

# Dealing with a Crisis

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Preacher: Fred Stone

[ 0 : 00 ] I left home at 6 a.m. on Wednesday morning. I was going to Walmart to find flour and bread.

I went into Walmart and got one of the last bags of regular flour. But there was no bread on the shelf, no loaves of bread.

So I took off to Ingalls. I got the next to the last bag of self-rising flour. And there was absolutely no bread to be found on any of the shelves in Ingalls.

Now I know most of you have had a similar experience. Because right now at least, this is the new normal. In fact, I heard someone say the other day that the way things are going right now, they felt like we were living in the twilight zone.

We can relate, can't we? However we describe it, we are living in the midst of the most disruptive crisis since World War II.

[ 1 : 05 ] How are you responding? How are you responding to the coronavirus crisis? How do you normally respond to a crisis in your life?

Do you turn to God for help? Or do you blame God? Some people do. And instead of turning to Him, some just turn away.

Or do you ignore God? And just sort of do the best I can. But realistically, you're doing the best you can like an atheist.

You're just leaving God out. I want us to look at a passage, John chapter 11 this morning, that provides for us a great example of how Christians should respond to a crisis.

Now, what we're going to be looking at is how two sisters, Martha and Mary, responded to a crisis. Their brother had died.

[ 2 : 10 ] His name was Lazarus. Many of you are familiar with Martha and Mary and Lazarus. They were friends of Jesus. We learn from Luke's gospel, the 10th chapter, that they hosted Jesus in their home.

It seems that they had a close relationship. Mary, Martha, Lazarus, and Jesus. Well, that's why when Lazarus, what appears to have suddenly come down with a serious illness, Mary and Martha sent for Jesus.

They sent word to Him because they wanted Him to come and heal their brother. But Jesus did not immediately go. And Lazarus died.

They buried Him. And then four days later, four days after He was buried, Jesus arrived at the house of Mary and Martha.

John describes all this to us in John chapter 11, verses 1 through 45. We're going to read some of these verses as we go through this message.

[ 3 : 22 ] But I want to encourage you, maybe sometime today, to read John chapter 11, all the first 45 verses. Or you may even want to pause this message right now and go ahead and read John 11, 1 through 45.

But as we go through this message, I want you to keep in mind that the qualities we see in Jesus, they're the same exact qualities that we see in God the Father.

One of the things Jesus did when He came into this world is He revealed to us what God the Father is like. Jesus explained it like this one day.

Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. From this John 11 passage, I want to point out two lessons that can help us deal with any crisis, including the coronavirus crisis that we all have been touched by right now.

Lesson number one. Whenever you face a crisis, turn to the Lord. Turn to the Lord. When Mary and Martha found out that their brother was seriously ill, they immediately sent word to Jesus.

[ 4 : 43 ] Look at it in verse 3. So the sisters sent to Him, saying, Lord, he whom you love is ill. Now think about that. Their first response to a crisis, their brother was seriously ill, well, they turned to the Lord for help.

Now we know from what they said later, after Lazarus had died, that they were hoping that Jesus would come and heal their brother. In fact, both Mary and Martha said the exact same thing to Jesus later on.

It's found in verses 21 and verse 32. They both said to Jesus, Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. Now, when a crisis occurs in your life, what is your first response? Now be honest. Looking to the Lord is not always our first response, is it? Sometimes we do everything except look to Him.

Sometimes we panic. Sometimes we not only panic, but we say or do things that are irrational. That's why there's a toilet paper shortage right now.

[ 6 : 08 ] People are acting irrationally in responding to this crisis. Some people, what they react is they try to downplay its seriousness or maybe even ignore it.

Just pretend it's not there and hope that it'll go away. You know, there are some people right now who are denying the seriousness of the coronavirus pandemic.

They're trying to downplay it. And I want to be honest with you. At the first, when things were starting to be said, and it was mostly our media saying them, I was one of the ones who was guilty of denying it.

It was not really until last Friday when President Trump came on, surrounding himself with government and private sector leaders, that it really sunk into me.

This is something that is extremely serious, deadly serious. And so we need to avoid being that kind of person who pretends it's not real or it's not serious.

[ 7 : 21 ] That is not the way to respond to any kind of crisis. But you know, I think a lot of people, including Christians, sometimes respond to a crisis by just sort of what you might say, buckling down, getting tough, and just doing the best that we can on our own, and really with very little thought about looking to the Lord.

