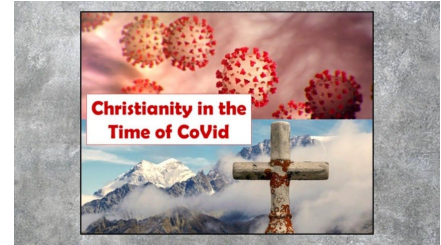


## The Sermon - In 10 Sentences Or Less

Christianity in the Time of CoVid (Week 3) - Kingdom Labor Pains:



1. American Christianity since 1900 has been particularly susceptible to thinking that "the end is here."
2. The New Testament time and again emphasizes that "the end" (what the Old Testament calls The Day of the Lord, The Last Days, or God's Kingdom) was launched with Jesus 2000 years ago and will come to completion at some unknown point in the future.
3. We live in the "already/not yet" tension of God's Kingdom, a chief image for this in the N.T. is that it's like experiencing labor pains prior to childbirth (Matthew 24.8, Romans 8.18-26).
4. So not all of the pain you see in the world right now is loss and personal hardship; some of the discomfort is that which accompanies the slow emergence of God's Kingdom.
5. Some of our pain right now is from seeing what we've chosen to ignore or not acknowledge previously.
6. For example, the most vulnerable among us are now visible in a way that they weren't before; we only love those we choose to see.
7. Some of our pain right now is from the death of our self-created myths, and from the cost of admitting that what we've been doing hasn't worked; that is, old creation is failing and dysfunctional, and we desperately need God's new one that's coming.
8. From this pain of Kingdom birth, we should expect to discover new paths of justice and love, and unanticipated Kingdom good.
9. Christians of all people feel this labor pain because we are more aligned with God's world that is coming than the world as it actually is right now (see Romans 8.23)
10. We should even expect to be so confused and befuddled in this Kingdom in-between time that we won't know how to pray or hope, but, rest assured, God's Spirit will sort it out for us and even pray for us (see Romans 8.26-27).

### **Prayer for the Week - Adapted from Walter Brueggemann (contemporary Old Testament scholar)**

"God, our old sense of normal made us happy and certain. But now that normalcy has been exposed as a construct of our privilege, indifference to our neighbors, and blind self-sufficiency. In the midst of the virus, now we realize that we are deeply connected, and that we're all vulnerable together. We dislike the disruption and discomfort, and we want to go backward, but we cannot. You summon us into a new future; You ask us to imagine, to risk, and to be bold. May the blind see, the sick be healed, the hungry be fed, the poor have good news, and workers provide for their families. Your new normal requires major adjustment, and adjust we will; we will live, trust, and share differently, for in Christ former things are passing away, and Your new world is emerging, we pray this with great joy and thankfulness, amen."

### **Spiritual Exercise for the Week**

Try to stay aware this week of when and how you see...

- 1) ...That you as a Christian don't fit well in the world that is,
- 2) ...That CoVid is exposing things that we, as persons or a culture, were trying to ignore or dismiss,
- 3) ...That CoVid is showing us how our old, usual way of doing things doesn't work,
- 4) ...And that CoVid is providing unanticipated good of God's new creation.

If you spend a few days this week with open eyes to these things, then later in the week try sharing what you've observed with a friend or small group, or journal about it.

### **A Song for the Week**

This tune, "Kingdom Come" by Covenant Worship, fits perfectly with what we talked and prayed about in church yesterday: [Covenant Worship - Kingdom Come](#)

### **Scripture Reading for the Week**

Check out Matthew 13 this week: the entire chapter is full of parables (stories with a spiritual point) told by Jesus about how God's Kingdom will emerge in the world: [Matthew 13 New Revised Standard Version Updated Edition](#)