

You Can't Quarantine The Gospel!
Sunday, August 2, 2020 – Online Service
Scripture: Mark 1:35-42

Introduction:

We are living during some strange times and we continue to see more and more cities are taking drastic steps to contain the spread of the Coronavirus. Living Waters has taken drastic steps as well; we have cancelled our in-person gatherings for the immediate future and have gone exclusively to online ministry. That's what it takes to contain a global pandemic like the Coronavirus. But something we must remember, even if every Christian was quarantined to their homes for the next several months in the worst possible scenario ... you can't quarantine the Gospel. It is an unstoppable force that doesn't hurt, it heals; it doesn't destroy, it transforms; it doesn't bring death, it brings life. The Apostle Paul understood this well, at the end of his life he was stuck in a jail cell, chained to a Roman soldier waiting to be executed, in a final and ultimate quarantine of sorts, but he wrote these words ...

2 Timothy 2:9 [New Living Version]

9 And because I preach this Good News, I am suffering and have been chained like a criminal. But the word of God cannot be chained.

I love that last phrase, **"But the Word of God cannot be chained!"** That message was spreading and multiplying even while Paul was in quarantine on death row! In the same way, we may feel somewhat quarantined during this time of social distancing and house confinement for many. But the Word of God cannot be chained.

I believe that we are living at a time where the Gospel could spread faster and farther than ever before. The circumstances surrounding this pandemic can actually accelerate the spread of the good news of the Gospel. For the first time since 9/11, many people are turning to God, worried about death and concerned about this life and the afterlife. The COVID-19 Outbreak has dominated our landscape for almost five months, but I believe that God is about to cause a spiritual outbreak to begin to dominate our world.

Romans 5:20-21 [New International Reader's Version]

20 The law was given so that sin would increase. But where sin increased, God's grace increased even more.

21 Sin ruled and brought death. But grace rules in the lives of those who are right with God. The grace of God brings eternal life. That's because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done.

The COVID-19 virus is a great example of how the Gospel spreads from contact; it spreads from person to person. I can't help but think of **Acts 1:8** where Jesus told his disciples how the Gospel would infect the world (in a good way!). He said, **"you will receive power after the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem** (the single red dot), **and in Judea and Samaria** (the red covers a larger portion of the map) **and to the ends of the earth** (the whole map is drenched with the red blood of Christ!). So, praise God that the Gospel message is more contagious than the Corona virus. The difference is, that the Gospel doesn't kill you, it transforms you; it doesn't make you ill, it makes you well; it doesn't lock you down, it frees you up!

Question: So How Do We Unleash It? Answer: (1) We Pray! (2) We Care! (3) We Share!

Focused Text: Mark 1:35-42 [New International Version]

35 Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.

36 **Simon and his companions went to look for him,**
37 **and when they found him, they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!”**
38 **Jesus replied, “Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That**
is why I have come.”
39 **So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.**
40 **A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, “If you are willing, you can make**
me clean.”
41 **Jesus was indignant. He reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he said. “Be**
clean!”
42 **Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed.**

1) **We Pray!** *Jesus Set The Pace For Prayer.*

In **Mark 1:35-37** the Bible tells us...

35 **Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off**
to a solitary place, where he prayed.
36 **Simon and his companions went to look for him,**
37 **and when they found him, they exclaimed: “Everyone is looking for you!”**

Jesus was always escaping ministry opportunities to pray. He'd always be gone on some prayer walk somewhere and nobody could find him. In a sense he was quarantining himself so that he could spend time talking to God the Father before he dove into the hard work of spreading the Gospel. Here Jesus engages in a very specific kind of prayer called, “intercessory prayer.” The Latin word for intercession comes from two words that mean “I go” and “between.” In other words, an intercessor is a “go between” between the people we are praying for and the potential danger they are facing. When we pray for those who don't know Jesus, we come between them and the danger with a divine baseball bat. We intercede.

2) **We Care!** *Jesus Shows Us What Care This Looks Like.*

In **Mark 1:39-42** the Bible tells us...

39 **So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.**
40 **A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, “If you are willing, you can**
make me clean.”
41 **Jesus was indignant. He reached out his hand and touched the man. “I am willing,” he**
said. “Be clean!”
42 **Immediately the leprosy left him, and he was cleansed.**

How does Jesus show he cares? He cast out demons. There are literal demons and figurative demons that many people are wrestling with today, especially during this global pandemic! We are in a battle with an invisible, but very literal enemy, Satan and his army of demons. They are diligently seeking to deceive, distract, discourage and destroy us right now. If you really take a look at this world you can easily see that the forces of darkness are real. You can see that the Devil is doing everything in his power to stop us from loving Jesus and serving Jesus. In **1 Peter 5:8** the Bible says this about Satan, **“Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.”**

Jesus casted out demons and He healed the leper. The Bible had very specific instructions on how to deal with lepers in the Old Testament. They were isolated, of course because leprosy was highly contagious.

Note: We keep saying that these are unprecedented times, but seasons like this have occurred before. And don't tell me that the Old Testament is not relevant to today's world, just look at this passage in Leviticus.

Leviticus 13:45-46 [New International Reader's Version]

- 45 **Suppose someone has a skin disease that makes them 'unclean.' Then they must wear torn clothes. They must let their hair hang loose. They must cover the lower part of their face. They must cry out, 'Unclean! Unclean!'**
- 46 **As long as they have the disease, they remain 'unclean.' They must live alone. They must live outside the camp.**

Those infected had to wear torn clothing, have unkempt hair, wear a mask, and cry out "Unclean" when they were around those who were healthy. Can you imagine the stigma of that? But Jesus broke that protocol.

- 40 **A man with leprosy came to him and begged him on his knees, "If you are willing, you can make me clean."**
- 41 **Jesus was indignant. He reached out his hand and touched the man. "I am willing," he said. "Be clean!"**

Now, I'm not saying that you should go out and hug someone with the Coronavirus, but I am saying that you need to care for them and care for all of those who are afraid of it, which is pretty much everyone. Christians have set the pace for caring for the hurting throughout Church history. When everyone else rushes out of fear, Christians rush in out of love.

3) **We Share!** *Jesus Was Constantly Looking For Opportunities To Share.*

In **Mark 1:36-38** the Bible tells us...

- 36 **Simon and his companions went to look for him,**
- 37 **and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!"**
- 38 **Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come."**

Jesus had a greater purpose and that purpose was to share the good news of the Gospel with as many as possible. But how do we do that during a pandemic? Here's the great thing about sharing Jesus during a pandemic, people are open to talking about it! Once you're in a spiritual conversation, it's simple to share with them the Gospel message.

Dare 2 Share has been training teenagers for almost 30 years how to share the Gospel with their peers and they have developed an acrostic that has been shared millions upon millions of times with people around the world. The acrostic spells out the word, GOSPEL and tells the whole story of the Good News of Jesus from Genesis - Revelation.

- **God Created Us To Be With Him.**
- **Our Sins Separate Us From God.**
- **Sins Cannot Be Removed By Good Deeds.**
- **Paying The Price For Sin, Jesus Died And Rose Again.**
- **Everyone Who Trusts In Him Alone Has Eternal Life.)**
- **Life with Jesus starts now and lasts forever.**