

Revive us again

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- [0 : 0 0] Well, over the last few weeks, more or less since the MCO started, we have been spending our time in the Psalms.
- I hope they've been enriching to you, they've certainly been enriching to me. And this morning we're going to turn again to yet another Psalm, a Psalm that I found personally challenging during this week as I look at it.
- And so let us turn now to Psalm 80, Psalm 80, and I'm going to read it and then we will hear what the word of the Lord has to say to us this morning.
- Psalm 80, for the director of music, to the tune of the Lilies of the Covenant of Asaph, a Psalm. Hear a shepherd of Israel, you will lead Joseph like a flock.
- You will sit and throne between the sheridan. Shine forth before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh. Awaken your mind. Come and save us.
- [1 : 1 7] Restore us, O God. Make your face shine on us, that we may be saved. How long, Lord God Almighty, will your anger smolder against the prayers of your people?
- You have fed them with the bread of tears. You have made them bring tears by the bold food. You have made us an object of derision to our neighbors, and our enemies mock us.
- Restore us, God Almighty. Make your face shine on us, that we may be saved. You transplanted the vine from Egypt. You drove out the nations and planted it.
- You cleared the ground for it, and it took root and filled the land. The mountains were covered with its shade. The mighty setters with its branches.
- Its branches reach as far as the sea. It shoots as far as the river. Why have you broken down its walls? So that all who pass by pick its grapes.
- [2 : 2 0] Bores from the forest ravage it, and insects from the fields feed on it. Return to us, God Almighty. Look down from heaven and see.
- Watch over this vine, the root your right hand has planted, the sun you have raised up for yourself. Your vine is cut down. It is burned with fire.
- At your rebuke, your people perish. Let your hand rest on the man at your right hand, the son of man you have raised up for yourself.
- Then we will not turn away from you. Revive us, and we will call on your name. Restore us, Lord God Almighty.
- Make your face shine on us, that we may be safe. This is the word of the Lord. Let's pray again to the author of this word to help us.
- [3 : 1 9] Father, as we come to this psalm this morning again, will you be at work by your Spirit? Will you be at work ensuring that this word takes root in our hearts? And that you might refine us so that we might be a people who will live to your praise and follow your praise.
- All this we pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. Empty. If there is one word that I would associate with the current pandemic, that is one of the top candidates.

I wonder, have you noticed just how much COVID-19 has emptied our lives? In the first instance, it does like quite literally, COVID-19 empties us of breath.

As I listen to the first hand accounts of the doctors and the patients on the front lines, I keep hearing over and over again. The struggles to breathe, the low levels of oxygen, the constant cry for more ventilators.

That's what makes COVID-19 so deadly the way it can attack our lungs. But that's not the only emptying happening. COVID-19 has emptied our shelves.

[4 : 32] I guess that's no longer so true, but certainly in the early days, in scenes repeated across the globe, whenever a country comes into contact with COVID-19, our supermarket aisles, formerly filled with bread, hand sanitizers, and disinfectant wipes, are suddenly all bare.

It's as if a giant hand has reached in and taken everything with one swoop in one go. And while those empty shelves are now filled again, the empty streets aren't.

It's striking that whenever at night I go out and throw the rubbish, just how quiet Jalan Laksamana Cheng Ho is. Now this is a busy road, but now in the evening, you can literally have minutes without a single vehicle passing by.

Furthermore, COVID-19 has emptied our time. Now this is not true of everyone, of course, but it is true for a great many of us. That our work routines and habits have been greatly interrupted.

That we now have great stretches of uninterrupted time at home with nowhere to go. And if we are quarantined, like some of my friends are, perhaps like one or two of you this morning might be, then we have very little to do.

[5 : 56] And of course, it has emptied our churches. All over the world, church buildings sit silent and empty in a way that would have seemed unimaginable to us just a few months ago.

In the pre-coronavirus age, it would have been every pastor's worst nightmare to preach to empty halls during Easter service. But last week, that nightmare basically came true for 90% of pastors all around the world.

But there is one more thing COVID-19 has forced us to reckon with. It's forced us to reckon with whether this world is empty of God. Now it could be empty of God in two ways.

