

The Sermon - In 10 Sentences Or Less

1. Christian love is "agape" love (John 15.12-13; Eph. 5.2): it is benevolent, seeking the benefit of the other, even if at an expense to self, and it is self-giving.

2. We are hardly the first Christians to live through a time of epidemic or catastrophe.

3. Christians in the Roman Empire were noteworthy in their care of the sick and dying, so much so that it led directly to the explosive growth of the early church.

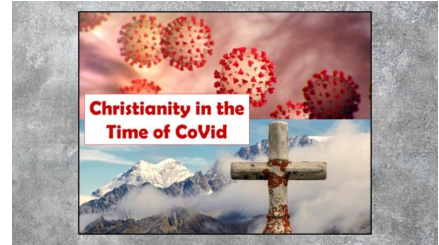
4. While we cannot always imitate the behavior of our Christian forefathers (for example, public health guidelines would discourage us from unnecessary close proximity), we can glean valuable guiding principles from them.

5. Principle #1 = As Christians, all necessary sacrifice begins with us.

6. Principle #2 = We can act, even when the government doesn't.

7. Principle #3 = To love well means to do it for the long haul (Gal. 6.7-10).

8. One must wonder - if American churches, like KirkWood, will respond to this crisis with costly love, sacrificial service, and local/interpersonal investment, will CoVid not be a spark for revitalization and growth, like it was for the first Christians in the Roman Empire?



Quotes for the Week

1. An excerpt from Martin Luther's letter when the bubonic plague hit Wittenberg in 1527 A.D.: "So I will pray that God may be gracious and preserve us...If God wishes to take me, He will be able to find me. At least I have done what He gave me to do...If my neighbor needs me, I shall avoid neither person nor place but feel free to visit and help them...We die at our posts. Christian doctors cannot abandon their hospitals. Christian governors cannot flee their districts. Christian pastors cannot abandon their congregations. The plague does not dissolve our duties. It turns them into crosses, on which we must be prepared to die."

2. Bruce Hindmarsh, church historian - "We do not yet know how much suffering will come. But may we all encourage one another to deepen our trust in God as our eternal refuge, and together with all the saints may we love and care for our neighbor like those Christians long ago in Alexandria, of whom it is written 'never sparing themselves and thinking only of one another'...We must be especially creative to find other ways to bring the love of Christ to the suffering and the outcast."

Prayer for the Week

A prayer from Teri Peterson, a minister in the Church of Scotland:

Holy God, before time You named us
Through time You redeem us
You call us, precious in Your sight
May we love as You love.

Holy One, through the turbulent waters
Make us steady, Your hands
Holding strong the fragile and weak
May we love as You love.

Gracious God, may the fruits of our lives
Be food, clothing, shelter, warmth, and Word
For all who are in need
May we love as You love.

God of justice, remove the chaff
Of our lives that keep us from
Hearing and following, Your call
May we love as You love.

Loving God, take this day our fears
Worries, distractions, and all
Turn them into courage and service
May we love as You love.
Amen.

Videos to Go Deeper

Just a few, short videos to help us think creatively about what sacrificial Christian love in the time of CoVid might look like -

[Coping with coronavirus: Watching out for our neighbors](#)

[How to Love Your Neighbor as Yourself During the Coronavirus Pandemic](#)

[Being a good neighbor during Coronavirus outbreak](#)