and the hurtful and the terrible things that can and will come notwithstanding, we know how it's going to end.

by the way, do you know which side you're on? Well, here's the article that I submitted and I'd like to share it with you.

[9 : 44] It's called The Cosmic Conflict Begins. And I want to remind you, the reason I'm doing this is because the venues from which you could obtain this magazine are all closed and unavailable, so I'll be your mayor for the day.

So far, we have discovered why there is something rather than nothing. Revelation 4.11 says, Thou hast created all things, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

There we have it. Revelation 4.11 tells us why God was pleased to create all things and why he was pleased to do so.

We don't know, only that he was. And in and out of the eternal existence of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, these brought other beings into existence called angels.

We are not told how many were created, but believe it was a very large number. And these two were spirit, in essence, not material. They were created as volitional beings, endowed with a free moral will, allowing them to comply with their creator.

[11 : 02] It also meant that they were capable of defying their creator. Defiance would become a reality to one designated as chief of the angelic order.

His name was Lucifer, and he occupied an elevated status in the angelic hierarchy. In Revelation chapter 12, he succeeded in recruiting one-third of the created angels to align with him in rebellion against the creator.

And his name was changed to Satan, which means adversary. Those he recruited will later be known as demons.

all was spirit, including creator and angels. Nothing material existed anywhere, nor was there any need for materiality.

Fast forward then to our present sphere. Once again, solely because of God's good pleasure, the heavens and the earth were created and made of matter.

[12:14] A material earth would be needed to meet the needs of a different order of beings called humans. These, too, would be endowed with a spirit component.

But unlike angels, humans would have their spirit joined to a physical body. Thus, an intact human would consist of an immaterial spirit joined to a material body and their totality constituted a human trinity called the soul.

This means you do not have a soul, you are a soul. And like the angels created earlier, humans would also be endowed with volition and the power of moral choice.

They, too, could obey or disobey their maker at will. They would be provided a physical anatomy consisting of male and female differences.

These included the ability to physically conjoin and produce new humans like themselves.

Currently, the six billion plus humans that now inhabit the earth are the result of that conjoining.

[13:44] Other biological life forms would similarly reproduce after their own kind. And our overarching plot line, what everything is all about, continues to thicken.

Those original humans, the parents of us all, will not get far in their new existence on this brand new planet called Earth, before trouble will surface.

Big trouble. Earth-shaking trouble. Shortly after God pronounced the whole of the creation week very good, everything would come crashing down with a fall and a hurt that still permeates the entirety of the planet.

What on Earth happened? Well, remember Lucifer and his rebellion in heaven? He seeks to expand his influence and accomplishments wherever and whenever he can, and Earth will be seen as a pushover.

As part of Earth's creative order, God had delegated our first parents, Adam and Eve, to be in charge. They were specifically told to exercise dominion, or dominate, all of the created order.

[15:14] They were to function under only one restriction. In the midst of having an enormous variety of food, there was but one source God had placed off limits.

And it was called the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. And we know nothing of this tree or its fruit. And neither did Adam and Eve. But they were told that partaking of it would result in their death.

Apparently, it became overly tempting when aided by another principal player, namely Lucifer or Satan. So Adam and Eve ate of it in obedience to the creature, rather than refusing to eat in obedience to the Creator.

Everything changed. Everything. For Adam and Eve, innocence was gone. Guilt set in, followed by fear, followed by hiding from the one they disobeyed.

Spiritual death was immediate. They became separated and hid from the one they disobeyed. The seeds of physical death were also activated in them and would result in their physical demise later.

[16:39] Ours too. The animal world changed also. Dominion over them was gone. Even the vegetable world changed.

Weeds, thorns, and thistles seemingly came from nowhere, requiring man now to toil by the sweat of his brow to bring forth fruit from the earth.

Besides death, both spiritual and physical, being so far reaching for all, it was also their loss of dominion and authority over earth that has so severely impacted the whole of humanity.

In much the same way that Esau forfeited his birthright to Jacob for a bowl of soup, Adam forfeited dominion over the earth to Satan for the fruit from that tree.

Satan is in charge now. You have suspected right along, have you not, that all is not well with the planet?

[17:48] Christ himself acknowledged Satan's rule in John chapters 12, 14, and 16 by calling Satan the prince of this world.

Paul, the apostle, calls Satan the god of this world in 2 Corinthians 4, and to those, 1 Peter 5, where Satan is said to be walking about as a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour.

Having deceived and cheated Adam as God's original owner-operator, Satan soon got right down to business, and the business in which he excels is in sowing seeds of conflict and confusion in concert with the now fallen natures of Adam, Eve, and their posterity.

Wicked fruit soon shows up in Cain, the first human born to our parents. He murdered his brother Abel. Fast forward a millennia or so, and God will find it necessary to destroy the entire planet and start over.

