

# The Coronavirus and the Blessing of the Curse

## Genesis 3

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*Video and audio versions available online:*

<https://relentless-love.org/sermons/the-corona-virus-and-the-blessing-of-the-curse/>

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*This document was prepared by Heather Eades using Peter's notes and the video version of this sermon. If you encounter any significant discrepancies or errors in this document, please let Heather know. Thank you!*

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## Prayer

So Lord Jesus, we thank you that you said you will never leave us nor forsake us. We confess that we've looked for other helpers. But we haven't found other helpers. You're our helper and you found us. So help us now, Lord Jesus, and I pray that you would cause us to preach. We ask this in your name. Amen.

## Message

Everything was good... and now everything is bad... so it seems. I watch CNN. On the right they have a banner with a couple of numbers:

- One that keeps going up—that's the number of folks that have died.
- And another that keeps going down—that's the Dow Jones Industrial average.

And I think, *"What happened? What the Hell is going on?"*

Many of you know Alan and Jennifer Parsons. Alan has been one of my best friends since we were about six. After we both graduated from CU, Alan decided to serve the Lord in Lesotho, Africa by building water systems for the last and the least. After two years, he returned from Africa, worked a lucrative job in California, and then, married Jennifer.

Soon, Alan and Jennifer both felt called to drop everything, and move to Costa Rica to serve the Lord as missionaries with Young Life. For over two years they lived in a little apartment with paper-thin walls. On one side, their neighbors partied into the wee hours of the morning; on the other side, a carpenter would fire up his power tools before dawn. The work was hard and frustrating at times; it often seemed futile, but it was a labor of love and they offered it to Jesus.

When Alan and Jennifer came back to the States, they had a layover in the Bay Area where I was a youth pastor at the time. So, we arranged for dinner at our house before they returned to Colorado.

I picked them up at the airport. It was great to see them; everything was great and we were happy. But as we drove through some of the highest-priced real estate in the world, they started asking about our life, our church life, and of course, my home.

Feeling ornery, I started saying things like this:

“God certainly has blessed us here in Danville... Alan, don’t you believe that God blesses those who are faithful to Him? —Those that know the good and choose to do it?”

Alan said, *“Uh, yeah.”*

“When we obey, he makes us prosper,” I said.

It’s the kind of stuff you hear in church all the time, and it’s pretty easy to find in the Old Testament.

Deuteronomy 28 · “If you obey. . . the Lord will bless you in the land that the Lord gives you. . . And the Lord will make you abound in prosperity.”<sup>i</sup>

So anyway, I said to Alan, “You know, Alan, I’ve obeyed. I’ve given to the Lord, and He’s given back to me.”

Alan said, *“That’s nice.”*

“You can’t out-give God, can you, Alan?”

He said, *“I suppose not.”*

Then I said, “Alan, the Lord God has given Susan and me a home.” —Meanwhile, I had gotten off the freeway a few exits early and was driving through a very nice area of multi-million-dollar homes.

When I spotted one gorgeous house with no car in the drive, I drove up, hopped out of the car, and headed toward the door saying, “Yes, God is faithful to those He loves. He keeps us secure in his mercy. The Jaguar is in the garage!”

Now hear me well: having a big house and nice car can be a great blessing. All good gifts come from God. But implying that those things are God’s payment to you because you’ve been obedient to him, that’s quite different.

Well, Alan and Jennifer stood there stammering a bit, trying to act nice, but I could see it in Alan’s face: Things had been good, but now everything was bad.

He was thinking:

*“Faithful! You want to talk faithful?”*

*“Where’s my stinkin’ house? Where’s my Jaguar? Where’s my security?”*

*“I did everything right and...,what the Hell?”*

Well, just then, getting concerned about alarms and security guards and stuff, I said, *“Oh, gosh. I’m sorry— I took a wrong turn. This isn’t my house.”* Then Alan said a bunch of bad words, and he began to hit me.

Well, I’ve just been thinking about Alan this week. I’ve been wondering if we’ve all been feeling a bit like him just before I said, “This isn’t my house,” and Alan wondered *“Well, where’s my house?”* Alan was relatively happy, and life seemed to be good, until I fed him a lie—but actually most of what I said was true:

- It’s true that we can’t out-give God.

- It's true that when we obey, God will bless us in the land that he gives us.
- It's true that for each of us, there is a house.