It could be empty of God in the Dawkins sense. Richard Dawkins is an Oxford scientist and one of the most famous atheists of our time. And to him, it's nonsense to think that there is any supernatural dimension to our world.

This world is empty of God because there is no God. Our world is simply a closed system of physical forces and laws of nature.

[7 : 11] If there is an earthquake, a tsunami, or a virus that emerged from nowhere, well, tough luck. That's just the way the world is. And certainly COVID-19 could push some people towards that conclusion.

Since surely the existence of this pandemic proves that there is no God. But that is unsatisfactory because if that is simply the way the world is, why do we still feel the pain?

Why do we still feel the need to search for meaning? Why do we feel so empty if that is simply the way the world is? In his book, *River Out of Eden, The Darwinian View of Life*, Dawkins writes this, and it's also on your outline.

In a universe of blind physical forces and genetic replication, well, some people are going to get hurt. Other people are going to get lucky. And you won't find any rhyme or reason in it, nor any justice.

Did you hear that? Dawkins is simply bringing his worldview to a logical conclusion. If there is no God, and the world is the way it is, simply because that's the way it is, then everything that happens is actually natural.

[8 : 37] Earthquakes, tsunamis, coronaviruses, we shouldn't even call them tragedies or disasters. And some people will get lucky.

They won't get exposed or die from COVID-19. Others not so much. But it's all random. COVID-19 itself simply exposes our world as empty of meaning, if you subscribe to Dawkins' view.

But there is another way in which we could say that this world is empty of God. It's empty of God in the Plath sense. Sylvia Plath was an American writer in the 20th century who was clinically depressed for most of her adult life.

As all great writers do, she has a keen eye for both her outer surroundings as well as her own inner life. And she has this beautiful line that captures the heartfelt cry for many of us.

I talk to God, but the sky is empty. I talk to God, but the sky is empty. In other words, I talk to God, but He didn't reply to me.

[9 : 51] I spoke to God, but it appears He's not listening. I turned to God, but He didn't turn His face towards me. The world is empty of God, not because God doesn't exist, but because God has chosen to absent Himself.

That is certainly how the people of God feel. In the psalm we're looking at today, we find a prayer of Israel. They're desperate for God. They're pleading for Him.

They're crying out for Him. It appears that they have realized their lives, not just individually, but nationally, is empty of God. And so now they want Him back in their midst.

They're under some sort of pressure, some attack, and so they seek Him. And isn't that so often how God has to get our attention?

When times are good, God is just an option. He's a luxury we occasionally indulge in. He's on the sidelines, not on the center of our lives.

[10 : 57] Or He simply surpasses the requirements, something extra and nice to have, but not strictly necessary. But when we are plunged into the deepest pits and the darkest valleys, we begin to realize our need for Him.

And sometimes that's what God does, bringing us to a place of desperation so that we will finally throw ourselves at His feet.

It's not that we need God more during the tough times. It's that we realize better what has always been the case.

From this psalm, we know that Israel is broken, ravaged, and mocked. They certainly felt their need for God most keenly at the point where God's hand was most heavy upon them.

But they've always needed Him. As we'll see later on, God has always been their shepherd and their gardener, not just during selected times.

[12 : 06] And perhaps that's the point God wants to bring us to in this season. He wants us to feel the emptiness COVID-19 brings, so that we will see that we are not independent tola bears, bravely travelling through the ice-cold Arctic sea on our own, but that we are sheep without a shepherd, frequently lost, always needing a guide to lead the way.

And so what can we do when we're at this point? Where can we go? What's our response? How can we fill the empty void God has left us in with?

Well, here is the answer of Psalm BD. We must pray as we wait. We must pray as we wait. In particular, we should pray for revival.

We should pray for restoration. We should pray for repentance. Look at the repeated refrain that runs throughout this Psalm. Verse 3. Restore us, O God.

Make your face shine on us, that we may be safe. Verse 7. Restore us, God Almighty. Make your face shine on us, that we may be safe.

[13 : 23] Verse 19. Restore us, Lord God Almighty. Make your face shine on us, that we may be safe. Restore us again, Lord.

