

Easter 2020
Resurrection and Covid-19 Pandemic

Part A Covid-19 the big disruptor.

As long as I can remember there have been quiet warnings and concerns expressed about a re-run of the 1918 flu pandemic that spread disease and death around the world in modern times.

In recent decades we had candidates for this in SARS and Bird flu with frightening Ebola in parts of Africa. Covid-19 is the one that took off and has the world worried.

I am not aware of anyone in the Trinity Church family being sick with Covid-19. Some of us have lost family members who were vulnerable and are now living with socially distanced grief.

What all of us do experience is disruption.

- Children have been home from school and learning to do school work at home
- Those who can work from home have been doing that as well. I have heard people craving their colleagues company and wanting to go to work.
- Spring has arrived and the sun has been shining but the message is to not enjoy nature, stay at home.
- The family members we are concerned about cannot be visited. They are in rest homes or across borders that are closed, so we spend more time than usual on line than before. My 87 year old Father is bored and restless living alone and staying at home so we Skype more often than before.
- Going out for essential supplies is now a bit of an exercise with some tension involved. It involves hand cleansing and realising that not everyone takes 1.5 meters so seriously as we try not to bunch up in the supermarket.

Covid-19 is a serious virus and will not be messed with. It is highly contagious by nature with a mortality rate and that is what it is no matter what people say or choose to believe. Preferred realities and no amount of spin make no impact. Yet precisely because it is such an unwelcome reality it presents a challenge that can disrupt normality.

There are two thoughts that I live with in this disruption:

Firstly the pandemic is making the world step back from business as normal. It is bringing some good disruption because life as it has come to happen normally was not good and could not continue.

Was the world so good and righteous before Covid-19 that we really want to restore what was? Let's consider just a few headliners:

- The ecology of the world has been telling us that for some time as each year we use the resources of 1.2 planets. That level of exploitation has to stop.
- When the amount of air traffic is expected to double every 15 years, I think WOOH! Normal is a bit crazy. That needs disrupting.
- Then locally, when 40% of Dutch teenagers are reported as having some psychological illness during their teenage years I hear a normal that needs to be disrupted. That is not OK.
- When most of the planet are living hand to mouth without the basic facilities that could be available and a minority of the planet control the vast bulk of all resources. That needs disrupting.
- When we cannot stop ourselves pumping climate-changing gases into the atmosphere I think that needs disrupting.
- I could go on and on couldn't I? These are just some stand out familiars.

Disruption always comes at a cost. The Covid-19 disruption has already taken over 100,000 lives and is expected to cause an economic depression not seen since the 1930s and it is early days yet.

So we are tasting the beginnings of the disruption, seeing the initial costs but perhaps also realising that we are being saved from some normalities that need changing.

Why does it take Covid-19 to drop the crime rates around the world?

Why does it take Covid-19 to clean the air and brighten the sun?

Why does it take Covid-19 to shut down commercial immorality on health grounds - as adults will understand?

Then secondly, and what I really want to say this morning is that The Resurrection of Jesus from his grave is a disrupter that puts Covid-19 in the shade.

Until Jesus rose from the grave, the normal arrangement had been:

You are born, you live life as best you can, you die and you stay in the grave – end of story.

Everything was adjusted to this.

Then one man breaks the rule. It only takes one to get away!

The raising of Lazarus had been a dry run to demonstrate that death was no object, no barrier to God's loving redemption.

The resurrection of Jesus by the sovereign power of God without anyone present was a disruption of what St Paul termed the Law of sin and death. It's the law that allows sin to lock down human existence within the horizons of birth and death.

Many people still see it that way today.

- Human purpose and destiny,
- Human value and significance,
- Human love and sacrifice

These features are massively upgraded and extended by the single fact of Jesus' resurrection as witnessed by his disciples and friends and reported to us in the Gospels.

What locked them down within the limits of a human life span was broken.

This is what confronted the socially isolated disciples of Jesus, themselves hunkered down in fear following the crucifixion.

All through his ministry Jesus let it be known that he was a disrupter and the Resurrection came as vindicating authentication that what he had said was now an undeniable fact of reality.

The horizons have moved.

The boundaries are broken

The road closed is now a road open

Take hold of this and live accordingly.

God's purposes for humanity have been redeemed and upgraded.

Application

We Christians are Resurrection People.

We rejoice in the disruption of God of the powers of normal that rule by sin and death.

Q How then should we live in a season of pandemic disruption?

A1: Place our hope in God's provision not in reinstalment of the normal idols of this age.

Let God's resurrection disruption established in Jesus rule in your thinking as your new normal and don't crave the lost fleshpots of Egypt.

The empires of the world all need to fall but we have a Resurrected King who cannot fall. No line can hold him or contain him.

The resurrection of Jesus made that absolutely real to his followers.

A2: Breathe in God's bigger purpose in which death is but a sleep until the resurrection.

Some of us may yet be part of the 5% mortality expected for those infected. Like Lazarus we may taste death. But the resurrection assures us this is only a sleep and those who share Christ's death in baptism will share his resurrection to eternity.

That is the hope I speak at every Christian funeral but it is not only for funerals. It's what we live life by in hope and not despair.

A3: Live to let others know you willingly embrace God's disruption and that you trust it as foretaste and promise of what is to come.

Many have recently remembered that plagues are nothing new and a lasting Christian witness in the ancient world was how Christians believing in the Resurrection behaved when plague broke out. Those who did well in the normal circumstances of this world fled cities for their country houses as some politicians around the world have been caught doing in lockdown trying to leave the country or move to a second home. In contrast to this, Christians were noted for going into the city to care for the afflicted.

The memory and impact of this was significant for centuries.

There will be opportunities to love and care when others are afraid and cold hearted. Take them as opportunities to witness to your Resurrection faith

Summary

Choose your significant disruption, Covid-19 and all the uncertainties it brings or the Resurrection of Jesus that has been turning the wrong side up world upside down for centuries.

Let us be Resurrection disrupters free of fear and not attached to what is normal in the world.