Those statements are true, but I strung them together in a false narrative.

Most all of the devil's statements in Scripture are true, but he strings them together in a false narrative, which twists the facts and turns them all into lies.

There is absolutely no doubt that we will all be experiencing some real tribulation in the coming days, but the surprise we feel and the questions we ask might betray the fact that we have believed a false narrative. And we might have even called that false narrative "the Gospel."

So we ask, *"What's wrong? Who's to blame? And, what do we do about it?"*

My friend Wade posted on my Facebook page: *"Is God in charge of this?"* He's saying, *"I know this is evil and you say God is Good... So if he's Good, he isn't in control... And if he's in control, he sure isn't good."*

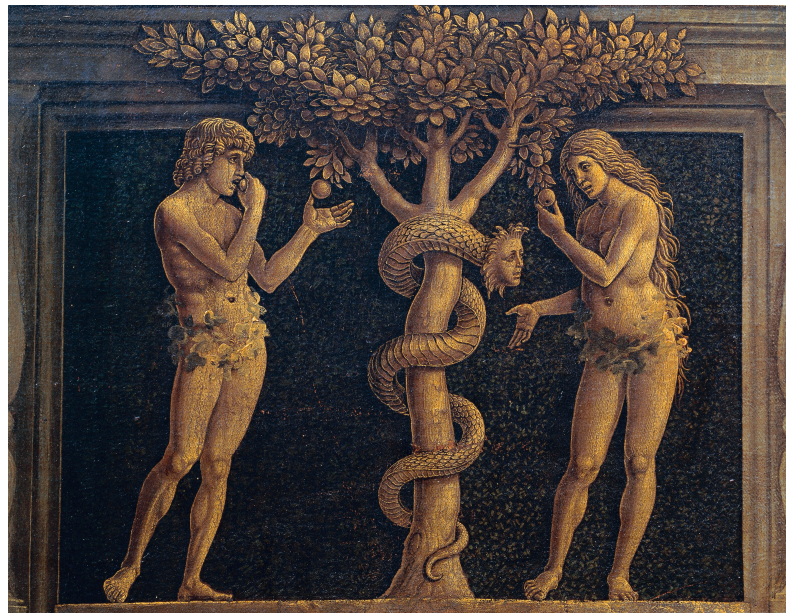
We want to know who's to blame.



- I've heard pangolin's are to blame...
- Or, Chinese people that eat pangolins, bats and snakes.
- Or, maybe some secret Chinese bio-terrorism program is to blame.
- Or, maybe stupid Italians who let the Chinese into their country.
- Or, maybe Trump... or could it still be Obama...?



- Or, maybe God—He made pangolins, bats, snakes, the Chinese, the Italians, Donald Trump and Barak Obama...He's the one that made Adam and Eve and left them in a garden with a deadly tree and an evil talking snake.



Others say, "None of that's important, we just need to know what to do now!"

Well, I don't know exactly, but it strikes me as fascinating that although everything has changed, *nothing* has really changed... except that we're asking these questions all together and at once. I mean we all seem surprised that we might die—either in the big way, or in a million little ways. And yet, we already knew that, didn't we?



Have we been asleep, dreamin' a dream that we'd never die? Maybe it's good that something is shattering our illusions and waking us up. And maybe it's good that we ask these questions together.

How we answer is dependent on one of two narratives—(A narrative is how we give meaning to all of the facts).

The first narrative is that the world is governed by immutable laws, like gravity, thermodynamics and the Ten Commandments. To live is to gain of those laws, knowledge of good and evil, and then utilize that knowledge to create and save your own life... build your own house if you will.

- Secular people often call that "The Survival of the Fittest."
- Religious people often call that "Righteousness;" they think it refers to your ability to obey God's laws and so build a life—a house if you will—a self, strong enough or fit enough to endure God's judgement, and so survive.

That first narrative assumes that we're all alive and preparing to die.

The second narrative isn't that the world is governed by a set of immutable laws and our ability to obey them. The second narrative is that the world is governed by our Dad who is telling our story with his Word; the story of our salvation that is our creation. He has laws, but they're all part of a story, a story of grace called the Gospel. It's revealed in Scripture but not only Scripture, for Jesus is the light that enlightens all men. He's the plot to the Gospel, and he is the Life. And that's not the survival of the fittest, but actually "the sacrifice of the fittest." And surprisingly, the Gospel doesn't assume that any of us are alive; it actually reveals something quite different.