Turn to us. Smile on us once again. We need to be revived. Now, it's very important that we recognize what revival is not. Revival is not about large rallies, emotional speeches, and appeals to come forward.

Revival is not about kicking a box that says, I've rededicated my life with Jesus while feeling high. Revival is not tears, trembling, groans, loud cries, or falling down.

That does not constitute revival, or even indicate one way or another that someone has experienced revival. They might accompany revival, but in themselves they are empty signs.

Instead, to use the words of the church historian Richard Lovelace, revival is nothing less than the infusion of new spiritual life imparted by the Holy Spirit into an existing part of Christ's body.

[14 : 40] It's when a group of Christians, whose spiritual life is tired, who are lacking in vitality, who are genuinely God's people, but know little of his love, become aware again.

Become aware again of the holiness of God, the depth of your sin, and their status in Christ. That they are people who are fully accepted by God, and who are now free from the bondage to sin.

It is at its heart, a rediscovery of the gospel as life transforming. And revivals are necessary, because we too often fall into living as if the gospel is not true.

We might know it in our heads, but we don't need it in our hearts. But when revival touches us, the gospel no longer simply becomes a set of beliefs to subscribe to, but the power of God for profound change.

And revival is something that only God can bring about. We can't produce a strategic plan to create revival. We can only pray as we wait.

[15 : 57] But how should we pray as we wait? Well, Psalm 80 prescribes three actions we can take. Firstly, we can plead earnestly for restoration.

We can plead earnestly for restoration. Verse 1. Hear us, Shepherd of Israel. Yew who lead Joseph like a flock. Yew who sit and throw between the cherubim shine forth before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh.

Now notice the way the psalmist names his God. He's the Shepherd. Shepherds are not receptionists, sitting down comfortably in air-conditioned settings with little to do except play candy crush on their phones.

No, their job is out in the hot sun, leading the sheep onto safe paths for grazing and drinking. They protect the sheep against predators, and at night they pretend to injured and sick sheep.

They are their sheep's constant companions. And Israel rightly looks to God as their shepherd, to feed and guide them, to care and protect them.

[17 : 09] But this shepherd is now distant. Indeed, his power lies dormant. In the temple, in the Holy of Holies, there lies what is called the Ark of the Covenant, representing God's throne on earth.

And right above its lid are two cherubim, two angels made of gold. And so when the psalmist names the shepherd as one who sits and thrones between the cherubim, he's really saying, you know what?

Our shepherd is not some random animal lover. Our shepherd is the king who commands heavenly armies. And that's why the psalmist urges him, awaken your might.

You can protect us. You're powerful enough to do so. You can lead us. You're strong enough to do so. Lord, please do so. We don't know why you don't.

You see, Israel are discontented with their current state of affairs. They are dissatisfied with their status quo.

[18 : 18] They know who God is. And they know their current experience doesn't match up with who God is. And so their discontent leads them to plead earnestly.

And notice the short, sharp petitions. Shine forth. Awaken your might. Come save us. Restore us. You see, any hope of revival must begin with discontent.

Now that sounds wrong. Isn't discontent a bad thing? Yes, it normally is. But not always. Discontent can be a good thing when it acts as a disruptive force to awaken us to God's desires.

One author observes, Christianity has nothing to say to the person who is completely happy with the way things are.

Its message is for those who hunger and thirst. For those who desire life as it was meant to be. And so when our discontent produces in us a desire for God himself, when it leads us to long for his kingdom to be established, then we know that discontent is wholly discontent.

[19 : 39] For God often uses bad situations to sharpen our prayers. He wants us not to address him as therapists, someone he simply bumbled to.

He wants us not to address him as magician, someone who fulfills our every wish. Rather, he wants us to address him according to who he really is.

A shepherd who leads us. A king who rules over us. And he wants to sharpen our prayer requests.

He wants us to ask him not just for protection, but to restore us to become a people who genuinely relate to him rightly. And that's where revival begins.

For did you notice verse 3, that the cry is not simply for deliverance, but for relationship. Make your face shine upon us.

[20 : 41] The psalmist is invoking the famous words of the Aaronic blessing from number 6. The Lord bless you and keep you. The Lord make his face shine on you and be gracious to you.