Now don't misunderstand that last statement. When a crisis happens, we need to act decisively as well as turn to the Lord.

A few years ago, on a Sunday morning, Lisa passed out. And when I went to her, helping her to sort of gather herself together, she complained with severe pain in her stomach.

Well, we got ready as quickly as possible and took off to the ER. And I am so glad we acted decisively and quickly because the pain was coming from her appendix.

And by getting there when we did, they were able to do the surgery before it ruptured. Now, as we were getting ready, hurriedly, and as we flew to the ER, we did turn to the Lord in prayer.

[ 8 : 44 ] We asked God to help Lisa, take care of her, help her to get over this, help us to get to where we need to be for her to get help.

And I'm sure the way that I drove, Lisa was also praying, Lord, help us to not get killed on the way there. But, as we got ready, as we drove, we did everything we knew to do.

We had hurried, we'd acted decisively, we had prayed, we had looked to the Lord, and we did what you might say the best we could, personally, and in terms of turning it over to the Lord.

During this time of crisis in our country, we desperately need to be looking to the Lord and calling out to Him for help, for wisdom, for divine intervention into this crisis.

But at the same time, we also need to be listening to our government and healthcare leaders, and we need to be listening carefully. We need to be following their instructions.

[ 10 : 00 ] We need to be doing everything that we can to stay healthy, to help others, and to stop the spread of this very, very serious virus.

Now, I want to ask you, do you naturally and automatically turn to the Lord in a time of crisis? I can predict your answer.

It really depends on the kind of relationship that you have with the Lord. If you have a close relationship with Him, you spend time with Him, you talk to Him, you listen to Him, well, you'll just naturally turn to Him whenever a crisis occurs, and you'll turn to Him with confidence.

But if you don't have a real relationship with Him, then you won't turn to Him. You know, if you don't have a close relationship with the Lord right now, there is absolutely no better time for you to begin one than now.

And I'm talking to Christians. I'm talking to you who you do know Christ as your Lord and Savior. You do pray at times. You do read the Bible at times.

[ 11 : 18 ] You're watching this message right now. But I want to encourage you, start spending time with the Lord every day, seriously.

Just you and Him. Talk to Him in prayer. That's really what prayer is all about. Talking to the Lord, communing to Him. Listening to Him.

And think about as you read the Bible, this is God's Word. This is God speaking. Listen to the Lord as you read His Word. You know, it may be that your life, your schedule at least, has slowed down. Your life's slowed down. Your schedule's gotten a little bit lighter during this crisis. You may not have warned it to, but it is. I want to encourage you to take some of this time and do some reading. There's all kinds of helpful Christian books and articles available today that you would profit from. Help you to know God better.

[ 12 : 23 ] To know how to live in a closer relationship with Him. To know how to use the gifts He's given you. To know how to better serve Him. You know, our church family, as a church family, we have access to some very good online Bible studies and resources for people of all ages through Right Now Media.

You can access Right Now Media on your computer, your iPhone, your iPad. Now, if you've never done that before, I want to encourage you, email Jeff Rafferty.

Email Jeff here at the church and let him know you would like to have access to online or to Right Now Media and he can send you a link that will get you started immediately.

Or, there is information in this week's newsletter. The March the 22nd newsletter. One that was mailed to your home this weekend. It's also available online.

Just go online, look at the newsletter and there's information how you can start looking at these resources, these helpful resources. on Right Now Media Right Now.

[ 13 : 29 ] But having a close relationship with the Lord, that makes it natural to automatically turn to Him in a time of crisis.

Make sure that this weekend you get serious with the Lord. Draw close to Him. And the Scripture tells us as we draw near to Him, He will draw near to us.

The second lesson I want us to see from John chapter 11 is this. Whenever you face a crisis, trust the Lord. Now trusting the Lord involves more than just turning to Him or calling out to Him in prayer.

Here's what I mean by trusting the Lord. First, trust that God is in control. Martha believed this. She had absolutely no doubts. That's why she turned to Jesus and said this in verses 21 and 22.

Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died. But even now, I know that whatever you ask from God, God will give you.

[ 14 : 38 ] Martha may have heard Jesus on another occasion explain in very simple terms how God controls everything in this world.

