

1 Samuel 30

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Date: 22 March 2020

Preacher: Iver Martin

- [0 : 00] Good morning and welcome to this service on behalf of Bon Accord Free Church.
- Welcome to all our regular attendees, those of you who come on a regular basis. Also, we want to welcome everyone who has joined us by live stream.
- My name is Ivor Martin and I'm the intra-moderator at Bon Accord Free Church, which means that I'm looking after things in the absence of a regular minister.
- We did imagine that the vacancy would be straightforward and it should have been. Nobody took into account the possibility of unforeseen circumstances such as the ones that we are in right now.
- Right now, we're having to live through some strange times. In the space of about two weeks, the whole of life has been transformed and instead of going about our normal routines, we've had to learn to distance ourselves from one another, which means that in the interest of complying with government advice, we have felt the need to cancel church services.
- [1 : 24] This has been a painful decision because church is such a vital element in our lives. So we're going to feel the effects of not being able to see each other as normal.
- What's more, we have no idea how long these new restrictions are going to last. We're in the hands of scientists whose judgments we trust. And so, in all our interests, we will listen to them and we will heed their advice.
- The fact that we can't meet together as normal does not mean that we can't worship. We're so thankful today for the internet and for social media.
- While social media is responsible for lots of harm in our society, it is at root a fantastic tool if used wisely and responsibly.
- And today, we're using it for the best possible reason. God is not confined to geographical location.
- [2 : 37] He is omnipresent, which means he is everywhere in the universe. This great attribute is expressed by the psalmist in Psalm 139, which I'm going to read at least part of as we begin our service.
- O Lord, you have searched me and known me. You know when I sit down and when I rise up. You discern my thoughts from afar.
- You search out my path and my lying down and are acquainted with all my ways. Even before a word is on my tongue, behold, O Lord, you know it altogether.
- You hem me in, behind and before, and lay your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me.
- It is high. I cannot attain it. Where shall I go from your spirit? Or where shall I flee from your presence? If I ascend to heaven, you are there.
- [3 : 47] If I make my bed in Sheol, you are there. If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there your hand shall lead me and your right hand shall hold me.

If I say, surely the darkness shall cover me and the light about me be night, even the darkness is not dark to you.

The night is bright as the day, for darkness is as light to you. Such is the description that David gives of the omnipresence of God, the truth that God is not confined to any one geographical location.

It means that our worship today is not virtual. It is real because we come to a God who is present and who accepts us as we come in the name of Jesus.

And that's the name above every name. The name through whom we come together because there is no other name, the Bible says. Under heaven, given amongst men, whereby we must be saved.

[5 : 05] So, from now on, at 11 o'clock every Sunday, for the foreseeable future, I will lead a live service so that we can try to keep Sunday life at Bon Accord as normal as possible.

The service will start off very simply. Today we're going to have a few readings, prayer and a simple message. I'm ably assisted by our technical assistant, Ian Bowman, who I want to thank for his help in setting this up.

As time goes on and as we get used to this arrangement, I hope we'll get better at it. I'm sure perhaps that things can be added or adjusted as they become apparent.

And perhaps some musical slot can be incorporated into it that will provide some kind of compensation for our hymn and psalm singing.

But that will all develop as we go along. And I hope you'll bear with us as we try to negotiate our way through what is, for all of us, a new situation.

[6 : 19] Not least for me. It's strange for me to stand in front of a camera like this when I'm used to standing in a lectern or a pulpit where I can see faces in front of me.

And that's such an important feature of our church service to see the reaction from people who are listening to work.

Right now I can't see that. But I trust that you are with me and that you are listening and joining in this event.

Now, additionally, because we always worship on a Sunday two times, again at 6pm, I want us to keep that pattern going.

Again, by having a live-streamed event. Except in the evening, it won't be me. Rather, we will direct you to another carefully selected chosen site where you can benefit again from the ministry of the Word.