You could call the first narrative, "I save, me saves, or we save."  
And the second you could call "God saves," or in Aramaic, "Yeshua."

So, "*What's wrong? Who's to blame? And what do we do now?*"

Genesis 2:7· On the sixth day of Creation, God formed "*ha adam*," humanity out of the dust of the ground.

In v. 8· He planted a garden.

In v. 9 · "The tree of Life was in the midst of the garden, and the tree of the knowledge of Good and evil."

In the beginning, we read about two trees in one place in the Garden of Eden. In the end, there is one tree in the midst of the garden city, the New Jerusalem. In the middle, we find one tree, flanked by two trees, in the Garden of Calvary. ("Tree" and "cross" are often one word in both Greek and Hebrew)

In the modern era, folks have been obsessed with finding the Garden of Eden. Orthodox Jews believe it was on the temple mount. And yet we've learned that we *are* the temple, and in the inner sanctuary, there is a garden. The garden is at the beginning of your time, the end of your time, and indeed, it's the edge of all your space and time. It's the edge of time and eternity, where all our time gets its meaning, it's *logos*.

In the beginning, humanity was with God but humanity didn't know it. We didn't know the Good and so couldn't find our Helper, our savior. And so, our Helper said, "It's not Good that the Adam is alone."

He split the Adam in two, making male and female. We'll discover that the ultimate Adam is Jesus, and we are, all together, his body and bride—that is "the woman, made from the man," (body broken and blood shed).<sup>ii</sup> And the woman, that will even give birth to the man... the promised blessing, "the seed."

In Genesis 3:1, it's still the sixth day of creation for not everything is good, and humanity has not yet known the Good, has not yet learned to love—that is to lose one's life and find it in another.

**Genesis 3 <sup>1</sup> Now the serpent was more cunning than any other beast of the field that the Lord God had made.**

**He said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" <sup>2</sup> And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees in the garden, <sup>3</sup> but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden..."**

It's interesting that she refers to "the tree" (singular) "in the midst of the garden..." God mentioned two trees, but both in the midst of the garden. It might have been helpful for God to have said, "By the way, the one on your left will kill you, and the one on the right will make you live."

But no, "...of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden," God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.' [And, of course, she doesn't know that's bad, or that the word of God is good.]

**<sup>4</sup> Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die."**

Isn't that interesting? We'll find that everything else the serpent says is basically true, but this is the lie, "*You will not die...*" And yet, according to the book of Hebrews, the Devil keeps us in lifelong bondage through the fear of death. God says, "You will die..." The Devil says, "You won't die," and then he "keeps us in a lifelong bondage," thinking we might die. Sound Familiar?

**<sup>4</sup> Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. <sup>5</sup> For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." <sup>6</sup> So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband with her, and he ate. <sup>7</sup> Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.**

- Clothes are a covering.
- A tent, that is a tabernacle, is a covering.
- A house is a covering.
- Self-justification, self-righteousness, is a covering.<sup>iii</sup>
- Your psyche, your ego, your resume, your false self is a covering.

We make coverings to protect ourselves. What are Eve and that first Adam protecting themselves from?

**<sup>8</sup> And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden.**

The Lord God walking in a body is named Jesus, and he is “The Life.” They hid from “The Life,” ...and I would think, that’s death.

**<sup>9</sup> But the Lord God called to Adam and said to him, “Where are you?”**

The Word of the Lord is the music that upholds all Creation. I suspect that the Lord sang, “Where are you?”

**<sup>10</sup> And [Adam] said, “I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” <sup>11</sup> He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat [literally “not to eat]?” <sup>12</sup> The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” <sup>13</sup> Then the Lord God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”**

This is a cover-up...

And that’s why we eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, isn’t it? That’s why we take the law to justify ourselves, to cover ourselves, and protect ourselves from the Judgement of God. And Jesus is the judgment of God. He is the Word of God spoken into the void, creating all things, including us.

This is a cover-up...

And both Adam and Eve are still taking from the tree. They’re taking knowledge of good and evil and using it to justify themselves. In the process, they’re taking *life* from each other, in an effort to save themselves, which only damns themselves and stops the river of life. They’ve become the zombies and vampires that we’ve been preaching about. They’re biting and devouring each other, taking life, rather than giving life.