The Lord turn his face towards you and give you peace. You see, back in Numbers, God wanted to make sure that his people knew this as they got ready to settle in the Promised Land.

He wants them to know, you're precious to me. And that's why I want to keep you. Be gracious to you. Turn my face towards you. Give you peace.

Notice that these are all relational words. And that's what true blessing is all about. Relationship with God. But Israel forgot time and time again.

Until now. As they sit surrounded and ravaged by their enemies. And now they remember. So they plead. Please, Lord, return us back to the relationship our ancestors had with you.

[21 : 49] You know, it's just like when you had a quarrel with somebody. Normally what happens is that you sit silently, you're breathing away, and your faces are turned away from each other.

Right? But reconciliation happens when a head is reached out. When a face is turned back to you.

When a smile breaks out on both your faces. And your relationship is restored. Well, that's what Israel is asking for.

And so the question is, are we asking for the same thing? Are our prayers being sharpened?

During this pandemic, what do our prayer requests consist of? Are we asking to know God more? Are we pleading to deepen our relationship with Him?

[22 : 49] Are we treating God like a random policeman, simply demanding that He give us protection? Or are we treating God as Father, wanting to see His smiling face?

After all, we've all been where Israel was. We know what it's like to feel the pressure from our circumstances. Maybe it's COVID-19 related pressures of job security and health concerns.

Maybe it's pressures unrelated to COVID-19, to do with family relationships and other issues. And we know what it's like to be cold towards God.

I'm sure if you've been a Christian for any length of time, there are times when God is not awesome to you at all. Even during this MCO period, I know that I should pray more.

But I still find it difficult to do so. Maybe you feel the same. Even though you have more time on your hands, you find yourself avoiding spending time with God.

[23 : 54] But if we are discontented with our spiritual coolness, if we are dismayed that our hearts don't find God great at all, even during a pandemic, well that's a starting point.

Bring those to God. Plead with Him and say, You know, God, this time has exposed how much I think I don't need you. This time has exposed me and shown how much I don't actually long for you.

And so Lord, please restore me. Help us value our relationship with you. I want the Gospel in my heart again, not just in my brain. Begin to pray the prayers of Ephesians 3 verse 16 to 19.

God, strengthen me by your Spirit. May Christ truly dwell in my heart. And may I be rooted and established in Him. To grasp how wide and how long and how high and how deep is the love of Christ.

Lord, as you fill the Old Testament, the temple in the Old Testament, with your presence and your glory. Fill us, your church now, with the full measure of yourself.

[25 : 09] Your presence, your power, your love. And so plead earnestly for restoration. Begin to get dissatisfied with the status quo.

After all, none of us are in a place where we can say, I don't need to change. None of us are fully sanctified yet.

And so plead with God to revive you. But don't stop that. Secondly, assess and accept the Lord's discipline.

Assess and accept the Lord's discipline. In verses 4 to 6, we get more of a sense of Israel's troubles. How long, Lord God Almighty, will your anger smolder against the prayers of your people?

You have fed them with the bread of tears. You have made them drink tears by the full food. You have made us an object of derision to our neighbours and our enemies, while us.

[26 : 14] We are not sure of the exact historical situation. But the references earlier to the tribes like Ephraim and Manasseh, who are all from the northern kingdom, suggest that these are the last days of that kingdom before it fell to Assyria.

Or perhaps just after. The psalmist could be part of the northern kingdom. Or perhaps just a sympathetic observer from the south, asking God to have mercy on the top, while also pleading with God to revive them in the south, to ensure that the same fate does not be for them.

For whatever the exact situation, it's clear that Israel has brought this upon themselves. And after all, when we read the Old Testament, God's people, whether in the north or the south, are often unfaithful.

In fact, it doesn't really matter exactly when this was written, because it would apply to many points in their history. Israel are repeat offenders, regularly committing spiritual adultery.

Just read Hosea. Just read Amos. Just read Ezekiel 16. A shocking, graphic parable detailing the way people break their relationship with the Lord.

