

Brian Gadsby 20 June 2021

(Sermon Summary)

Luke 13:1-5

‘The Voice of Coronavirus’

On August 12th 1866, Charles Haddon Spurgeon preached ‘The Voice of Cholera’, a powerful sermon which addressed the outbreak of cholera in London. Today we are in a similar situation to his original hearers, since the Covid pandemic turned our lives upside down last March.

We all have different views:

- some are more afraid of infection
- some are more concerned about the disruption to their relationships
- we have different attitudes to the restrictions and the reasoning behind them.

But perhaps we have been talking about the wrong issues. We overlook the fact that GOD has changed the world. While the Government have done all they can to help and support us, they have left God out of the equation. Our only hope of understanding His purposes is to turn to Scripture.

In the passage, Jesus addresses two incidents which were talking points in Jerusalem at the time: the collapse of the Tower of Siloam and the murder of some Galileans by Pilate in the temple. In both instances, the victims had met a sudden death. The general view was that this was a judgement for their sins - a view similar to that expressed by Job’s friends. Jesus didn’t enter into debate about the victims’ sin and instead diverted the discussion to the *living*. He warned all those around that “Unless you repent, you will all likewise perish”, challenging them to think about their own standing before God.

Covid struck us as quickly as the tower fell. It proves that we are not in control of our lives and cannot control the future. Even world leaders are powerless to ensure that it never happens again. This should make all of us stop and ask eternal questions.

1: Remember God’s Hand

God has planned the outworking of history and His purposes are being worked out (Eph 1:11). This should humble us. Spurgeon said, “We believe that God sends all pestilences ... with a purpose”. We cannot fully understand God’s ways (Isaiah 55:8-9) but we can know in part.

2: Remember God’s Holiness

God’s eyes are too pure to look on wickedness (Habbakuk 1:13). God’s holiness stands in complete contrast to our uncleanness and that of our society. When Isaiah saw a vision of the Lord he was awestruck and completely undone (Isaiah 6). God sees everything we do, and the innermost thoughts of our heart (Heb. 4:13).

God looks at our society and sees all His commandments being broken. He sees idolatry, blasphemy, and no desire to worship on the Sabbath. People do not honour their parents and the streets are filled with murder, adultery and covetousness. These things were bad enough in Spurgeon’s day, but today it is far worse and social media condones these sins.

3: Remember God's Hell

While few people today believe in hell, Jesus spoke very clearly about it. In Mark 9 we learn of two terrible realities:

- the worm that never dies. This probably refers to the torment of regret as people remember their lives on earth and all the times they heard the Gospel and rejected it.
- the fire that is not quenched. This probably refers to the physical agonies of hell - a place of punishment, thirst, pain, anger and eternal separation from God.

You could die at any time, for example in an accident or terrorist incident. If you have rejected God's plan of salvation in Christ, then you have a ticket to hell. But it doesn't have to be like that!

4. Remember God's Hope

Our only hope is in the Lord Jesus Christ. 'Unless you repent, you all likewise will perish', but "believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved" (Acts 16:31).

Covid foreshadows the great eternal calamity coming on all who do not believe. However, it could also be an act of grace. It is a trumpet call, warning us that death is real and certain. It gives people time to repent and turn to Jesus Christ before the final judgement.

Perhaps God has given this extra time especially for you. Jesus said "Come to me, all you who labour ... and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). You don't need to do any religious actions - God is offering His salvation to anyone who says "I will follow Jesus".