

## HIPC Happenings – May 2020

**Thoughts from Rev Brad:** Recently, our world has come to face a terrible menace in the form of COVID-19. All around the world, public spaces such as schools, stores, hotels, restaurants, and churches have been shut down; some stores have limited the purchase amount on certain items; and travel restrictions have been put into place. While many are being forced to work from home, others are being forced to still go into work at general merchandise stores, restaurants that have carry out/drive-thru capabilities, and places of health care. The date of “reopening” our country seems to keep getting pushed further and further back with talks of large public gatherings (e.g. concerts) not being allowed until Fall 2021. In short, our world is facing a hardship unlike anything many (if any) alive can remember, and we are left wondering “Why is God making/letting this happen?”

In light of being asked this question by some and seeing others trying to explain this, I thought it best to answer this question to the best of my ability. First and foremost, though, let me emphasize that I don’t know. I have thoughts and beliefs, but in terms of actual knowledge, this is one of those things that is simply beyond actual “knowing” for any human. Therefore, take the following list of explanations as you will.

1. **This is *not* God punishing us.** Though Fred Graham and other ultra-conservative pastors are pushing this theory, this theory is not biblically-sound. John 3:16-17 tells us our God is a God of Love, one who loves us so much that He sent His only Son as the ultimate sacrifice for the purpose of redemption and reconciliation. We see this reflected in 1 John 4:7-10: “Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. God’s love was revealed among us in this way: God sent his only Son into the world so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.” Such a loving act is not the act of a wrathful God and one who wishes to punish, but rather, one who loves and wishes to forgive.
2. **God is using and will use this time to accomplish great things.** For example:
  - a. **God will heal Creation.** Already, as a result of the drastically decreased amount of travel happening, many CO2 and other greenhouse gasses have made a significant drop to WWII levels, and the ozone layers is starting to heal. Cities that have been covered in smog for years are seeing that smog clear up for the first time in decades.
  - b. **God will heal our relationships.** With the decrease in face-to-face conversations and human contact, humanity as a whole is rediscovering the value of relationships. So, there is a possibility that, once this pandemic blows over, we as humans will be closer and less attached to our technology.
  - c. **Humans are learning good hygiene.** If absolutely nothing else, we as humans are learning good hygienic practices such as washing hands, using tissues to wipe eyes/nose/mouth, self-quarantining when sick, etc.

In the end, we need to be asking not “Why is God doing/allowing this?” but rather, “What good will God use this situation for?” Ours is not a God who punishes mercilessly or takes pleasure in such pains as we experience. Ours is a God of Love, one who meets us in our pain/suffering and walks through our “valleys” with us. Our God is not far off watching this world unravel, but rather, is here with us, helping us through these tough times. This is the belief I hold onto regarding this situation, and hopefully this explanation helps revive hope in you all that “this too shall pass.”