

Prayer 10 — Prayer and Crisis

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Sermon Series	Prayer
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Introduction (Connection):

[Welcome everyone to the live stream]

Yes, this really is a live stream, though there's probably a 20 second delay.

Let me prove it. [Show phone]

It really is today.

[Invite to 2 Chronicles 20]

Beach Lake FM Church, I miss you guys, this is really a cheap substitute for what we get to have every time we gather together.

I am grateful that we at least get to do this.

I'm hearing really encouraging news that lots of you are getting a lot of calls from lots of you.

Our leaders here have taken on groups of you all and are regularly checking in on you through phone calls, so thank God for phones as well.

Tension:

From what I can tell though is that we have a wide range of views on the current world crisis represented in our church, from people who are doing spit handshakes to those who strapped on a fanny pack stuffed full of lysol wipes and they're giving themselves a lysol wipe down every 15 minutes.

Then we have those in between.

Regardless, we are in a worldwide crisis.

According to Oxford...

[Crisis - a time of intense difficulty, trouble, or danger](#)

And boy are we in that.

We have a virus that is 2x more contagious than the seasonal flu,¹ you can have it and spread it without even knowing it...

it is 20x more deadly than the flu², and those 60 and over, especially with underlying conditions, are the highest at risk.³

We have over 1.2 million confirmed cases with 65,652 deaths worldwide.

And even there, the numbers are still iffy since this is so new and it is developing so rapidly.

[In our church family](#) here at Beach Lake FM Church we have parents whose sons have tested positive for COVID-19.

We have health care workers in our church who are literally on the front lines of the war against this unseen yet violent monster.

We have members of our church family who have been laid off and are without jobs.

We are in a new kind of crisis, but crises are nothing new... in a fallen world waiting to be fully redeemed by God, we experience crises all the time.

A car accident puts your spouse in the hospital.

¹ <https://www.nytimes.com/article/coronavirus-vs-flu.html>

² <https://www.sciencealert.com/the-new-coronavirus-isn-t-like-the-flu-but-they-have-one-big-thing-in-common>

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/article/coronavirus-vs-flu.html>

A cancer diagnosis completely reshapes the routine of your life.

How are we to respond?

I was under the impression that last Sunday was going to be the last sermon in our series on prayer, but I also hold my plans with an open hand before the Lord.

So today we're going to talk about **prayer in crisis**, how the children of God can relate to God when facing a crisis.

I believe God desires us to go through this, not simply to help us with the current coronavirus crisis, but also to equip us on how to navigate every crisis we face in this broken world.

Exposition:

So we're going to look at a story today about a man named Jehoshaphat who was the king of Judah.

You can see chapters 17-19 in 2 Chronicles that things are going really well for all of Judah under this guys reign... and then crisis hits.

2 Chronicles 20:1-13 — "After this the Moabites and Ammonites, and with them some of the Meunites, came against Jehoshaphat for battle. ² Some men came and told Jehoshaphat, "A great multitude is coming against you from Edom, from beyond the sea; and, behold, they are in Hazazon-tamar" (that is, Engedi). ³ Then Jehoshaphat was afraid and set his face to seek the

Lord, and proclaimed a fast throughout all Judah. ⁴ And Judah assembled to seek help from the Lord; from all the cities of Judah they came to seek the Lord. ⁵ And Jehoshaphat stood in the assembly of Judah and Jerusalem, in the house of the Lord, before the new court, ⁶ and said, "O Lord, God of our fathers, are you not God in heaven? You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations. In your hand are power and might, so that none is able to withstand you. ⁷ Did you not, our God, drive out the inhabitants of this land before your people Israel, and give it forever to the descendants of Abraham your friend? ⁸ And they have lived in it and have built for you in it a sanctuary for your name, saying, ⁹ 'If disaster comes upon us, the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we will stand before this house and before you—for your name is in this house—and cry out to you in our affliction, and you will hear and save.' ¹⁰ And now behold, the men of Ammon and Moab and Mount Seir, whom you would not let Israel invade when they came from the land of Egypt, and whom they avoided and did not destroy— ¹¹ behold, they reward us by coming to drive us out of your possession, which you have given us to inherit. ¹² O our God, will you not execute judgment on them? For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you." ¹³ Meanwhile all Judah stood before the Lord, with their little ones, their wives, and their children."⁴

I'm going to intentionally neglect parts of this passage and only hone in on a few.

The kingdom of Judah is thrust into a massive crisis: vast armies, too numerous to count, from nations around them are coming in to drive Judah out.

What does King Jehoshaphat feel in response to the news of this crisis? Fear.

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), 2 Ch 20:1–13.

Verse 3 tells us the king is afraid... he's one of the more godly kings to rule over Israel, and he's afraid.

Friends... godly people aren't immune to fear; it's not as if the more like Christ you become the more invincible to fear you are.

Is it not reasonable for him to be afraid?

Listen to what I'm about to tell you: It's ok to be afraid.

Being afraid doesn't mean you have little faith or are spiritually immature.

There are things that I'm fearful of in all of this... I, at times, have been afraid for the health and provision of my family, the preservation and safety of you all during all of this.

