

Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> September 2020

Dear Members of our Church Family,

Our Government has now made it clear that no more than 6 persons should have a gathering indoors or outdoors, for instance in the garden. This will be enforced by COVID-19 Stewards and the possibility of people getting a levy for breaking the law is serious. Testing and tracing contacts, are also being highlighted as key areas in the fight against Covid-19. Although the programme of testing is under stress at the moment, with long waits and people been asked to travel over a hundred miles away to have a test done at some testing centre, going forward, marked differences will be seen that makes 2019 a different year compared to 2020 and for that matter 2021 looking at the way we do things such as meetings and church services. We pray that we may hold the right balance between how different people handle their experience of seeing the effects of COVID-19.

For Christians and non-Christians, the uncertainties that we face as a result of the coronavirus is unprecedented in recent history. The fact that this is a global pandemic makes it unique. We cannot help but notice that infections have been reported in different parts of the world as it spread to over 180 countries out of 195 countries.

Unfortunately, whilst people in these countries may be under threat and uncertainties of COVID-19 we continue to ask, where is God in this or how are Christians dealing with this time of need? Recently I read the narrative about Job, a descendant of Esau, who God allowed to experience destruction and sickness as a test but the testing was so severe and unbearable for his wife, that his wife advised him to curse God. Yet whilst bearing the material loss, sickness and shame, Job recited the phrase 'Blessed be the name of the Lord' (Job 1:21).

Addressing his wife, Job made the argument that; after we have received good things, prosperity, health and wealth from God, should we abandon God when we discover that we have a need (Job 2:10)? God our provider of wealth is also our healer in times of sickness. Assuming we cannot be as perfect as God, nor wiser or more generous than God; we may be urged to seriously caution ourselves not to believe that we are right and blameless, whilst we blame God for our troubles. After any failure of material goods, or human health, like Job, may we consider that there is a more final or ultimate loss, which is the loss of our breath? At which point we may caution ourselves and even at the face of material deprivation or sickness, declare that we have a redeemer (Job 19:25).

The scripture for last week's meditation "Matthew 18: 21-35" demonstrated how Jesus brought salvation on a daily bases as we are forgiven for our sins and we are expected to forgive others who sin against us. During the Sunday Fellowship hosted by Walton Methodist Church at 4.00 pm. The Revd. Barrie Tabraham preached on this text and cited the point that the Apostle Peter wanted to establish the number of times that one should forgive another person. He cited that from the Jewish tradition the practice was to forgive up to four times a day, Peter's question increased that to seven times a day. But Jesus made it seventy times seven suggesting that as much as you can count just forgive. I wish to challenge us as Christians by asking that we forgive the next person once a day. And I invite you to calculate the peace that we may

experience in the world, in our marriages in our churches and so on. Next, calculate how many times you often asked God to forgive you, and then kindly match that number with the times that you forgive one another?

Next week's scripture for meditation is "Matthew 20: 1-16", please spend some time reflecting on this passage and let us see if we may understand God's application of grace towards the relative needs of ourselves and others. May we remember to be humble at the face of trials and in times of need. From Job's narrative, we may learn that trials sometimes bring us victory and stronger spiritual wisdom to truly know God. May we remember that as long as we have our breathe, we may continue to hope and trust in the righteousness of God even through COVID-19.

Sincere regards,

Sydney Samuel