[7 : 20] Tonight, at 6pm, we will go to Dingwall Free Church where Al McInnes, one of the students at Edinburgh Theological Seminary, where I work, he will be preaching this evening.

And this will be a good opportunity to hear other preachers starting tonight with Al McInnes, Dingwall Free Church. Please join us for that. Additionally, today has been set aside as a day of prayer.

And particularly at 7pm this evening, Christians of all kinds of backgrounds and traditions will be asked to come together virtually and to make 7pm a slot where we gather and where we join together in prayer from our own homes.

Again, this is a huge opportunity to come to God and ask for him to do his will in all of this. For him to work through this peculiar circumstance, painful and difficult as it is.

And for some people, much more painful than others. We have to remember that. But this is an opportunity for us to come and pray to the God in whom we trust, the God we believe is the living and true God.

[8 : 41] And he will hear and he will answer and do beyond what we ask or even think. Now, there are thousands of churches, of course, who are doing exactly what we are doing.

They're live streaming their services. And all over Facebook and other social media platforms, churches have taken the opportunity to conduct virtual services. And many of them will be excellent.

And I'm sure it will be very tempting for you to check some of them out. And I'm not saying not to do that. However, I think it is important to preserve the cohesion of Bon Accord, to keep our identity as a family going.

And this provides, this event, this slot will provide us to, for us to come together, particularly as Bon Accord.

And of course, anyone else who wishes to join us. So please join us at 11 o'clock and again at 6 o'clock for this live stream event.

[9 : 46] Let's move on then and hear God's word as he calls us to worship in the words of Psalm 107. Oh, give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever.

Let the redeemed of the Lord say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble and gathered in from the lands, from the east and from the west, from the north and from the south.

Some wandered in desert wastes, finding no way to a city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted within them. Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress.

He led them by a straight way till they reached a city to dwell in. Let them thank the Lord for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man, for he satisfies the longing soul and the hungry soul he fills with good things.

Let's join together in prayer. Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, we come to you believing that you are here, that you are present where we are in our homes, in Aberdeen, some of us in other places in Scotland, and perhaps some of us meeting with us from other places in the world.

[11 : 29] And we rejoice today that we can call upon your name in worship, that whilst we are scattered, yet in another real sense we are together, in the union that you have created through the Lord Jesus Christ, whereby all of us are bound to one another in love towards you.

Our Father in heaven, we rejoice that this is the day that the Lord has made, that we will rejoice and be glad in it. We rejoice despite our circumstances and the unusualness of them.

We rejoice that in many ways things remain the same. The word of God remains the same. The being of God remains the same. The power and the omnipresence, as we've just seen, the love of God, the holiness of God remains the same.

We thank you that you are the same yesterday, today, and forever. And so we pray that despite where we are at at the moment, and all the peculiarity of the current crisis, that we will come to you in peace.

The peace that you have granted to be in our hearts, the peace that comes from knowing that we are justified through our Lord Jesus Christ by faith.

[13 : 02] So it is in his name that we want to come, and we want to focus our attention upon your word, the Bible, that remains the infallible and authoritative word of God.

And we want to take refuge in that word. We want to listen to it now, and we want to hear what you have to say to us through it. In Jesus' name.

Amen. I'm going to read from the first book of Samuel, and the 30th chapter. 1 Samuel and chapter 30.

So if you have a Bible with you, then please read it along with me. If you don't have a Bible, then please listen. I'll explain the background to the story in a few moments' time.

1 Samuel chapter 30. Now when David and his men came to Ziklag on the third day, the Amalekites had made a raid against the Negev and against Ziklag.

[14 : 16] They had overcome Ziklag and burned it with fire. Ziklag was the name of the town where David and his men lived with their wives and families and their flocks and herds.

So this was, in effect, a disaster. The Amalekites had raided Ziklag while David and his men had been away.

So when they came back, they found the entire city razed to the ground. They killed no one, but carried them off and went their way.