It's ok to be afraid... whether you're a king or a citizen... in this story, all the kingdom came together.

Did you notice how in v. 13 it mentions that they all stood before the Lord, even their little ones, their wives, and their children?

The fear that accompanied this crisis wasn't something they kept their children from experiencing.

In the last few weeks I've received some amazing letters from some of the children in our church family.

I got this letter this week from a young man named Mason who said this: “Dear Pastor Scott, how are you doing in the spring? I have been praying for the sickness to stop soon. I just got chickens. We got 13 of them. See you soon, from Mason.”

Even though I want to so badly, it is impossible protect our kids from the experience of fear in this world.

Which leads me to another part of this conversation of fear... why is it that crises thrust us into fear?

Why are we so afraid in moments and seasons like these?

Ultimately, it's because we aren't in control.

We can't control reality, we are literally having to sit back and let things happen.

We spend so much of our days building up our lives and circumstances with the false impression that we are the ones in control, or to quote the English poet William Ernest Henley, “I am the master of my fate. I am the captain of my soul.”⁵

And we think that when a crisis breaks into our lives, that the crisis itself strips us of our control.

⁵ William Ernest Henley, “Invictus,” a short poem written in 1875 and published in 1888 in his first volume of poems, *Books of Verses*.

That is not it at all, however.

A crisis doesn't strip us of control, it's a sign we never had it.

Brothers and sisters, the reason this world and the humanity that fills it is in the fallen state it is in is because we tried to get control at the start of all of this and discovered we were terrible insufficient for the task.

In the Garden of Eden, we attempted to elevate ourselves to a false position of authority and control only to find out we break things when we do because we don't have the love and power and wisdom it requires.

We don't have control, we never did, and we fear what we can't control.

For everyone but the Christian, depending on your worldview, humanity is either at the mercy of a thousand different self-appeasing gods, one wrathful and just god void of love and compassion, or no god at all, just nature's course of survival.

But for the Christian, we are at the mercy of a just and merciful God; a God whose love is more fierce than the blazing sun and whose power is more mighty than the force of an exploding supernova.

So when I say "it's ok to be afraid," I want to follow that up with, "but don't stay there."

You and I as Christians ought not be defined by the fears we experience in crises; why?

Because we don't have to.

We can run and hide in the safe retreat that is God, where the fortress walls tower to the sky in God's strength, the blankets are warm with God's love and gentleness, and the food satisfies the soul.

That's exactly what Jehoshaphat does.

According to v. 3, he set his face to seek the Lord, meaning he gave all his attention and effort to going after God.

And he called all Judah to do the same, and so they do.

So the question I want to ask you, right now, when you're afraid... where do you run and hide?

I have three main action points I want to give to you today, brothers and sisters, and the first is this:

When crisis comes, seek God's face.

I'm calling my church family to seek God's face just as Jehoshaphat called his people to do the same.

We're going to seek God's face.

Some of you are running to the news scanning articles and stories just hoping for good news in light of all of this and finding none.

Some of you are literally hiding away in your homes and not just socially distancing, but socially isolating yourself fully from everyone around you as a protective measure.

Maybe you're hiding in drugs or alcohol to escape your fear for as long as the hit lasts.

Or maybe you're vegging out on tv series and movies because you're trying to keep your mind from thinking altogether.

No, seek God's face, seek to draw near to God.

Well what does that look like?

[Prayer](#); that's where we started this whole series on prayer with Prayer and Proximity.

Jehoshaphat has all the citizens of the kingdom gathered together and he prays!

I'm wondering if you all remember a little popular book that came out two decades ago called *The Prayer of Jabez*.

I'm sure *The Prayer of Jehoshaphat* wouldn't have done so well, but probably would have been better for our souls.

Did you notice how he structures his prayer?

Very similar to what we talked about last week!

He starts off with praising God specifically for his authority and power.

v. 6 — *“Yahweh, you are God in heaven. You rule over all the kingdoms of the nations.”*

In other words, he has all authority, meaning, he has the right to do whatever he desires.

But if he had not power to act in this authority, he'd be a worthless ruler. But he does have all power.

v. 6 — *“In your hand are all power and might, so that none is able to defy you.”*

Do you realize that the best news right now is that God, whose heart is perfectly good in every way, has all authority and power over this whole universe?

Bring your feelings of fear under the tutelage of God's character.

And then Jehoshaphat continues to pray in remembrance of the things God has done.

v. 7 — *“God, you drove out the inhabitants of this land before us, and you gave it to the descendants of Abraham just as you promised.”*

And then he recalls the commitment they made to God.

Look at v. 8-9.

Vs. 8-9 — “And they have lived in it and have built for you in it a sanctuary for your name, saying, 9 ‘If disaster comes upon us, the sword, judgment, or pestilence, or famine, we will stand before this house and before you—for your name is in this house—and cry out to you in our affliction, and you will hear and save.’”

They had already told the Lord in the past that when crisis came, when disaster struck them, no matter what it was, they were going to cry out to God in the confidence that he would hear them and come to their rescue.

