

Walking With God in a Pandemic

The Way Forward

Rough Transcript

Brett Clemmer

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Hey, guys, welcome back to the Bible study. We're wrapping up our series today, **Walking With God in a Pandemic**. I want to talk today about the way forward. Where do we go from here? What I'd like to do is talk a little bit about the resurrection of Jesus Christ, but before I get into that, what I've noticed is there's lots of different kinds of people, but there's two kinds of people in particular that I interact with, and those are planners and visionaries. Planners are the kinds of people that they like to have a process for everything. They like to have spreadsheets and project plans, and maybe you're a guy like that. I've got a guy that works for me, and he's a planner, and I love having him around because he's always thinking of the process. Then, you might be more like I am. I'm a visionary. I often say, "I can't tell you what I'm doing tomorrow, but I got a pretty good idea of what I'd like to be doing three years from now or five years from now." Those are visionaries.

As Christians, there are problems that we would typically have as a planner or as a visionary. A planner, the problem that a planner can have is you want to set your plans and then you want to follow your plan. Sometimes, planners have a hard time not being rigid, not allowing for deviations based on circumstances. They can get pretty flustered when things don't go according to plan. Then, for visionaries, like I am, sometimes, the problem with a visionary is that we get equally stuck on our picture of what the future is supposed to be. We also might struggle with circumstances or with changes coming that make us have to adjust our vision for how things are supposed to go or where we're supposed to arrive with the destination even is supposed to be.

I think those are really two sides of the same coin. What I think they come down to is this: both planners and visionaries, we want to be in control. We want things to go the way that we want things to go. When circumstances intervene and they pull us to the right or to left, it can be very disconcerting for us because we had a plan. We had a vision for how things were supposed to go. Well, I don't know about you, but 2020 started off with some great plans that we had planned for the ministry. I had a great vision for where we were going to go. Many of us in the organization had a great vision for where we were going to go. Then, 2020 happened. Then, COVID happened. Then, the racial issues really bubbled up to the surface in a huge way with the death of George Floyd. We've had three crisis this year that we've had to deal with. We had a health crisis followed by an economic crisis and a social crisis, and these all still going on.

For a planner, these things throw your plans into disarray. For a visionary, these make your vision of where you think you're going, what you think the future is going to look like, feel very unstable. That can be so disconcerting. When you realize that about yourself, if part of where your sort of angst is right now with how things are going in our society, recognize that either because you're a planner, because you're a visionary, that you're getting pulled off.

Here's the key for me in all of this. That is that we're trying to be in control, that we're expecting things to go the way that we want them to go, and we're not allowing God to intervene in our plans where a lot of us, as Pat likes to say, a lot of us plan, and then we pray that God will bless our plans rather than praying and then making plans on what God tells us about in our time abiding with Him. If you're a

planner or visionary and you're really feeling a lot of frustration and unstableness, instability right now, I'd like to suggest to you a third way, and that is to be a disciple. What do I mean when I say that? Is that just an easy answer?

Well, what I mean is I mean to be resilient and hopeful, but also action-oriented and believing in the power of God. If you are resilient and hopeful, if you are action-oriented and believing in God's power, then, as things change, you're going to be able to adjust to that. That's the whole idea of resilience. I think a disciple of Christ, a believer in the power of God, has a leg up on the planners and the visionaries who don't have God in their lives, who don't have the ability to see the supernatural power of God at work. I think that's a good thing for us to think about as we try to chart a way forward in the midst of these crises that we're facing.

If you have a Bible, let's look at some folks that also had some plans and also had some visions for how the future was going to look. Let's look at Mark chapter 16, and I'm going to read the first seven verses of that chapter. This is after Jesus has been crucified and He's been laid in the tomb, and then we see this story of the women going to the tomb in Mark chapter 16.

"When the Sabbath was passed, Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so they might go and anoint Him, and very early, on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb, and they were saying to one another, 'Who will roll away the stone for us from the entrance to the tomb?' Looking up, they saw that the stone had been rolled back. It was very large. Entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe. They were alarmed. He said to them, 'Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. He is risen. He is not here. See the place where they laid Him, but go, tell His disciples and Peter that He is going before you to Galilee. There, you will see Him just as He told you.'" It's the word of the Lord.