Verse 3. David's two wives also had been taken captive.

David and David was greatly distressed, for the people spoke of stoning him, because all the people were bitter in soul, each of his sons and daughters.

[15 : 30] But David strengthened himself in the Lord his God. And David said to Abiathar the priest, the son of Ahimelech, Bring me the ephod.

So Abiathar brought the ephod to David. And David inquired of the Lord, Shall I pursue after this ban?

Shall I overtake them? He answered him, Pursue, for you shall surely overtake and shall surely rescue. So David set out, and the 600 men who were with him, and they came to the brook Bezor, where those who were left behind stayed.

But David pursued he and 400 men. 200 stayed behind, who were too exhausted to cross the brook Bezor. They found an Egyptian in the open country, and they brought him to David, and they gave him bread, and he ate.

They gave him water to drink, and they gave him a piece of cake of figs, and two clusters of raisins. When he had eaten, his spirit revived, for he had not eaten and drunk for three days and three nights.

[16 : 43] And David said to him, To whom do you belong, and where are you from? He said, I am a young man of Egypt, servant to Amalekite, and Amalekite. My master left me behind, because I fell sick three days ago.

We had made a raid against the Negev of the Cherethites, and against that which belongs to Judah, and against the Negev of Caleb, and we burned Ziklag with fire. And David said to him, Will you take me down to this band?

And he said to him, Swear to me by God that you will not kill me or deliver me into the hands of my master, and I will take you down to this band. And when he had taken him down, behold, they were spread abroad over all the land, eating and drinking and dancing because of all the great spoil they had taken from the land of the Philistines and from the land of Judah.

And David struck them down from twilight until the evening of the next day, and not a man of them escaped, except four hundred young men who mounted camels and fled.

David recovered all that the Amalekites had taken, and David rescued his two wives. Nothing was missing, whether small or great, sons or daughters, spoil or anything that had been taken.

[17 : 57] David brought back everything. David also captured all the flocks and herds, and the people drove the livestock before him and said, This is David's spoil.

Then David came to the two hundred men who had been too exhausted to follow David, and who had been left at the brook Bezor. And they went out to meet David and to meet the people who were with him.

And when David came near to the people, he greeted them. Then all the wicked and worthless fellows among them who had gone with David said, Because they did not go with us, we will not give them any of the spoil that we have recovered, except that each man may take his wife and lead them away and depart.

But David said, You shall not do so, my brothers, with what the Lord has given us. He has preserved us and given into our hand the band that came against us.

Who would listen to you in this matter? For as his share is who goes down into the battle, so shall his share be. Who stays by the baggage they shall share alike.

[19 : 06] And he made it a statute and a rule for Israel from that day forward to this day. Amen. And we pray together that God's word will reach by the power of his spirit.

God's word will reach into the depths of our heart and that he will speak to us and change us and impact us as never before. So may he bless it to us because this is the word of God.

Let's once again join together in prayer. Our Father in heaven, we want to recognise where we are at today. Isolated from one another.

Isolated from being able to gather together normally as we would want to do and as your word commands us to do. It's painful for us to stay away from church because church is such a natural part of our being.

It's such a vital place for us. It's a place that we long to go to every Sunday. And so for us, the prospect of not only one Sunday but lots of Sundays without church is one which is distressing to us.

[20 : 22] We feel alone. We feel isolated. We feel that there is something wrong. And there is something wrong. We are reminded afresh that we belong to a world in which from time to time catastrophic events happen like the one which we are witnessing.

We recognise that none of us have ever seen anything like this crisis. the COVID-19 pandemic which has wreaked havoc all over the world and threatens to continue and develop and to take many, many thousands of lives.

Our Father in Heaven, we recognise the various impacts that this has had on people. we recognise that there are people who have lost life and we pray for families who are coming to terms with the loss of loved ones.

We pray for people who are right now dangerously and seriously ill with this disease. We ask for them, Lord, that you will draw close to them where they are.