Look at what Jesus said in Matthew chapter 10. He said, Are not two sparrows sold for a penny? And not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your father.

Jesus is talking about a lowly, insignificant sparrow. He is saying that not even a sparrow dies. Not even a sparrow dies and falls to the ground apart from God's will, from God's plan.

Now, I think it's important that we understand the point that Jesus was making when he made that comment about God being in control through the death of a sparrow even.

Jesus was saying that to calm fears He was trying to help people not worry, not be anxious. He was trying to let people know that God not only is in control, but God cares.

[ 15 : 50 ] Look at this. It's the verse after, the two verses after verse 29, verse 31. Fear not, therefore, you are of more value than many sparrows.

It's important for us to understand that God is in control. But that's not enough. We need to have confidence that our Lord and our Heavenly Father care about us.

Look at this. Trust that God cares for you. Mary and Martha saw firsthand just how much the Lord cared for them during their time of grief, this crisis brought on by their brother's death.

I want you to look with me. We're still in John 11, verses 32 through 35. It says, Now when Mary came to where Jesus was and saw Him, she fell at His feet, saying to Him, Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.

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

[ 17 : 04 ] And He said, Where have You laid Him? And they said to Him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept. That helps us to see that when we are hurting, the Lord hurts with us.

Whenever a crisis occurs in your life, you can be assured as a child of God, you are not alone. The Lord is our faithful shepherd.

He walks with us through the valleys of life and death. You know, during this time of a national crisis, I think it might be helpful, comforting to all of us to take some time to just read slowly through Psalm 23 and to make it personal.

Make it personal as you read, The Lord is my shepherd. And let it sink in and take comfort from His words of comfort.

Let's look at one more reason for trusting God in a time of crisis. Trust that God is working according to His good purpose. You know, Jesus did not prevent the death of Lazarus.

[ 18 : 26 ] Even though it caused pain to His friends, Mary and Martha, their hearts were broken because their brother died.

But Jesus knew that God the Father planned the death of Lazarus for a purpose. Look at this in verse 5 of John 11.

Jesus said, It is for the glory of God so that the Son of God may be glorified through it. I want us to think for just a moment how both God the Father and the Son were glorified through the death of Lazarus.

First, Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Look at this. It's in verses 43 and 44. When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, Lazarus, come out.

The man who had died came out, his hands and feet bound with linen strips and his face wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, Unbind him and let him go.

[ 19 : 35 ] Jesus brought this dead man to life before all these people. Truly, God, the power of God was made known, visible, right there before their eyes.

Both God the Father and Jesus who called him forth received much glory for their power in bringing back from the dead this man, Lazarus.

The scripture goes on to tell us that as a result of what Jesus did, many people believed in Jesus. In verse 45, many of the Jews, therefore, who had come with Mary and had seen what he did believed in him.

they saw the power of God at work and God not only worked to bring Lazarus back from the grave, in that experience, in that time among those people, God worked in their lives to open their spiritual eyes and to call them to faith in Jesus right then, right there.

We need to have confidence that God is in control, that he cares for us and that he works in everything for his glory.

[ 20 : 46 ] But that's not all. We also need to have confidence that God works in all things for the ultimate good of his people. The Apostle Paul assures us of this in one of my favorite verses in all the Bible.

It's in Romans 8, 28. He says, and we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who've been called according to his purpose. I can't think of anything more comforting to me as a child of God as I go through this time of national crisis than this promise.

Paul said it in the context of talking about Christians' suffering. Back up in Romans 18, he said this, for I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

This is a time of suffering right now worldwide. Many people are suffering throughout the world. Many people are suffering in this country including Christians.

Christians are suffering physically, emotionally, financially, socially, and in other ways. There is absolutely nothing good about this crisis that we're going through right now in our country.

[ 22 : 09 ] But God is working in the midst of this awful crisis for ultimate good in the lives of his people. One of the ways God is working is to develop Christ-like character in us, his children.

Look at this from Romans 8, 29. For those whom he foreknew, he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son. God is working in everything, both good and bad, to make us more and more like Jesus, to develop Christ-like character in us.

We as God's people, God's children, we need to trust him as we go through this time of crisis. We need to have confidence that God really is in control, that he really does care for us, that he is working everything for his glory and for ultimate good in our lives as his people.

