

And **your ultimate good** is to become conformed to the image of our Father's only divine Son. Said another way, to become more and more Christlike in your thinking, in your attitudes, in your emotions, in your will, in your everyday living in a world that rejects Him. And **God is so good**, and so committed to our ultimate good, that He knows it will take bad things as well as good things to accomplish that ultimate purpose.

And, of course, His Son is our ultimate example. So there He was on the cross suffering for you and for me, and "when he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued \_\_\_\_\_ himself to him [His Father] who judges justly" (**1 Peter 2:23**). Can you do that? If you know that He is good, and if you are committed to His ultimate goal for you, then you will do that!

**Covid-19... Why God?** Pandemics and other crises, among other unknown things, are meant to awaken the lost to their own terrible lostness, and that only Jesus can save them. Pandemics and other crises are meant to remind us believers that God is out to burn off the dross so that we walk before Him increasingly pure like Jesus.

## So in closing, let's pray two prayers:

### 1. Pray that \_\_\_\_\_ people will climb a tree.

Let's pray that they'll awaken to their need for salvation, and will run ahead of the crowd who's blocking their view, and so seek to see who Jesus is, that they will climb a tree.

### 2. Pray that \_\_\_\_\_ people will climb a tree.

You know how we can sometimes get distracted by all the vertical in our lives? How some of us can't see God's forest because of the world's trees? There's too much stuff. Too much self. Too much drama. Too much self-inflicted drama. Too much disunity. Too much anger. Too much. Let's pray that because of the pandemic, we'll climb a tree.

I love this: Jesus stopped under Zacchaeus' tree, and looked up as he was looking down, and said, "Zacchaeus, come down out of that tree, for I must stay at your house today." Do you need to climb a tree today?

# Covid-19... Why, God?

## Selected Scriptures

### Zacchaeus climbs a tree (Luke 19:1-9).

Seventeenth century French Theologian Blaise Pascal is credited with saying that there is a God-shaped \_\_\_\_\_ in every heart, and consequently only God can fill it. But that doesn't stop people from trying to fill it with all kinds of things, events, places, and other people. It can't be done, but they give it a heroic go, nonetheless. Zacchaeus certainly did.

He was rich. He was important. He was somebody. But Jesus said in verse 10 that what he really was, was "lost." And what he really needed was salvation from his lost condition. Zacchaeus went after position, power, prosperity, and pleasure, but nothing he tried satisfied, nothing filled the empty God-shaped hole in his heart.

He's now more lost and needy than ever. And this realization of total lostness and dire need drove him to do something way out of character: to pull up his skirt, run down the road to the end of the crowd, and with short arms and legs, with great effort, **he climbs a tree.**

Isn't that what God wants from people, to finally come to an end of themselves and climb a tree? There are two verses that I find fasci-nating. The first is verse 3: "And he was seeking to see who Jesus was." That is a faithful translation. He wasn't only seeking to see Jesus, He was seeking to see who Jesus was. The second verse is 10, where Jesus said, "For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost." That's why Jesus came! Not only was Zacchaeus seeking Jesus, Jesus was seeking Zacchaeus, because Jesus knows Jesus is what people need.

So, generally speaking, that's why God allowed Covid-19. Or is it more biblically correct to say that God caused the pandemic? That would be in keeping with what happened to Job, for Job said, "Shall we receive good from God, and shall we not \_\_\_\_\_ evil [from God]?" (2:10) For what is evil or bad to us, God often means it for good. God knows what people need, and He seeks them out in their troubles. For lost people to finally be found and saved from their lost condition, they must seek God, while He at the same time is seeking them.

That's the general reason, but let's get specific. Why does God allow/cause bad things like Covid-19 to happen to nearly the entire planet? What specifically does God want to teach people about Himself? What do all people desperately need to know about God?

### **Covid-19... Why, God? Because people need to know that:**

#### **1. God is \_\_\_\_\_.**

**Isaiah 43:11:** I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior." **45:21:** "There is no other god besides me, a righteous God and a Savior, there is \_\_\_\_\_ besides me." But isn't it true to say that the vast majority of God-created human beings who live on His created planet don't recognize Him as the only God and Savior? Or, if they do recognize Him, they certainly do not treat Him as the only God and Savior. They treat Him as though He is not an important Person. And being human ourselves, even as saved humans, we too are prone to live as though God's not an important Person, plowing through life with very little attention given to Him. I wonder how God feels about that?

He is not pleased with His creatures, saved and unsaved alike, when our visions and views are horizontal rather than vertical. When we don't acknowledge Him, look to Him, honor Him, trust Him, depend on Him, worship Him and Him alone, and treat Him as the only One who is God!

#### **2. God is the \_\_\_\_\_.**

**Isaiah 14:24:** "The LORD of hosts has sworn: 'As I planned, so shall it be, and as I have \_\_\_\_\_, so shall it stand.'" **Verse 27:** "For the LORD of hosts has purposed, and who will annul it? His hand is stretched out, and who will turn it back?" And in **Daniel 4:35**, a humbled King Nebuchadnezzar confessed, "[The LORD] does according to his will among the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth; and none can stay his hand or say to him, 'What have you done?'"

God is the Controller of all His creation, in heaven and on earth. Or said another way, God is Sovereign. So who can thwart His hand? Nobody! He controls, and we control only what He has given us and has allowed us. And God is reminding us of that, because the tendency of humanity is to look everywhere but up, trying to control what only He controls.

#### **3. God is \_\_\_\_\_.**

**2 Peter 3:9:** "The Lord is slow to fulfill his promises as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that \_\_\_\_\_ should reach repentance." God is mercifully patient, waiting, waiting for people to finally wake up and get a clue that God is our only Savior, so we better repent!

However, because of the pandemic, people are dying either after they got a clue or not, but having been given plenty of opportunities in life. The fact is, we are all dying. It is the one great inevitability. And there's only one way to live so that we will live forever in heaven—by \_\_\_\_\_ in God's divine Son. So the God who sent us the pandemic, is calling us to awaken from our spiritual slumber. How merciful!

#### **4. God is not \_\_\_\_\_.**

For those who think He's optional, the Lord Jesus Himself clearly stated in **John 14:6**, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. \_\_\_\_\_ one comes to the Father except through me." It's not like God is a good choice, but so is Buddha, or church attendance, or charity work, or family, or worldly pursuits, or Jack Daniels, etc. But I guess God is optional ... **if you don't care who you hurt through your unbelief, including yourself, or who you take with you when you die.** This awful pandemic is meant to warn us of something worse.

#### **5. God is \_\_\_\_\_.**

But that doesn't mean He brings only good to those who hate Him, or ignore Him, or deny Him, or rebel against Him. And that doesn't mean that everything that visits His beloved children is good. From a human point of view, many not-good-things come our way. But because God is good, He means it's all for our good. **Romans 8:28-29:** "**And we know that [because God is good] God causes all things to work together \_\_\_\_\_ good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.**"<sup>29</sup> For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined **[to this high and holy purpose] to become conformed to the image of His Son.**" Do you know that, child of God? That if you know that God is good, if you trust Him, and if you cooperate with Him *He will cause all things to work together for your good?*