[27 : 34] It's not the sort of story you want your son and his school kids to know. And the Lord is grieved and disquieted. Somewhat shockingly, this psalm tells us that His anger burns against the prayers of His people.

They pray. But God is disquieted with their prayers. Why? We're not told exactly here. But quite likely, the situation is similar to what was going on in Isaiah chapter 1.

In Isaiah, the people have been engaging in evil deeds, neglecting their neighbour, engaging in unjust practices, while at the same time still going to the temple and offering their sacrifices.

They are hypocrites. And so in Isaiah chapter 1 verse 15, God calls them out. He says, When you spread out your hands in prayer, I hide my eyes from you.

Even when you offer many prayers, I am not listening. And so here's the thing. Sin often feels good.

[28 : 45] Donating to charity for the purposes of man's praise feels good. Enjoying illegally downloaded movies during this MCO feels good.

Making snide remarks online about other people's inconsiderate behaviour feels good. But sin will ultimately rob us of joy.

The psalmist tells us so often that tears will become our food. Verse 5. And as the proverb goes, pride comes before our fall. And so sin leads ultimately to our downfall and to becoming an object of mockery.

Verse 6. Because sin disquiets God. It wounds his heart. And he gives us over to the consequences. He takes no pleasure in doing so.

But he must. Notice in verse 5 that it is God himself who has fed them and made them drink these tears.

[29 : 49] And so as we pray for restoration, we need to assess as well. How are we doing spiritually? Are there places in my life that I have not surrendered to God?

Or where I still pay rent to sin as if he is still the landlord? Now let's be clear. Covid-19 is not specific punishment from God for specific sin.

As I unpacked in my sermon from Luke 13 a few weeks ago. It's worth saying that again. But Covid-19 should make us not just long for restoration, but also to take stock of our lives.

How are we doing? And we should take stock not just individually, but as a church. This past week I found an article by an Anglican pastor theologian, Jonathan Bale, quite hard provoking.

He reflects on the episode where Jesus empties the temple and drives out all the money changers. He observes that the reason Jesus does so is because Jesus knows that the temple is meant to be a house of prayer for all nations.

[31 : 07] But it has now become a den of robbers as the money changers are just interested in money. And that phrase, then of robbers, is taken from a sermon by the prophet Jeremiah, in which the prophet foretells the imminent destruction of the temple because of the idolatry of the people.

And so, when Jesus empties the temple, he is doing so as a prophetic sign of coming judgment against it.

But what is so thought-provoking is that Bales asks this question. Could there be a parallel between the empty temple and our empty churches?

He is careful to clarify what he is suggesting. He makes clear that the parallel is not exact. But Jesus clears the temple with a whip, while we voluntarily vacate our churches in response to a pandemic.

And like me, he is not suggesting that COVID-19 is a specific judgment against the sins of the church. But he suggests that by emptying our pews, perhaps God is forcing us to take stock of where we are as a church.

[32 : 28] What are the areas we might have grieved God as KEC? Perhaps our sin of indifference, our sin of treating His word lightly, perhaps our sin of our lack of life.

But whatever it is, we can lament, but we should also humbly repent. We should confess our sin as a church.

For revival happens only when we take such a posture. Revival happens as we assess ourselves and accept His discipline. As Hebrews 12 verse 5 to 6 says, My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when He rebukes you, because the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and He chastens everyone He accepts as His son.

You see, for Christians, discipline is actually good news. Hebrews 12 verse 8 tells us that if we are not disciplined, that shows we are not in the family.

Fathers don't discipline those outside their family, they discipline their children. And so God disciplines us because He loves us as His children. You see, it is true that in Christ we have no more condemnation.

[33 : 55] In Christ, God will not punish us when we stand before Him on that final day in the divine court room. But He still disciplines us in the meantime as our Father.

In Hebrews 12 verse 9 and 11, we are told the purpose of such discipline is so that we can share in His holiness. It produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.

And so God might still bring difficult circumstances, trials, hardships into our lives to train us to turn from sin and to live His way.

It is about formation, not destruction. It is to be understood, as the theologian Frederick A. He puts it, as the loving corrections of a merciful and tender-hearted Father.