You know, Mary and Martha experienced a crisis related to the death of their brother. They responded well. They are models of how to respond because they looked to the Lord in faith. They truly trusted him. But remember, the Lord didn't make the crisis go away. Things got worse before they got better.

[ 23 : 47 ] Lazarus died. Mary and Martha had to deal with the pain and the sorrow of grief. Grief over losing their brother.

But we need to always remember in this story and in life, God is always working in the midst of these difficulties for good.

He is always working according to his good purpose. He'll bring good from the crises. We've already seen in this passage both God the Father and the Son were glorified.

Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. And many people believed in Jesus as a result of this crisis and the way Jesus brought him back to life.

The Lord also worked in this experience to draw Mary and Martha closer to him. Now think about that. Their hearts were broken. They were grieving the death of their brother.

[ 24 : 57 ] But the way Jesus came to them, the things he said to them, the way he responded to them, it made all the difference in the world. They drew closer to him.

Think about what happened. Jesus walked with them through their crisis of grief. He was there. He was with them. Jesus even wept with them.

You know, that's how relationships grow deeper. We know that. Haven't you drawn closer to people who have been there with you during a crisis?

Or maybe people who shared a special time of joy with you. It draws you closer, doesn't it? Most people draw closer to those that they laugh and cry with.

That's why we need to have a relationship with God through faith in the Lord Jesus. If you don't have a relationship with the Lord like that, there's no better time for you to begin one than right now, this moment.

[ 26 : 07 ] If you sense your need of a real, true, saving relationship with the Lord, admit to God your sin.

Admit your selfishness. Admit how you have been living life your way instead of His way. Turn from your sin. Change your mind. What the Bible calls repent.

Turn from your sin and to Jesus. Trust that when He died on the cross, He actually paid the penalty for your sins. He took the punishment that you deserve as a result of your sin against God.

Call upon Jesus right now to save you. Call upon Him to become your Savior. Surrender your life to Him right now as your Lord, your King.

You know, if Jesus died for us, if He gave His life for us, in response as we trust Him, we should give our lives back to Him.

[ 27 : 10 ] He is trustworthy. And I encourage you to make that kind of commitment right now. If you are a Christian, but you've drifted away from the Lord, as I've talked about having a real close relationship with God earlier in this message, it bothers you to know that you don't have that kind of fellowship and relationship with the Lord.

I want to encourage you right now, just admit to God that you've ignored Him, you've drifted away, or if you've rebelled, admit it, confess your sin, turn from it, repent, come back to the Lord, trusting Him, resting in Him, knowing that through His death on the cross, the penalty for your sins have been paid.

Trust that through faith in Him, His perfect life is credited to you. That's why God can accept us because when we are trusting Christ, we become one with Him. He accepts Christ's perfect life and His death on the cross as ours, His death to sin as ours.

You know, right now, we all need to take responsibility to do what we can to stay healthy, to help others, and to stop the spread of the coronavirus, by listening to our state and national leaders.

This is important. And at the same time, as God's people, let's make sure that we do turn to the Lord, trust Him, and rest in the fact that God is great.

[ 28 : 53 ] God is sovereign. God is in control. God is good. God is good. God is good. He is working out His good purpose right now, even in the midst of this crisis, in your life and in my life as His

children.

Let's go to the Lord in prayer now. Would you pray with me? Father, thank You for Your Word, for these examples of believers who responded to a crisis by looking to You and trusting You.

Help us, Lord, to do the same. Lord, show us this morning how we need to respond. Show those who do not know Christ as their Lord and Savior their need.

Convict them of their sin. Call them to true faith in Jesus. Save them today, we pray. And Lord, we pray that You will work in the life of Christians who are not close to You right now.

Give them a true desire, a hunger and a thirst for closer fellowship with You. Draw them to You, Father. And Lord, I pray that You will encourage Christians who are seeking to walk with You.

[ 30 : 27 ] They're seeking to be faithful. Lord, help them, help all of us to be models in our community, among our family members and friends, of how Christians face a crisis by looking to You, trusting You, and also seeking to be the best neighbors and citizens that we can by cooperating with our national and state leaders and doing everything possible to bring about an end to this global pandemic.

pandemic. And it's in Jesus' name we pray. Amen.