

In a very sobering statement delivered just a few weeks ago, Boris Johnson warned that amid the current Corona Virus pandemic many Brits are likely to die.

He said:

We've all got to be clear; this is the worst public health crisis for a generation.

He then said, I must level with you: many more families are going to lose loved ones before their time.

In that reading from John we're hear about two sisters who sadly lose their brother before his time.

Verse 1 says: Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha.

It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair whose brother Lazarus was ill.

So, the sisters sent for Jesus saying: Lord, he whom you love is ill.

If when we then fast forward a few verses we read that Lazarus funeral has already taken place, because his illness like the corona virus, has led to Lazarus's premature death.

Verse 19 says: Now when Jesus came, he found that Lazarus had already been in the tomb four days, and many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them concerning their brother.

And Jesus grieves the loss of his friend despite the fact in verse 11 that he says to his disciples:

Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I go to awaken him.

So, as he arrives on the scene verse 33 says:

When Jesus saw Mary weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled.

And he said, "Where have you laid him?"

They said to him, "Lord, come and see." Jesus wept. So, the Jews said, "See how he loved him!"

You see in times of fear and loss God isn't distant.

Jesus knows exactly how it feels to lose someone close; and understands the pain of loss.

In fact, the Bible describes Jesus was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.

And it's at the graveside of his friend Lazarus that we witness these intense emotions, as we see Jesus troubled and deeply moved in his spirit.

In fact, the word troubled here actually means angry.

You see it was never God's intention for sickness, suffering, and death to be a part of our experience.

So, for example in the book of Genesis we're told that God created everything good.

But when our first parents chose to disobey

God, sin, death and sickness entered the world, along with everything that's bad.

As a result, we're told that the whole of creation is spoilt.

God says:

By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread, till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for you are dust and to dust you shall return.

And so, Jesus is angry with sin and its consequences, because death was never a part of God's plan.

And so, as he comes alongside this grieving family in John's Gospel, Jesus looks death squarely in the face and is incensed!

But you know he does much more than that.

He actually reverses the effects of sin by dying on a cross, and then defeats death by being raised to life.

That's why in verse 25 Jesus says:

I am the Resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die.

You see death might steal our loved ones from us now, but for followers of Christ the separation's only temporary:

Because the future hope for everyone who puts their trust in Jesus, is an eternal LIFE in heaven, where pain, suffering, and grief won't exist anymore.

And as sign of that future promise we're told that as Jesus stands at the graveside of his dead friend, he cries out in a loud voice:

Lazarus come out! Then the man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips, and his face wrapped with a cloth.

And Jesus said to them unbind him; and let him go.

PAUSE

Well you one day you and me are going to die; and during this crisis that might be before our time; and so, the question is:

Do we trust Jesus with our death?

PAUSE

Well as we draw to a close, this passage shows us that Christian's have nothing to fear; *from the* coronavirus, death, or whatever else life might throw at us.

So, listen to this email I received just the other day:

One of the primary words of God to his people is to trust Him. The Corona virus is contagious; but the calm of God's people in times of crisis could also be contagious!

The global virus reminds us we're not going to live forever.

And so, this realization of our mortality is a perfect opportunity for God to work in our families, our church, our community, and our world.

After all we've been praying for Him to awaken people and bring revival.

To be afraid concerning the virus is perfectly normal, even for Christians.

The potential is frightening. But fear is not where we're to remain. Jesus said "Do not let your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid"

And When God says do not fear, it's because He wants to encourage us to put our confidence in Him as we feed on his word and trust in his faithfulness.

Faith, however, is not foolishness or presumptuousness.

And so, we should follow guidelines to avoid the spread of the virus, be responsible and pray.

And at a time like this as people are being confronted by their mortality, thinking about it and feeling vulnerable, we can remind them that there's a way to escape death.

Because Jesus defeated it.

And to those who put their trust in Him we're delivered from death to eternal life.

If we're alive spiritually though we die, we go on living in the presence of the Lord of the Lord Jesus Christ forever.

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Well finally in medieval times Children would dress up in Spooky costumes on the Night before All Saints in Festivities known as 'A Danse Macabre,' which is where Halloween comes from

And this dance was a way of celebrating victory over the powers of evil and death that Jesus won through his own death on the cross.

And the Apostle Paul does something similar in 1 Corinthians 15 where he mocks death, and then celebrates with something like a football chant mocking the opposing side he says:

Where, O death, is your victory?

Where, O death, is your sting?

But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

You see all death can do to a believer is deliver them to Jesus and bring them into the eternal presence of their Saviour.

PAUSE/LAND

And at this time of uncertainty and fear Jesus says: I am the Resurrection and the Life.

Whoever believes in me, though he dies, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Amen