So while we pray as we wait, we assess ourselves and accept the Lord's discipline. That is part of how He revives us. After all, you can only get physically fit if you subject your body to discipline.

[35 : 06] And it is similar with our spiritual fitness. But as we do that, there is one more action that is even more foundational for revival.

So we come to our final action for today. Thirdly, seek refuge in the true vine and sun. Seek refuge in the true vine and sun.

Now here is a picture of God that you might never have thought about. A gardener. As a vine dresser, verse 8, He takes care of Israel, His precious vine. He transplanted the vine from Egypt.

He drove out the nations and planted it. He cleared the ground for it and He took root and field to land. The psalmist is recalling the history of his people.

He remembers how God has rescued His people out of Egypt, brought them into the Promised Land and blessed them. And in so doing, he is actually recalling the character of God.

[36 : 08] I know nothing about taking care of vines. But from what I understand, it actually requires careful preparation and patient nurturing. The vine dresser must be committed if the vine is to be fruitful and grow.

And so how the vine turns out is a reflection of how committed the vine dresser is. And how has this vine turned out? Verse 10. The mountains were covered with its shade.

The mighty setters with its branches. Its branches reach as far as the sea. Its shoots as far as the river. The vine's growth reflects the care and the commitment of the vine dresser.

And now the psalmist pleads with the vine dresser to act to rescue his vine once again. Why tear down what you have been so committed to? He cries. Verse 12.

Why have you broken down its walls so that all who pass by pick his grapes? Boars from the forest ravaged it and insects from the fields feed on him. An early Jewish commentary explains the gravity of the situation.

[37 : 23] When the vineyard has been breached, anyone and everyone can go in and plunder it. They are ripe for destruction. And so the psalmist cries out, God, you've always been committed, so stay committed.

Please, otherwise your people might perish. Verse 16. Don't forget the son you have raised up for yourself. Verse 15. Let your hand rest on the man at your right hand.

The son of man you have raised up for yourself. Verse 17. In the immediate context, the psalmist is talking, of course, about Israel itself.

Verse 15 makes that clear. Since the son is in parallel with the vine. And so when he says, Please watch over the son you have raised.

Verse 15. He's talking about the nation. But he's also talking about Israel's king. In verse 17, his focus now moves towards an individual at God's right hand.

[38 : 31] And in the psalms, God's right hand is associated with Israel's king. And so the psalmist is praying, May you raise up and bless this king to ensure that your vine does not perish.

Is that our prayer too? Well, not quite. Because in Psalm 110 verse 1, we find another son of David who is Israel's king. And he talks about somebody sitting at God's right hand.

But this person, he says, is greater than the king of Israel. And indeed, if you turn to Daniel, the prophet speaks of somebody like the son of man, but to whom all nations will bow, all authority is given.

And indeed, the son of man sounds like God himself. And then Jesus comes. And he isn't shy to use the title, the son of man.

Indeed, the titles found in Psalm 80, such as shepherd and king, other titles, Jesus also will use. And he has been raised up by God to restore God's kingdom. Indeed, he has come to turn the hearts of man back to God himself.

[39 : 51] But on his last night of earth, he sits his disciples down, and he tells them, I am the true vine, and my father is the gardener.

What an astonishing claim! What is he saying? He is saying that he is not just God's representative, he also represents all the people of God.

And what does he do as this representative? He chooses, out of his own free will, to feed himself the bread of chaos.

He is raised up to be the vine that is cut down. He chooses, according to his human nature, to have the Father turn his face away from him as he bears our sin.

Why? To answer the prayer of the psalmist, that God's people may be restored, that God may shine his face upon the people, that God will save his people from perishing.

[41 : 00] Jesus shows that God remains the committed vine dresser. And so the psalmist prays and waits for this to be fulfilled.

But we pray knowing this has been fulfilled. We don't wait in the same way anymore. But we are like the psalmist in one respect.

We both look at God's mercy. He looks back at God's mercy in the Exodus. We look back at God's even greater mercy on the cross.

And why do we look back? Because we still need to be restored. We still need to repent. As Romans 2 verse 4 says, God's kindness leads to repentance.