They’ve become aware of the Good, but are trapped in evil; trying to take the Good to make themselves good, they only make themselves more evil. They take the Good that is the Life, who is our Lord, and our Helper. They want the Good, but are terrified of the Good because they know they’re not good. <sup>iv</sup> Because they’ve believed the narrative of the snake, “You are Salvation.” They’ve cut themselves off from “God is Salvation,” the story God is telling and the Life that God is giving.

They’re the walking dead, trapped in hell, and surrounded by heaven.

They are not the living, threatened by death. They are the dead, threatened by Life—the Life, the Light, the Judgment of God.

Are you threatened by the Judgment of God? Jesus said, “I know that the Father’s judgment is eternal life.”<sup>v</sup> (John 12:50)

So, what is death?

In Scripture, “physical death” really isn’t *death* so much as a metaphor for death, just as your body is a metaphor for The Body, and male and female is a metaphor for Jesus and us. Physical death really isn’t death... but in Scripture there are two deaths: a first death, and a second death, which is the death of death.

In Romans 7:9, Paul writes, “I was once alive apart from the law [that’s the knowledge of good and evil], but when the commandment came, sin came alive and I died.”

Paul thinks he was alive, like Adam and Eve, but died when he began to take knowledge of good and evil to justify himself, and protect himself from the judgment of God which is a decision called love, which is life.

The first death is hiding yourself from the Life. It’s cutting yourself off from your source. It’s like a body part that refuses to bleed.

“The day you eat of it you will surely die,” said God. And we’ve all been eating of it; we’ve all been trying to justify ourselves, save ourselves, and create ourselves, ever since what—the age of two or three? That day we became self-conscious, insecure, anxious and afraid, for we felt shame... and began to blame... taking life, rather than giving life. The day we began to hide from the Life, the Light, and the Judgment of God. The day we began to hide in ourselves—the very selves we seek to save.

Jesus said, “Whoever wants to save his life...” (It’s really weird that we modern evangelicals threaten people with death, and then ask, “Who wants to save his life?”) Jesus said, “Whoever [wants] to save his life, will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

- The first death is seizing control of “the Life;” the second death is surrendering “the Life.”
- The first death is seizing control; the second death is surrendering control.
- The first death is separation; the second death is separation from separation, which is communion.
- The first death is a darkness where men weep and gnash their teeth; the second death is a lake of burning love that is the life of God.

The second death is the death of death, which is eternal life and the Judgement of God.

The first death is darkness, shame and fear.  
The second death is faith.

Listen to Jesus:

John 5:24 · “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes (that means have faith, which means trust)... (*trusts*) him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life.”

See? Jesus thinks you’re dead, until you trust God’s Judgment, which is himself. For then you pass through judgment from death into life, eternal life, which is the death of death.



God's judgment *is* eternal life; God's judgment is to make you like himself—The one who never hides in fear and always loves in freedom.

Well, on the sixth day of Creation, which is also *this* day of Creation—(unless of course you are already perfect and finished in the image of God)—On the sixth day of Creation, Adam and Eve are hiding from God and still eating from the tree, trying to make heaven but sinking deeper into hell. They've been enchanted by an evil talking snake and the illusion of their own sovereignty, their own control—a false narrative.

**"The serpent deceived me, and I ate," said that woman.**

**<sup>14</sup> The Lord God said to the serpent,**

**"Because you have done this,  
you are cursed more than all cattle,  
and more than every beast of the field;  
on your belly you shall go,  
and you shall eat dust  
all the days of your life.**

**<sup>15</sup> And I will put enmity between you and the woman,  
and between your seed and her seed;  
He (this seed, "born of the woman") shall bruise your head,  
and you shall bruise His heel."**

**<sup>16</sup> To the woman he said,**

**"I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception (your toil in conception and pregnancy);  
in pain you shall bring forth children.  
Your desire shall be for your husband,  
but he shall rule over you."<sup>vi</sup>**

**<sup>17</sup> And to Adam he said,**

**"Because you have heeded the voice of your wife  
and have eaten from the tree  
of which I commanded you, saying,  
'You shall not eat of it,'  
cursed is the ground [*Adamah*] for your sake..."**

Did you notice that he didn't curse Adam or Eve, but he cursed the ground— the *adamah*, the dust of which we are constructed..

He cursed the earth, and their earthen vessels, their houses of clay. He cursed them *for* "their sake."

In other words, this curse is a blessing.