We pray for those who are impacted in other, many, various ways. Lord, we pray for those who have lost jobs already. They never expected this to happen.

[21 : 52] Two weeks ago, things appeared to be secure and successful and now all of life has changed. There isn't a single person for whom life hasn't changed in some way.

Lord, Father, we pray for the elderly. We pray for those who are alone anyway and who are now having to suffer entire isolation, complete isolation. We pray for those who don't have access to medicine or help or the kind of companionship which they depend on so much.

We ask, Lord, that you will draw near to the distressed and the suffering right now. we pray that you'll remind us of our responsibility where we know of those who need our help and where we don't know.

We pray that we will find out that we will use every resource available to us for the benefit of others. We want to pray for the governments of the world, the UK government, the Scottish government, the various governments in Europe.

we think especially of Italy right now where there has been such devastation and we do pray for an end to this crisis and we pray for wisdom to be given to those who are in control to having to make decisions as to how to flatten the curve and to bring in laws which appear so severe and yet which are so necessary to bring an end to what we are seeing around us.

[23 : 35] So Father, we pray for wisdom to be given but we also pray that this will be a time when men and women will be reminded of our own weakness and our own mortality and vulnerability and we pray that you will speak in this crisis.

We pray that you will intervene. We pray that you will draw men and women to a sense of eternity. We pray that you will use this opportunity to impress upon them your truth, your word, your son, the Lord Jesus Christ who came into the world to seek and to save those who were lost and it would be so wonderful if this was an opportunity where the gospel was brought home to people's hearts and where people came to faith in Jesus.

Our Father, we pray for our congregation in Bon Accord. We pray for everyone we know. We ask, Lord, that you will draw near to them and that you will strengthen them. We pray that you will meet their needs.

We pray for those who are bereaved, for those who are brokenhearted. We think of those we know who have lost loved ones recently and we ask that you will draw near to them in your own mercy and in your own tender compassion.

We pray for those who are ill in other ways and we ask that you will do in them and for them more than they can ask or even think. We pray, Lord, for all those then who have been impacted by this and ask that we will be encouraged, that we will be strengthened by your word in Jesus' name.

[25 : 21] Amen. Turn with me to this chapter that we read in 1 Samuel chapter 30 and let's work our way through some of the verses in this chapter.

I often hear people saying at times like this, I wonder what God is saying to us. Sometimes people go further and at a time of calamity or disaster, they will even go as far as to say, well, God is judging us in all of this.

There are several problems with coming to that kind of conclusion. One of them is, well, what do you make of things when they go successfully and when life is easy and when the economy is booming and when people are successful in jobs and when nothing seems to be happening?

Does that mean that everything's okay with God? That God is pleased with us? Not so. What I'm trying to say is that we mustn't try to over-interpret the events that we're seeing around us, but at the same time it is necessary for us to recognise that God is in this.

He is in it for good. He is in it to bring glory to his name. He's in it to challenge us, to remind us, to waken us up.

[27 : 02] He is in it in order for us to discover his greatness, his goodness and his reality. And I want to go to this passage because I think there are some elements in this passage that prove what I've just said and that point us in the right direction.

David at this time was a young man. He hadn't become the king of Israel. Saul was the king of Israel. And Saul was David's bitter enemy.

In fact, David was on the run. Saul was determined to kill him. And this had gone on for many, many months to the point where David had become weary of being pursued by Saul.

And he did something that was quite foolish. In his weariness and in his despondency, he had decided that it was safer to locate himself and his men and their wives and families in enemy territory.

So he went to the land of the Philistines, the land of Gath. And he made a deal with the king of Gath. He said, look, please give us refuge, please give us security in your territory, and we will assist you in your wars.

[28 : 24] My men are at your service. We can join your army and we can be of great assistance. So the king of Gath said, yeah, good idea. We're quite happy to welcome you. Bad decision.

Because it was only a matter of time before David became compromised and he found himself in his pledge to assist the king of Gath.