Now, no, this is not the other way round. Romans 2 verse 4 doesn't say our repentance leads to God's kindness. No, it is as we see God's kindness, supremely in the Lord Jesus, that we are led to repentance.

[42 : 09] We are led to genuine prayers for revival. After all, if revival is a rediscovery of the Gospel as life transforming, it makes complete sense that looking at Jesus and rediscovering who He really is will transform us.

So see and take refuge in the true vine and Son. Meditate again on who He is. Revival begins there.

Did you notice that all throughout the psalm, that the focus is not so much on Israel's repentance, but on God Himself and what He can do? Read through this psalm again and notice how it keeps saying, you and your.

Because we need God to do the work. Look at verse 18 and notice just how powerless we are. Revive us and we will call on your name.

You know you would have thought it should be, as we call on your name, Lord, revive us. But no. We are so dead on our own that we need God to do all the work.

[43 : 25] Revive us and we will call on your name. And that's why we can only pray. That's why we must. We must.

On our own, we are empty. And COVID-19 has exposed that emptiness. But that need not be the last word. Samuel Shaw was a pastor in the 17th century who lived during a time of plague.

He and his wife were infected with the disease. But although they recovered, two of their children didn't. And died. And he published some of his meditations.

And here is what he said. Creation, he said, is good. It's full of good things. So he's not somebody who thinks that the world, the things of the world are all bad.

But here's what kinds of suffering and affliction do, he says. It empties us by stopping those created good things from feeling us.

[44 : 36] Poverty empties your money. Sickness empties your health. Old age empties your potential. Suffering empties your sense of wellbeing.

But when these created things fail, Shaw says, this is the best time to fill our hearts with a different kind of fullness. When we have all those good created things, we foolishly forget the supreme good.

But when God empties us of creaturely enjoyment, we are better prepared to meet God and to delight in His fullness.

You know, usually when we say someone is full of himself, it isn't a compliment. It means that he is arrogant. But when we say God is full of himself, it's different.

For God is love. And so to say he is full of himself is to say he is full of love. God is merciful. And so to say he is full of himself is to say he is full of mercy.

[45 : 42] God is good. God is good. And so to say he is full of himself is to say that he is filled to the brim with goodness. And God is a full God who wants to fill us.

Isn't that amazing? And so yes, COVID-19 has emptied us. But that need not be all bad news.

This morning, why not let God redeem that emptiness? Why not ask God during this time to fill us with His fullness? Why not cry out during this time, Restore us, Lord God Almighty.

Make your face shine upon us that we may be saved. Why not let the good God fill you with His goodness so that you can in turn do good to others.

For in Christ, God has made himself nothing, Emptied himself, And humbled himself onto a cross.

[46 : 49] And three days later, He left behind and empty too. Go to Jesus again today, Whether it's your first time, Whether you've been a Christian for 15 years, And be restored, Be revived, And let the warmth of God's face shine upon you.

Let us pray. Once again, I'll just give us a few seconds, Just to take in our prayer, Before I do this.

Father, as we come to you, I confess to you that too often our hearts are cold to mercy.

Too often we are indifferent to you, We don't think much about you. But Father, We just want to begin to get discontented with those state of affairs. Just set on fire our cold hearts once again.

Help us not to be lukewarm, But help us to be people who long to long for you. Help us to be people who want to know you. But help us to be people who want to know you. Would you indeed revive us so that we will call on your name again.

[48 : 29] Father, We know that sometimes even a pandemic might not be enough to wake us up. But you can Lord, so please wake us up. Please help us also to take stock of our lives, both on an individual level, but also as a church.

Where you will help us to see where we might have gone wrong. Or help us to run back to the foot of the cross once again. Where we know that we can see your supreme kindness as demonstrated on the cross.

Thank you for your great mercies. For the Lord Jesus, who chose to be the vine who was cut down for our sake. Help us to turn to him once again.

Help us to abide in him and remain in him. To be that branch who is crafted into the vine and who bears fruit. Help us to rejoice again in our good God.

The God who is absolutely full of goodness, full of love, full of mercy. Help us to see you as that kind of God.

[49 : 43] As who you really are. And will you revive us again? Empty us so that you might feel us. All this we pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Amen.