*"Blessed are the poor in spirit; of them is the kingdom of God."  
"Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."  
"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted."*

Poverty, weakness, and tears are part of the curse, aren't they? —The curse that is the edge of infinite blessing.

"We have this treasure in earthen vessels to show that the transcendent power belongs to God," wrote Paul.

So blessed are you crackpots, you shattered earthen vessels, for the curse reveals the blessing. Cursed are your houses of fig leaves, arrogance, self-righteousness, and fear.

**Cursed is the ground [*adamah*] for your sake, says the Lord.  
In toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life.**

**<sup>18</sup> Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you;  
and you shall eat the herb of the field.**

**<sup>19</sup> By the sweat of your face  
you shall eat bread,  
till you return to the ground [*adamah*],  
for out of it you were taken;  
for dust you are,  
and to dust you shall return."**

**<sup>20</sup> And Adam called his wife's name Eve, because she was the mother of all living.**  
(Isn't that crazy? You would think she'd be called the mother of death, but she is the mother of all living, literally translated "all living one.")

**<sup>21</sup> Also for Adam and his wife the Lord God made tunics of skins, and clothed them.**  
(I'm guessing it was the skin of lamb.)

**<sup>22</sup> Then the Lord God said, "Behold, the man (*ha Adam*, humanity) has become like one of us, to know good and evil.**

(That sounds like a lesson we're still learning).

**And now, lest he put out his hand and take also [or "again," *gam*] of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—"**

To live forever, eating of the tree as they'd been eating of the tree, would be an endless hell of darkness, loneliness, sorrow and fear.

*Do you suppose that God cursed the earth to save us from hell?*

*Isn't everything the Lord does a blessing?*

**<sup>22</sup> "And now, lest he [*ha Adam*, humanity] put out his hand and take also [or "again," *gam*] of the tree of life and eat, and live forever—" <sup>23</sup> therefore the Lord God sent him [*ha Adam*, humanity] out from the garden of Eden to till the ground [*adamah*] from which he was taken [To stare his own death in the face, so to speak]. <sup>24</sup> He drove out the man, and he placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.**

To keep us from taking the Life on the tree... And yet, we will return to the tree. We will know the Good and choose the Good who is the Life, our helper.

In the Revelation, John hears the New Jerusalem, and in it everyone sings. Then, he sees it coming down as a bride adorned for her husband. She's a temple and a city, and in the middle of the city is the tree of Life.

Rev. 2:7 · "...the tree of Life, which is in the paradise of God."<sup>vii</sup>

In the Gospel of Luke, the Life hangs on a tree at the edge of old Jerusalem at the end of the sixth day of Creation, the sixth day of the week and sixth hour of the day. He says, *"Father forgive them for they know not what they do..."* as if none of us knew good from evil the day when we took his life on that tree.

Flanking him, on either side of him, are two more trees and two other men. The first man reviles him and judges him. The second man trusts him and is judged by him, as he confesses: *We've done evil, but this man is good... He is the Good.*

To that second man Jesus says, "Truly, I say to you, this day you will be with me in paradise."<sup>viii</sup> That's Eden.

The cross is a curse: "Cursed is the man that hangs on a tree." It's a curse, and yet, look again and it's the greatest blessing. It kills us and sets us free.

"If we are joined with him in a death like his, we will surely be joined with him in a resurrection like his," wrote Paul.

Jesus didn't come so that you would never "lose your life."

Jesus came to help you lose your life, so you could find it in him. He came to help you lose yourself, your soul, your earthen vessel—that thing you think is life, but is actually a prison of lifelong bondage.

"Awake oh sleeper and rise from the dead and Christ will shine on you."<sup>ix</sup>

God is waking us up.

I think we've all been asleep in the illusion of our own sovereignty like that first thief that judges Jesus and tries to take his life. But Jesus turns us into that second thief that is judged by Jesus, receives his life, and becomes the image of God.



Figure 1 "Mystery of the Fall and Redemption of Man" by Giovanni da Modena (1420)

I think this is the fruit that was hanging on the tree in the middle of the garden. This is the Good in flesh and this is the life.

In the beginning, we all take knowledge of Good to justify ourselves and make ourselves in the image of God. We take knowledge from the tree, which is taking the life on the tree, which is the day we crucify Christ and the day we die. It's the day we think our life is our own and begin to build an ego... a false self.