He found himself committed to things that were disastrous, to wars that were against his own people, a war that was against God's people, in fact.

Amazingly, at that right time, the king realized what was going on and he said, well, hold on a minute, what if we go to war against Israel and you turn against us?

I can't take that risk. In fact, I'm not willing to have you on my army anymore. You've been really good to us, you've been a good buddy, but I think you need to go home now.

[29 : 34] So, away back to Ziklag for our safety. David and his men went back to Ziklag, the town that the king of Gath had given them and they found that it had been destroyed while they were away.

I can't begin to imagine how David would have felt on that occasion, having found everything deserted, all their homes burned to the ground, there was nothing left.

And his wives and their families, they're all gone. Who knows whether they were even still alive? Who knows what happened to them? them? The mind boggled. The possibilities were endless.

It was horrendous. And what's more, in their hysteria and in their rage, his men started threatening him. And they had it in mind to stone him because they turned their anger against him.

if David had begun to ask the question that I began with, what is God saying to me in all of this?

[30 : 45] I wonder what conclusion he would have come to. The fact is that David didn't even ask the question. He did the right thing.

He responded in the correct manner. And I hope that in the circumstances that we find ourselves in right now, we will respond in the right manner.

David's response, instead of despair, instead of anger, instead of overly analysing what God was doing in all of this, was an act of simple faith in God, in which we read that David strengthened himself in the Lord his God.

Verse 2, he strengthened himself in the Lord his God. I want us to stop for a moment and try to get our heads around what that means, so that if it's possible, the kind of response that David shows us might be a pointer to us this morning, as we try to analyse something that nobody has any control over, something which is potentially very threatening and which has already taken many lives and threatens to take more.

How are we going to respond? Are we going to simply say, well, God is judging us in all of this? Or, are we going to do something different? Something similar to what David did when he strengthened himself in the Lord his God.

[32 : 39] on one level, Ziklag was burned because an enemy came and destroyed it, and the blame lay with the enemy.

The Amalekites had come in, as was quite common in those days, and they had destroyed Ziklag. With coronavirus, I understand that something happened somewhere in China to trigger what has become a worldwide pandemic.

I don't believe it was deliberate, it was probably accidental. There's no human conspiracy, but rather a biological and a chemical origin to this virus.

Nonetheless, God is in this crisis, just as God was in the destruction of Ziklag.

Whilst it was destroyed by the Amalekites, and whilst it appeared that this was a lost cause, it is clear that God was in control, as he had been from the beginning and as he always was going to be.

[33 : 51] The destruction of Ziklag was part of God's plan to eventually restore David to his own land and his own people, and to continue his ultimate purpose to establish a righteous king over Israel.

God's part in this is a positive part. But at the time when David arrived in Ziklag only to find it destroyed, it all looked a complete disaster.

When they returned tired and exhausted to their horror, no one was left, without a scrap left.

It's no wonder that the reaction was one of irrational despair and even anger. But look at what David did.

Let's follow his example as we face not the same kind of crisis, but a crisis nonetheless. he found strength in the Lord his God.

[35 : 04] Simple statement, isn't it? And yet it is really profound. Let's look at two things. First of all, in whom did David find strength?

In the Lord his God. His God. God. What does that mean?

Well, right now, there are many people who are calling for prayer. You'll find that at a time like this. You'll find that suggestion given sometimes by governments that everyone needs to pray.

And what they mean by that, of course, is that everyone of every faith prays to his God in his own way. But that's not what this means. when we read that David found strength in the Lord his God, the implication is not that David turned to his God as only one of many gods.

The implication is that David was in a particular personal relationship with the living and true God in which he knew that God was his God.

[36 : 25] a unique relationship in which he could confidently approach the living and true God and know for sure that God accepted him and listened to his prayer lovingly.

that was a wonderful privileged place to be. And we find it in many many places in David's writings.

