

## **Church This Is Our Moment** **by Matthew Till**

As cases of the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) begin to rise across the globe, governments are instituting travel restrictions, encouraging social distancing, canceling major community and social events, establishing quarantines, and in some cases imposing large-scale lockdowns. Such disruptive measures to daily life in the free world are naturally upsetting and worrisome. Anxiety is already high for many. In the days of social media, fake news, polarized politics, and ideological tribalism, it's hard to know who or what is trustworthy. One thing is for certain, COVID-19 is here, and governments are taking unprecedented action not seen in generations.

This is the moment where the church is made to shine. This is the moment you have prepared for.

Rarely are there opportunities of this scale for the church to be tested and demonstrate its vibrant hope, its purpose in the world, and the very power of Jesus Christ who is alive in us. In moments like this, will we ignore, deny, or pray away reality? Will we shrink into anxiety-driven panic and isolation, hoarding and protecting for the sake of our own lives? Or will we choose to live out the mission of the risen and eternal Christ who says, "There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends."?

Consider the countless nurses, doctors, healthcare workers, and first responders on the front lines caring for those infected. These everyday heroes of humanitarian love put their own health on the line for the sake of their friends and neighbors without prejudice. Consider the scientists, researchers, and academics who study, seek to understand, and work against the clock to prevent the spread of a global pandemic. Consider those working in public transportation, hospitality, and social services who interact with diverse populations on a daily basis. They too, knowing their imminent potential for exposure, are ensuring our economic systems are operating at their fullest capacity. Consider the selfless

laborers supporting critical sectors like power generation, water supply, treatment, food production, and delivery. And consider our public servants who carry the leadership responsibility of vital decision-making between prosperity or catastrophe.

This is not alarmist thinking. This is looking reality in the face by standing where light meets darkness. This is the moment where the church is made to shine. This is the moment you have prepared for. This is what your pastor, minister, and bible study leader has educated you for. Your training is over. Your time in the classroom has come to an end. Graduation day is here. Church, this is our moment.

Today is the day to set aside intellectual and ideological debates.

Today is the day of action. Today is the day to join the front lines. Today is the day to live as sent-ones in the world. Today is the day we join God in his mission. Today is the day we demonstrate our eternal hope in a greater King. Today is the day we declare our allegiance to a greater and more perfect Kingdom that is meant for today and fulfilled in a coming final day. Today is the day we radically fulfill the great commandment to love God and love our neighbors. Today is the day we give the world every reason to believe in the Jesus who has given us new life.

Church, this is our moment.

Here is how the church can own its moment in simple, but powerful ways:

- Care for the body of Christ by having multiple means of connecting with fellow church members in the event of mass social distancing or quarantine.
- Make a list of those in your congregation and in the community who are most vulnerable, such as the poor, elderly, chronically ill, widows, and single parents. Obtain multiple ways of contacting those individuals and begin to identify their needs in the event of a significant distraction to daily life.

- If you are buying extra supplies or have supplies on hand, begin a distribution plan among one another in the event of a planned large-scale quarantine or lockdown. Just as the first-century church setup distributions among one another, so should the modern church all the more.
- Make space in your home to care for a single young adult, widow, elderly person, chronically ill person, a single parent and their children, or another vulnerable member of society for a short period of time.
- Identify first-responders, care-givers, health care workers, doctors, and other essential workers you know in your community. Discover ways those individuals and their families may need to be supported or helped in their unique circumstances, especially if a long-duration event becomes a reality.
- Host virtual prayer meetings using social media or video conferencing apps.
- Combat the threat of loneliness in times of social distancing, isolation, or quarantines by regularly communicating with others through phone calls, video calls, or text messages.
- Be a constant source of encouragement and strength for one another and your neighbors. In the words of the Apostle Paul, “Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong. And do everything with love.” (1 Corinthians 16:13-14, NLT)
- Avoid debates, complaints, political arguments, conspiracy theories, or overly spiritualized-explanations. Focus your thoughts and words on sharing life, love, and hope in Christ.
- Pursue unity, holistic solutions, and opportunities to save the soul; the whole person — mind, body, heart, & spirit.
- Use time in social distancing as an extended period of sabbath rest through reading, prayer, abiding in the presence of the Holy Spirit, and connecting with loved ones in your home. Your soul needs it and God will use it for His glory.
- Visit, call, grieve with, and pray with the families of the deceased in their mourning.

Church, this is our moment. Will we respond to the call? Will we abide in the power of the Holy Spirit? Will we allow God to use us over the coming days, weeks, and months for his glory? These are the defining events in history that spark movements. This is our moment.