God curses the *adamah* and casts us out of the garden in order that we'd die to ourselves, and come back to the tree in a new way... Jesus is the way. We ingested him when we took the fruit on the tree. He descended into us. He is our helper. He is "the way, the truth, and the life." That life is rising from the dead in us—it's a decision, a judgment, called "love."

When we come to the communion table, we confess that we broke his body and took his life... that's evil. We confess that we took his life, and proclaim that he gave his life, he fore-gave his life—that's the Good and that's the Life—it's the decision called Love.

So what is it that brings us to this table? And back to this tree? Isn't it an awareness that we can't justify ourselves, that our earthen vessel is cracking, that we are dust and to dust we seem to return?

It's an assault from the outside that cracks our earthen vessel that destroys this tent we call our home—that's the curse. It's an assault from the outside and it's a voice rising from the inside—that's the blessing: the Word of God rising from the dead within us. That's the judgment of God, and how God makes us in his Own Image.



...And God is Outrageously Happy.

Last Thursday I was feeling pretty sad; I'd been watching a lot of news... The news is a narration of the facts, and the underlying assumption is almost always the same:

*We're alive but all threatened with death.*

*So, we must take this knowledge, this news, and save ourselves.*

At lunch, I went down to the basement to ride our exercise bike. But instead of the news, I decided to do a YouTube search for: *"Italians singing on balconies."* I never got to the news because I was mesmerized by a half hour of stuff like this:

Video clip: Italians Singing on Balconies, YouTube video clip (2020)

*Scene shows an apartment building in Italy with people out on their balconies.*

Subtitles on screen      Quarantined Italians are taking their social life up to another level...on their balconies. These residents in Agrigento are singing and playing together a very popular Sicilian song...

*Scene changes to another apartment building with people on their balconies singing.*

Subtitle      ...While in Rome people sing the Inno di Mameli, the Italian national anthem.

*Other apartment buildings are shown with people out singing on their balconies.*

Subtitle      Many chanted the national anthem of Italy. And some were heard singing the national anthem of China. And...

Voice yelling      Thanks, China!

Another voice      Thanks!

*Scene changes to reflect more people out their balconies and windows.*

Subtitle      And people from Salerno sang the national anthem from their balconies.

*Scene changes to show people in China wearing masks shouting enthusiastically together as families.*

Subtitle      Messages of solidarity also came from China, in this video shared on social media.

*Multiple groups of friends and families wearing masks are shown, giving thumbs up, gestures of strength, and encouraging shouts.*

*Scene ends with Italian singer on his balcony holding his child, singing whole-heartedly in Italian.*

Isn't that something? I was weeping on the exercise bike. Italy has the highest death rate... and all the best singing.

And this is my point: No one did that in Italy, until COVID-19. They would've all yelled: *"Shut up, you stupid singer, just go to bed!"*

But this last week they came out of their apartments, out of their houses, but more importantly out of themselves...out of their insecurities, out of their egos, out of themselves, out of their fig leaves,

and they all began to sing...together. They asked the same question together, and together, they sang the answer.

Now I'm sure you may be thinking, *"Well, that's nice... for those that lived."* Well, the people in that video aren't the ones that truly lived. It's those that died and lived, that have truly come out of themselves, and truly begun to sing, such that they will never stop. They've lost themselves and found themselves in the New Creation where everyone sings, for everyone believes "God is salvation;" in a word: Jesus.

See? We're not the living preparing to die. We're more like the dead preparing to live. That's the Gospel, that's the story that God is telling, the Word that narrates... or should I say, "sings" all things into existence.

To refuse to listen is to trap yourself in nowhere and nothingness.

Your body may die, but if your soul hasn't died, if you still believe that you are your own salvation—you'll weep and gnash your teeth in outer darkness, until you finally surrender to the singer of the song who has descended into Hell in order to sing to you.

To refuse to listen is death... just death. But to listen is the "death of death." To listen is life, even now. Your body will die, but you won't die, for you've already lost your life and found it singing in the New Jerusalem. So, you'll die and turn to Jesus and say, "Thank you for delivering me from this body of death."<sup>x</sup>

The Lord will bless you in the land that he gives you...That land is an entire new creation. And you will obey him because he's giving you his own heart. And he will give you a house, in fact it's the same house as his.

2 Corinthians 5:1 · "...we know that if the tent that is our earthly home is destroyed, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. <sup>2</sup>For in this tent we groan..."