Remember in Psalm 63, O Lord, you are my God. Earnestly I will seek you. And what strikes you about this is irrespective of David's past foolishness and having taken refuge in the enemy's territory, he still could confidently go to the Lord.

You would think that shame would have kept him away. You would have thought that well you're not in a really a good place. You've let things slip. You've wandered away from where you should be in relation to God.

How can you now just come back to him with such confidence? Well, he could because despite David's failure and his backsliding and his wandering away, God's love for David had never changed.

[38 : 04] It was the same. It was a commitment. It was a promise. And God never breaks his promise.

I want to ask you today, are you in the right place in your relationship to God? And the reason I ask that is because maybe it takes a time like this for God to draw you back to where you should be.

And if that is the case, then so be it. It proves the love and the care that God had for David, that he was prepared to go to some pretty drastic lengths to draw David back into a right relationship with him.

I don't know when the last time was that David prayed. When is the last time that you prayed? It's perhaps some time.

Only you can answer that question. But it's an important question nonetheless. And I suggest that this is a golden opportunity when we've all been wakened up by the change around us to ask yourself, well, when is the last time I prayed?

[39 : 46] What is my relationship with God like? Have I wandered away? Have I allowed stuff to come into my life over the years and over the weeks that have really not benefited me? they have not done anything for my relationship with my Lord.

Now is the time I suggest to ask these questions but more than that, now is the time I suggest to return, to come back on the basis of God's covenant love for his people.

There is no elaborate complicated process of working our way back into favour with God. Always remember that we are saved by grace, not by works.

We are saved as we accept the death of Jesus Christ on our behalf and it is on that basis that we can confidently return to God, knowing that he will abundantly pardon.

[41 : 03] But moving on, David, there is another question and the question is who did David turn to? well, we have already asked that question and we have answered it in the first element of what the verse says, in his God. But I want you to notice the title that is given for the Lord, L-O-R-D, and it is a title that is given in capitals.

Anytime you see that in your English Old Testament, you should know that it is a translation of the Hebrew word Yahweh, which is the particular name, the unique name that God chose in relation to his people Israel.

So by using that title, David is laying hold on the covenant commitment that God had towards his people Israel. And that is such an important truth to remember.

God is covenantally pledged to his people. You remember where the covenant originates way back in Abraham's time when God chose Abraham out of Ur of the Chaldees and promised that he would be his God and that his children would be.

[42 : 30] Well, he didn't have any children at that time. That was a miracle in itself. But that his descendants would be like the stars of the sky and the sand on the seashore and that they would possess the land of Canaan and so on and so forth.

And he pledged himself at that moment covenantally to be his God and that they would covenantally be his people.

God had never forgotten that promise. God had and that's the promise that David laid hold on and that's how he knew that he could be so confident in knowing that God would listen to him and that he would hear and answer his prayer.

And that's the basis of this great statement that he found strength in the Lord his God. Let's find strength in God for who he is.

There's only one way to find out who God is and that's in the pages of the Bible where God has promised to covenant himself in love and in commitment to his people.

[43 : 44] But moving on there's another question here and that is how did David find strength in God? Well if you read in verse to verse seven there is a strange statement a strange request that David made.

He asked for the ephod the ephod now this is where a chapter we've perhaps understood everything up until now it's all been nice and easy until you come to the ephod you think well I'm lost.

I have no idea what this means it's all so strange and all so mysterious and it requires you to be a theologian and it requires you to have studied Hebrew and all the rest of it. No it doesn't. Let's just ask what does this mean?

What does it mean that he asked for the ephod? Well there's a very simple answer. Please don't be put off by the don't ever be put off by the terminology of the Old Testament or the terminology in the New Testament.

The ephod was a very simple thing. It was part of the dress the part of the garments part of the uniform that was worn by the high priest.

[45 : 06] I'll explain what high priest was in a few moments and I'll also explain why the high priest was so important and so key. But let's just look at him for a moment.