You know, it's really easy for us to be able to say with confidence how we're going to respond when certain circumstances come our way.

It is an entirely different thing when those circumstances actually come.

I'm sure we've said to ourselves in the past, “Yea, when suffering and affliction comes, I'm going to stay strong in my faith and I'm going to seek hard after God and not waver.”

Ok Peter.

Remember him? He said to Jesus, “I'll follow you wherever you go, I'll even die for you...” instead, when the time came, he denied Jesus three times, and it wrecked him.

And yet, Jehoshaphat and all of Judah are holding true to their commitment; they are crying out to God in their affliction.

And so in his prayer, this king recalls his circumstances to God, saying, “We’ve got this crisis... our enemies are at the door and they want to cast us out of our homes, our land that you promised.”

Then he turns his prayer to questioning mixed with imprecation like we talked about last week.

v. 12 — “Will you not execute judgment on them?”

And then he wraps up his prayer with words of yielding, which I really want to focus in on.

He says, ***“We are powerless against this vast army that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.”***

He says, “I’m powerless and I’m clueless. We can’t do anything about this and we have no clue what to do.”

Wait, what? Who in their right mind would ever want to hear their king and leader say, “I’m powerless and clueless?”

I mean, he said this in front of the whole nation of Judah.

When I was in high school I played four years of football and was terrible at it, and yet I still got to play...

And on every Friday night, under those lights, we’d group up right behind this massive paper banner that we’d break through at the climax of our walkout song... it’d be epic.

Imagine our head coach gathering us in to hype us up and saying to us... "Hey guys, so this team is really good, they're big and strong and fast, and we're pretty much powerless and I haven't got a clue what I'm doing."

Great pep talk, coach!

To the world, admitting weakness in the face of crisis isn't common sense; in fact, we hear the opposite.

As I drove into town on Friday, I saw a billboard that says, "We're strong and we'll get through this..."

Beach Lake FM Church, one of the reasons why God permits for crises to come into our lives is to remind us that we can't... we can't do this on our own, we aren't in control, we don't have understanding.

When crisis comes, admit our weakness.

Admitting our weakness and inability in the face of crisis is the best thing for you, because it keeps you grounded in reality.

That's exactly what God said to Paul when Paul admitted his own weakness in 2 Corinthians 12, "My grace is sufficient for you, because my power is made perfect in your weaknesses."

Which results in Paul saying, "Therefore I will boast all the more gladly of my weaknesses."

Brothers and sisters, it is when we finally accept our powerlessness and cluelessness that we can finally and freely say, "I don't know what to do, but my eyes are on you."

That's the third action point for today:

When crisis comes, fix our eyes.

We just sang it, "God we look to you!"

"I'm paying attention to you God; we're looking to you for our rescue. You are where our help comes from, for you are the maker of heaven and earth. I'm not looking anywhere else"

But are you setting your eyes on Jesus in this?

Or are you looking away and drowning beneath the waves of fear?

Maybe you even feel like you're drowning in your own guilt from your failures and poor decisions, and maybe you're in this place where you know you can't keep doing what you've always done and believing what you've wanted to believe because, really, look where that's gotten you.

Friends, the first step of believing in Jesus and receiving the full and free forever forgiveness he offers in his death and resurrection is admitting your own inability to save yourself, admitting your own faults and weaknesses, and throwing yourself fully on Christ.

What hope is there in life and in death apart from Christ?

Some of you are drowning in fear right now, not because you don't have control, but because you don't have Christ.

Would you trust in him today?

If you want to have someone reach out to you about trusting in Jesus and surrendering your life over to him, make a comment in the chat and one of our leaders will reach out to you.

Conclusion (Cast Vision):

Right now, we're going to seek God's face in prayer together where we'll admit our weaknesses, our powerlessness, and our cluelessness, and we're going to set our eyes on God!

I'm going to pray for us, then we're going to close out in praying through our benediction together, and then, just like we had last week, don't go anywhere because we're going to have a guided prayer time through our prayer tactics of praise, regret, ask, and yield.

And I want you to pray in a similar way to Jehoshaphat if you feel led to do so.

Now, I didn't finish the story... we didn't keep reading to see what happens.

Tomorrow morning again at 10 AM, I'm going to do another live stream on Facebook Live tomorrow and we're going to finish up the story from 2 Chronicles 20 and I'm going to issue a pretty unique and radical challenge to you, so be sure to tune in then.

And then, this Friday, I want to call all of us as a church family to set that day aside as a day to fast and pray.

You'll find out more details about it in the days coming up, but go ahead and mark your calendar; tomorrow morning at 10 AM on facebook live we'll continue this story, then this Friday, Good Friday, is going to be a day of prayer and fasting, and then we'll get together that night on livestream.

Let me pray for us. [Pray]

Benediction: [Philippians 4:19-20](#) — “[May God] supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. ²⁰ To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.”⁶

[Now let's join together](#) now in lifting up prayers of praise, regret, asking, and yielding to our God in this guided time of prayer.

I love you all, and I hope to see you soon.

⁶ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#) (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles, 2016), Php 4:19–20.