So, given all the foregoing failures, what options were open to the Creator? only two appear. Option number one, God the Creator could just allow the death sentence to remain a permanent reality, excluding man forever from his presence, and it would be perfectly just and within his rights to do so, as the Creator.

[19 : 44] or option number two, God could devise some provision whereby man's moral failure and disobedience could be removed, thus no longer being a barrier between himself and man.

But what would that be? the problem was magnified by his very nature and character, that is, God's nature and character being holy, utterly righteous, and removed from evil.

So, to merely overlook man's violation would necessarily compromise God's own moral integrity and sense of justice.

Fallen, sinful humans simply do not possess the moral capital that could satisfy God's righteous standard.

Not even close. Many of you readers or listeners to this already know the answer to this, don't you?

[20 : 56] And for you, the next issue of On a Mission will show it to be utterly glorious all over again. And for any who do not now know it, it can make all the difference in the world to you.

Not only in this world, but in the next also. You will see. And we will have to wait for the next edition of On a Mission to come out before you can see what we're talking about there.

But, admittedly, this is a different message, but admittedly, we are living in a different time.

We have never been here before. Don't quite know what to make of this virus thing. If Satan, as the scriptures says, is one of the players and he has a certain amount of latitude, that is, whatever latitude God is willing to give him, and by the way, you will find the best example of some of the dealings and activities of Satan in the book of Job, and I would encourage you to read it, because it really spells out the existence of evil, man dealing with evil, God's supremacy and God's sovereignty in connection with the whole package of good and evil, which, of course, remains one of the big conundrums of the whole universe, and it, of course, is also one of the major stumbling blocks for humanity, being able to accept a loving and gracious God, because the reasoning goes, quite understandably, if God is supposed to be all-loving and all-powerful and all-good, then why, pray tell me, is he content to put up with all of the evil that is in the world, all of the injustice and corruption and death and disease and hypocrisy and wars and conflicts and cancer and everything that goes with it?

you know, if I had the ability, if I as a human being had the ability to eliminate all of those negative, hurtful things, I would do it in a heartbeat.

[23 : 15] But I certainly don't have that ability, neither do you. But God does. so why doesn't he end it all?

Well, perhaps the most concise answer that I can give you is that that is precisely what God is about. But he is about doing it his way and in his timetable.

And that's what we have a lot of problems with, because we want results and we want them yesterday. today. And our thinking, which most of us would be very willing and very eager to impose upon God and his thinking if we could, would be to resolve these kind of issues pronto.

God has a plan and it's right on schedule and he's not a minute early and he's not a minute late and he works all things after the counsel of his own will. And do you know what he wants from you and from me?

Our trust, our belief, our confidence in him. That's all. More than anything else, God wants to be believed. And as you traverse through the scriptures, it becomes very apparent that this gigantic chess-like game of move and counter-move throughout the universe is taking place.

[24 : 36] And we don't know but what this coronavirus is, just one more move. And I'm not saying that the devil is completely behind it, but neither am I saying that he isn't. It may be just one of the moves that will be met with a counter-move and guess what?

That will be followed with another move and another counter-move and then that will be followed with another move and another counter-move, all in accordance with the combination of the players that we have mentioned in this great ongoing conflict.

But the time is coming when the curtain will come down. And the last couple of chapters of the Revelation describe that.

Meanwhile, we are in process and God is in control. Even though at times it may cause us to wonder whether this is so, he really is and he really wants to be trusted.

So, as your pastor today, I just want to remind you of the fact that we live and move and have our being and serve at his good pleasure and there is no way that that can be improved upon.

[25 : 50] So, just relax coronavirus or whatever it is that comes knowing that our Heavenly Father is aware and he cares and he works all things after the counsel of his own will.

and if you want to be one of those who has peeked back to the back of the book like most Christians already have, we know that Jesus wins. And the question is, are you on that winning side?

Would you pray with me please? Father, we are truly grateful for what you have been pleased to reveal in your word because apart from it, we would have nothing but questions.

And even though we still have some questions, we also have the answers that are most important which you've graciously provided, how that God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself.

How grateful we are for that truth and we pray that you will allow us to simply rest, relax, be at peace, confidence and trust in you that you really do do all things well and you know what you're doing no matter what, even when it hurts.

[27 : 03] Bless you for being the God that you are in the name of our wonderful Lord. Amen. It is our plan, I suppose, to have another similar session next week.

I do not know whether we will be having church or not, but my guess is that this thing may be prolonged and we'll keep you advised on a week by week basis, but for right now, tentatively, I guess we'll probably have another electronic session one week from today right here from my commodious basement.

This is Pastor Marv Wiseman saying, may the Lord bless you. Sire, let's pray. Now, thank you for the understanding of our schedule and my proposal for Thank you.