Mark tells this story of the women going to the tomb to anoint Jesus' body. This is what you would do in these times. They didn't always embalm a body. They would sometimes cover the body in spices as a respect to the body and to, obviously, make it not smell or at least not make it smell so bad. That's what they're doing. They're basically going to show their respect.

Now, you might think about what they were feeling at this point. I mean, they had to be full of despair and sadness. They had plans for how things were supposed to work. Just a few days before, Jesus had ridden into Jerusalem, like a conquering king on a donkey's colt, just like it was prophesied in the Old Testament. They probably had plans for what was going to happen as Jesus brought a new kingdom to the nation of Israel, at least sort of reformed the oppressive religion that they were under, perhaps, if not actually throwing off the Romans. They had plans. They had a vision for what that was going to look like, and it all got just thrown away. That's what we see in verses one and two, the Sabbath was passed, Mary Magdalene, Mary, the mother of James, and Salome bought spices so they might go and anoint Him. Why? Because that's what you do. That's the next thing.

If you've got the handout, and, if you don't, go ahead and pause the video and go download the handout and print it out so you can take notes, but in that first circle of the handout, the first part of the way forward is just do the next thing.

DO THE NEXT THING

When you're struggling and your life isn't going the way you think it's supposed to go, and the health crisis, the economic crisis, the social crisis are somehow impacting your life and everything that you had planned, everything that you envisioned isn't working out the way you expected, what do you do? Well, you do the next thing. For Mary, Mary, and Salome, the next thing after Jesus' death, unplanned in their vision of things and their plan of things, was you go and anoint the body. That's what you do.

I think, for us, as we're dealing with these crises, if you've lost your job, go find another job. If your income is decreased, you've got to readjust your budget. If you are recognizing that you are around

people who are suffering the effects of racism, or even if you're around people that don't have the right attitudes about race, lean into that. Do the right next thing. Have the difficult conversations that you need to have. I think you've just got to do the next thing.

What is that thing that you're supposed to do if you're struggling right now because things aren't going the way that you thought they were going to go? What's the next thing that you need to do? Just go and do that. You see that with them. Very early, on the first day of the week, the next opportunity they had, when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb to do the next thing.

What happens when they get there? Well, they don't know how to roll the stone away. Did that stop them from going to the tomb? No. They just figured, "Well, we'll figure it out when we get there." I think sometimes that paralyzes us, as men, from moving forward because we don't see how everything's going to work out. Well, don't wait to see how everything is going to go work out. If you think God's pointing you to the next thing, just go do it and trust that He'll provide a way.

They were just trusting that somehow, that stone, they would be able to get somebody to roll it away when they got there. When they got there, the stone's already rolled away, and they walk in, and where do they see? In verse five, entering the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe, and they were alarmed. They saw an angel. They saw a man in a white robe standing in the tomb of Jesus who had just been killed by the Romans, and Jesus isn't there. What would you think if you were them? You'd be scared. You'd be frightened. What does he say? He says, "Don't be afraid."

DO NOT BE AFRAID

It's kind of a simple message. That's what I would write in the second circle is, "Do not be afraid." When things don't go the way that we planned for them to, when our world seems in upheaval, God says, "Don't be afraid." God sends a messenger to say, "Don't be afraid." He says, "The man that you're looking for is Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified, but He's risen. He's not here," and that promise for us that Jesus has risen, that Jesus has come back from the dead, see, this is why we don't have to be afraid because our God is a supernatural God.

Now, a lot of Christians, they have a hard time with the supernatural. Yet, if you hear somebody say, "I had a scan. I had cancer, and I had a scan, and they found cancer in the scan, and then a lot of people prayed for me, and then I went in later, and I had another scan and the cancer was gone, and we all praise God, and we say, 'Well, that's fantastic,'" that's the power of prayer, and we don't have a problem with that. Well, that's the supernatural. That's the supernatural.