He wore unique, nobody else was allowed to wear this kind of uniform. Only the high priest could wear this type of clothing. And part of it, I'm not going to go into it in all this detail, but part of it was an ephod.

An ephod was, it's dead easy, it was a sleeveless vest, if you like. it was made out of choice expensive materials including gold and purple and blue and scarlet cloth and finely woven linen.

So if you by the way saw a high priest, you knew exactly who he was. There was no question about who this person was. You could always tell who he was by the kind of clothes he wore.

And the ephod was a sleeveless vest that was multicolored. on the shoulders of the ephod there were precious stones that were engraved with the twelve tribes of Israel.

[46 : 23] That was a striking feature. On each shoulder were beautiful twelve, six on one side, six on the other, twelve.

twelve precious stones. Each one of them engraved with a different tribe of Israel. What did that mean? The first thing I have to say about the high priest was that he represented God.

He was there to bring God's word to God's people and he was also there to represent God's people before God. So in wearing, in carrying the names of the twelve tribes of Israel, you got to see that God deeply cares for his covenant people.

So that's the first thing about the ephod. The ephod was a reminder to David of what we've said before, that God was covenantally committed, pledged to his people, and that was never going to change.

It was always going to be the same. But what's more, on top of the ephod was what they called the chest piece. And inside the chest piece, there were two things.

[47 : 41] There was the urim, again, terminology, don't be put off by terminology, the urim and the thumim. And these were used for determining what God's will was.

So when you wanted to approach God and ask him a question, you wanted to know an answer to a question, you used the urim and the thumim, which were contained in the chest piece that was placed on top of the ephod.

Now you're asking, what were the urim and the thumim? And here's my answer. I have absolutely no idea, and nobody does. I'm sorry, but that is the fact of the matter.

Nobody knows what the urim and the thumim was. It doesn't matter. The reason we don't know is because God doesn't want us to know it. It's not important. What is important is that this was used to determine God's will, his mind.

So when David asked God, will I go after the Amalekites? This was the way in which God answered his question. Yes, go after them. You will pursue them. You will rescue your people.

[48 : 51] He got his answer. The reason he asked for the ephod was as a reminder of God's love for his people, his covenantal committed love for his people, which is an act of love.

It's not just a love that says it, it's a love that does. God's love is a God's love God's love and he would know what the mind of God was.

That we don't have any of this kind of clothing anymore. We don't have this high priestly system. And the reason we don't is simply this, that we have one once and for all high priest and he is called Jesus Christ.

Every high priest in the Old Testament prefigured Jesus. And when he died on the cross, just as the high priest's job was to bring sacrifice to God and to offer sacrifice as the payment of our sins, so Jesus offered himself once and for all on the cross so that by his perfect sacrifice, our sin would be forgiven, so that on the basis of that sacrifice, we could come confidently to God.

We have a great high priest, but we also have the word of God. David had to turn to the ephod and the Urim and the Thummim to get the word of God.

[50 : 31] We have God's entire word in our hands. It's called the Bible. Do you see what's happening? David is finding strength in the God in whom he is covenantally committed, the God who loves him, the God who accepts him, who hears his prayer, the God who will act for his good and who will show him the way forward.

God. We come to today the same God, the God in whom we enjoy a unique relationship in the Lord Jesus Christ, the living and the true God who is covenantally committed to us.

I will never leave you. I will never forsake you. The Lord is my refuge and strength in whom then will I be afraid.

But he's also God who has disclosed himself and who has come amongst us in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ and has given us his mind and his will in the pages of the Bible.

the question for us today is do we make use of this relationship that we have with God? Do we make use of it?

[52 : 10] Do we make use of prayer? When we pray, do we come believing that God is, even if my prayer contains some pretty awful confessions, do I come boldly believing that I am justified through the Lord Jesus Christ?

May this be an opportunity for a renewed discovery, a rediscovery of the importance and the vitality of prayer.