Why do you groan? You may say, *"Well, I'm not afraid of death; I'm afraid of the damage it will do to the economy, and the 401k that I just watched evaporate... ugggh! But I'm not afraid of death."* Well you see that is death... the death of death... the loss of your control.

"In this tent we groan," writes Paul.

There's no way around the fact that this hurts—this pandemic really hurts. But read Paul's story. It hurt. But why did he groan?

"We groan, longing (hoping: the groaning is hope) to put on our heavenly dwelling... while we are still in this tent, we groan," writes Paul. "...Not that we would be unclothed, but that we would be further clothed, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life." (2 Corinthians 5:4-5)

### **So, what the hell is going on?**

Hell is going on, and it's been going on since we took the fruit from the tree in the garden. Hell has been going on, but it's being swallowed up by the Life, which is the death of death. In other words, we're fixing to be born. "The whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now" waiting for "the revealing of the sons of God."<sup>xi</sup>

**So, what's wrong?**

The narrative is wrong. We've believed that "we save" and haven't trusted that "God saves."

**So, what's happening?**

The death of death is happening... eternal life is happening.

**So, who's to blame?**

Well God is to blame, for his judgment is Good. In fact, the only place to hide from his judgment is evil.

**So, what should we do?**

Well...Wash your hands; don't congregate in large groups; call your mom... but, first and foremost: Do nothing.

Some people think that's death, but maybe it's the death of death. I think God calls it, the Sabbath—the seventh day.

What you've done is built a self.<sup>xii</sup> To enter the Sabbath is to surrender that self. It's to surrender your house, your earthen vessel, your ego.

So, surrender yourself and listen for the song. Then if you want to... sing along. You're free!

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## Communion

On the night he was betrayed, he took the bread and broke it saying, "This is my body given for you." And he took the cup saying, "This is the covenant in my blood, poured out for the forgiveness of sins; drink of it all of you."

This is called communion for we commune with Jesus in his death and resurrection.

Satan has been keeping you in life-long bondage through the fear of death. So, let's get our dying over with right now.

Pray with me:

*Jesus, I give my life, I give myself to you. I give you my house, me ego, my body, my security, my control, my job, my relatives. I give my life to you and confess that it was yours all along. I give my life to you and thank you that you have always given your life to me.*

All your hope is in him. And all the hope that is in you... is him. Christ in you is the promised seed. Christ in you is the promised blessing. Christ in you is the hope of glory. That's what Paul says. "Christ in you, the hope of glory." So go ahead and moan. But only moan because you hope. And now, why don't you sing.

[Song: All My Hope by Hillsong]

## Benediction

Amen.

So sometimes people ask, *“Why such a long sermon? Why all the explaining? All this explaining, all this preaching, all this time, and you haven’t told me what to do! All you’ve told me is the story of what God has already done!”* Exactly. That’s because I just want you to trust him. Jesus is the judgment of God. He is the death of death. And until you trust him, you’re dead. So trust him. And you can start singing now. And if you didn’t understand the sermon, everything I just said is basically this: believe the gospel. Amen.

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> Deuteronomy 28:1, 8, 11

<sup>ii</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:8-12

<sup>iii</sup> I picture the leaves as coming from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil; I picture them as laws, knowledge taken to justify the self.

In the Revelation, the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. If it’s the same tree, the knowledge serves a very different purpose.

<sup>iv</sup> They want to learn about the Lord, to protect themselves from the Lord, so they don’t need the Lord—who is the Good and the Life.

<sup>v</sup> John 12:50

<sup>vi</sup> In the very place Eve will hope for the Good, she’ll experience pain, futility and frustration...

<sup>vii</sup> Rev. 22:2 “the leaves of the tree [are] for the healing of the nations.”

<sup>viii</sup> Luke 23:43

It appears the first man refused to die with Christ, and so even after his body died, he was still trapped by death... terrified to die to death, for he thought death was life.

But of course, that’s not the end of his story; Jesus is the end. And Jesus descends into the depths of the earth. The second man died with Christ, before his body died—he died the second death called faith, and so he lives.

<sup>ix</sup> Ephesians 5:13

<sup>x</sup> Romans 7:24

<sup>xi</sup> Romans 8:20-24

<sup>xii</sup> What you’ve done is build a self, that’s become a prison.  
What God is doing is setting you free