We have a friend of the ministry who went through a terrible cancer diagnosis and went through a lot of different kinds of treatment and was diligent, but the whole way through, he just expected the supernatural. If God was going to use the natural to bring about the supernatural, that was fine, but, at the end of the day, he recognized that it was supernatural that he was healed from his cancer. Guys, the supernatural happens all the time, and we don't need to be afraid of it. In fact, the fact that God intervenes, the fact that we worship a God who supernaturally has an impact on our lives means that we don't have to be afraid because God has the power to step into situations that we need Him in and to bring about a solution.

God stepped into the death of Jesus and resurrected Him from the dead. God, the Father, looked at His son after He had died as the propitiation for our sins, as the payment for our sins. He then resurrected Him from the dead. The payment was made. Now, God showed His power, His very power over death, and brought Jesus back. He intervened supernaturally. Later on in the Bible, it says, "The power that raised Jesus from the dead is available to us as Christians." How amazing is that? Don't be afraid. Don't be afraid. We're going to make it through this.

That brings us to the next thing then that the angel says. He says to them, "Don't be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth who was crucified. He is risen. He is not here. See this, the place where they laid Him,"

and then he says in verse seven, "but go tell His disciples and Peter that He is going before you to Galilee. There, you will see Him just as He told you."

EXPECT JESUS TO SHOW UP

In the third circle on your handout, write this. Write, "Expect Jesus to show up." Expect Jesus to show up. The angel says, "Go to Galilee. He's going to be there. He's going to meet you there." The disciples will go to Galilee with the expectation of Jesus showing up. Why can we expect Jesus to show up? Well, he's promised it just like He promised it to the disciples through Mary, Mary and Salome. He promised that He would show up. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we're following Him. We're expecting Him to show up.

I just want to remind you what I said at the beginning. As disciples, we're resilient because we're hopeful. We're action-oriented because we believe in God's power. When we're faced with a crisis, we need to follow this pattern of Mark chapter 16, to just do the next thing, to not be afraid and to expect Jesus to show up, expect the supernatural to happen, expect God to care for you, and then the vision that you had that's blown up, the plans that you had that are a crumpled piece of paper now in the trashcan, God's going to give you something better. God's going to give you His plan that's better than your plan, His vision that's better than my vision. How amazing is that going to be?

That brings me to the Big Idea. The Big Idea is this. I know some of you guys are feeling low on hope, low on expectation for the future, and you're feeling like things are not going very well right now. Here's the Big Idea. **Things are going better than you think they are.** Write that down. Things are going better than I think they are because we worship a supernatural God who intervenes, a God who raised Jesus from the dead, and now Jesus sits at the right hand of His father, interceding on our behalf, and He sent the counselor, the Holy Spirit to live in our hearts and to act in our lives, and He's going to give us a better vision. He's going to give us a better plan, and we can trust Him to do that. Things are going better than you think they are because of God's power and grace and mercy.

Let's pray. Father, I'm so grateful for the resurrection story, for the fact that we can see your power intervening in the world. We can see your son, Jesus, rising from the dead. Jesus, we're so grateful to you for suffering and dying, to pay for our sins. Father, we're so grateful for you for raising Him from the dead. Father and son, we're so grateful for the Spirit, the counselor that you've sent to live in our hearts and be active in this world. It's so wonderful to worship this triune God, this trinity of God. We don't understand it, Lord, but we understand that you intervene, we understand that you are in control, we understand that things are better than we think they are because we don't often enough reckon on the power of God in our lives.

Father, thank you for making the power that raised Jesus from the dead available to us as Christian men. Would you help us Lord to find the next thing, to do the next thing, to not sit and just stay in our hopelessness or despair or frustration, Lord, to not be angry because our plans have been crumpled up, our vision has turned out to be the wrong vision, Lord? Instead, would you help us to rely on you, to trust in you and to follow you where you lead us as your men, as your disciples, resilient, hopeful, action-oriented men who trust you, who believe in your power? In Jesus' name. Amen.

All right, guys, I love you. Have a great week.