May this be a rediscovery of who God is and what our relationship to God is and may we turn, like David did, to the Word of God to give direction as to how we live.

Let's return then, in closing, to the question that I started off with. What is God saying to us through the coronavirus? Do you know what my answer is?

Nothing. What God says to us says to us in the Bible. He says to us in Jesus.

[53 : 26] And if anyone wants to know what God is saying, it's all here. However, at a crisis like this, there is opportunity.

God is in this crisis and he will use it as an instrument for good. For one thing, we are to endure all hardship as God's discipline.

Hebrews 12 and verse 7, endure hardship as discipline. Right now, this is hardship for us to a lesser or a greater extent.

Is it all random or meaningless? If you don't believe in God, then yes, there is no meaning in any of us. But for Christians, this is an instrument by which God is going to teach and train his people and prepare them for further maturity and eventual glory.

But secondly, this circumstance may be an instrument by which God is showing people the folly of trusting in all our advances.

[54 : 40] God often acts in history to intervene to break human pride and achievement and conceit. Like in Genesis 11 where they took it into their head to build the Tower of Babel. Everything seemed to be advancing at an unstoppable rate and God came down to see what was going on.

And he shook things up a bit. forcing them to scatter and migrate all over the world in their own cultural cohorts. Sometimes God does that.

It's also an instrument by which we pray today that God will waken up a rebellious world by forcing us to see our own vulnerability and our own mortality and how close we all are to death.

and that's where our responsibility as a church lies to make Jesus known in every circumstance so that through a time like this people will come to faith in him and be saved.

[55 : 52] The Bible then is where God speaks to us. He tells us where we originate. We were created by God. we have and we were created in his image.

But we lost that relationship to him at the beginning when our first parents rebelled against him. We became a condemned world, a dangerous world, subject to all the uncertainties of disaster and war and disease and death.

But God so loved the world and he gave his only begotten son who was willing to pay the ultimate penalty for our sin and he did by dying on the cross, rising again to vindicate what he had done and as the proof that death and the grave have been defeated.

He invites you to take his gift, the gift that he died to give you. You can take it freely and you can take it now so that by so doing you can discover the new, the abundant and the everlasting life that Jesus will give.

Will you do that? Will you rethink life in the light of our present uncertainty?

[57 : 18] reality? I dare you today, if you've never thought of this before, I dare you to take God into your thinking and to start a journey that will end in your discovering the reality and the preciousness and the greatness of God who you've never given any thought to before.

It would be wonderful if that happened. I pray that it will. And for those of us who are trusting in Jesus already, may this be a time of renewed prayer.

By the way, today has been set aside as a day of prayer by all churches. Seven o'clock tonight, we're all being asked to make this a time when we're concentratedly praying for God's help and for his mercy and for his power in all of this.

So let's do that. Let's make this. Let's take this opportunity and may he bless this circumstance to all of us. May he bless his word to us.

May he bless this service. I'm still trying to get used to this new circumstance. No doubt we will get used to it as time goes on. I feel very unhinged but nonetheless it has been an opportunity to share God's word together, to come around God's word and to benefit from it.

[58 : 52] And I hope that what we thought about today will be a real benefit to all of us as we try and work our way through the difficulties that we face.

May God bless you. May he bless all of us. And I'll see you next time. Let's pray together. Our Father in heaven we pray that you will make yourself known in a new and a living way in the current crisis that we face.

Father we pray that you will bless the churches that are going out live today, right now. Pray that it will go far and wide and that your word will be spread as never before and that your people will be encouraged.

I pray that your Holy Spirit will work in this new opportunity and that you will bring many people to faith in Jesus. In his name. Amen.

Please look after one another. Please make a point of contacting those you know who are maybe isolated in even more severe ways than normal and those who are in particular difficult circumstances.

[60 : 16] Please let's make this an opportunity where we can be the light of the world and where we can through our care and our love for one another where we can bear witness to the reality of the Jesus that we serve.

May the Lord bless you.