In the midst of the darkness of Israel’s 70 year captivity, God instructs Ezekiel to tell His people about a future glorious restoration.

That God’s people would experience the fullness of His presence again.

Let us pray

Nearing the end of Israel’s 70 year captivity, God tells them.

Ezekiel 36:21-23

In the O.T. Israel was called “God’s chosen people.”

In the N.T. who are “God’s chosen people”?

* John 15:16
* 1 Peter 2:9
* Romans 8:28

There are many N.T. verses that refer to followers of Christ as “God’s chosen”.

So why did god want to protect His Holy name, His reputation, among the nations of the world?

“Because the name of the Lord is a strong tower, the righteous run into it and are saved”.

The Israelites had “profaned” God’s name… made it “common”, reducing Him in their minds from the one true living God, Sovereign Lord and Creator of the heavens and the earth, to just one God among many…

But if God allowed his people to remain in sin and be permanently destroyed by the example of their enemies, it would lead other nations to believe that their pagan gods were more powerful than Israel’s God.

So to protect his holy name, and draw people to turn to Him for Salvation, God began returning a remnant of his people to their land.

That gives me comfort and hope for today, because it is proof that God is going to rescue His people from this virus, so that God’s greatness will be experienced by the world. Drawing some to faith.

Where Israel fell short was they failed to understand that as “God’s chosen” they were responsible for representing God to the rest of the world. Especially in times of trouble.

In 2020, believers (in Coronavirus stricken) Camp Verde, AZ share in that same responsibility. How do you represent God to the world?

History tells us that it is in very difficult times like we are facing today that “God’s faithful chosen”, always rise up, and “Christianity becomes Contagious”.

1. Make a great name.

Not for yourself, but for their Father in Heaven who sacrificed His only Son for us… The one who pulled us out of the miry clay of sin.

If Jesus hasn’t done that in your life, He loves you and He wants to.

For the last 2000+ years God has been instructing His “frozen chosen” thru verses like Romans 13:10-14 to wake up! The clock is ticking! It is “high time” to represent God well and love our neighbor.

In the midst of this Coronavirus plague, that can be seen by purchasing only what we need and not hoarding food and supplies…

Why? There are many good reasons not to;

1. It doesn’t represent God. It represents greed.

The more you take, the less there is for others who are also in need.

1. Remember when God led His chosen people out of Egypt, and they were starving in the desert? He made a promised Moses.

What did God say? Exodus 16:4

Why are following God’s instructions so important? Revelation 3:10

The word test is the word “pi-rad-zo”, it means examine/prove.

One of the important lessons we learned from our study of Revelation is that God is always testing/sifting…

Why? Because He is preparing a Bride for His Son Jesus. Revelation 19:7-8

Could it be that God has allowed the Coronavirus to test/examine believers around the world and move them out of their comfort-zones?

2 Chronicles 7:13-14

Turning from sin and complacency - to God… making Him more than some Sunday morning God, proves to the world that Yahweh, El Shaddai, Elohim, Abba Father is the one true God that people can turn to for Salvation & help in the midst of the crisis that we now face.

Passing the test of obedience to God’s Word is critical now because I believe with all of my heart that the “rapture” (catching away) of God’s faithful people is VERY NEAR…

What we are facing today is a true test/examination of how strong the believers walk is with Christ.

We would do well to “examine” ourselves and not just keep confessing sin over and over without any repentance/turning away from it.

Because as I shared with you last week, God’s repentant people (the church) need not fear anything, ever.

Only those who refuse to turn from their sin, or do not know or serve the Risen Savior, Jesus Christ, have to live in fear.

And when we see such people, they are our opportunity to represent God well and introduce them to the God who saves, Jesus, Messiah, Savior (the love of our life).

If you see someones house on fire you don’t give them a match!

You give them the hose and turn on the water!

Jesus is the water that extinguishes the raging fire of fear and anxiety. Faith and fear cannot co-exist.

So make a great name for God and…

1. Talk Faith – not fear

When David faced impossible odds against Goliath, did he talk about how dangerous Goliath was? No! He talked about how GREAT God is!

As we all practice “social distancing” and communicate with the world by phone and other means… may our communication be about our faith and trust that God will deliver His people from this unseen enemy that we now face.

Ask them: Since God will deliver His people, are you one?

For those who claim they cannot believe in a God they cannot see, ask them if they believe in a virus they cannot see?

As your Pastor/Shepherd/servant leader in Christ, I must confess to you that I have struggled with some of the things that we are being asked to do at this time.

To me some of it contradicts the Bible and the traditional way faith has been lived out for centuries.

We keep hearing about this deadly virus that has killed approximately 280 out of the 350 million people in the U.S. which is .0000008

1 person has died out of Arizona’s population of over 7 million people. Which is .000000142857 of our population.

To me, the math didn’t add up to what they were comparing to the “Spanish Flu” of 1918. Where 100 million people died.

But then the Lord asked me yesterday, “would it still seem as insignificant if that “one” who died was someone you loved”?

Then our District Superintendent began giving good information as to how Christians (we/God’s chosen) could continue to be faithful to His Word and represent God well, loving our neighbor by self-isolating and reducing the possible spread of this disease.

Again, it is a true test/examination of the believers faith… but I believe you can do it.

How do we remain faithful to God in gathering? Hebrews 10:25

Until the threat of infection is reduced, we do need to reduce our contact with other people, even if we are not sick, because we may be carrying the virus to the elderly/vulnerable.

We can use utilize the technology that God has given us (not to glorify the virus) but to gather for Sunday Worship…

Just for a little while.

My prayer is that this interruption only lasts a couple of weeks and then we can resume gathering to Worship God corporately, and love and encourage each other again.

The church is not CLOSING! We simply need to suspend the Sunday worship gathering temporarily.

So until further notice I am encouraging you to worship with us via Facebook live on Sunday mornings.

If you don’t have access to Facebook, but can access the church’s website @ newbeginningsnaz.com you can view weekly sermons, as well as remain connected to your church family.

I am also asking those who are younger and less vulnerable to pray about opening your home for a small group Bible study using a copy of the sermon like I have for you today.

These are tried and true ways to continue growing spiritually, make a great name for the Lord, talk faith and perhaps expand God’s kingdom in the midst of uncertain times.

Contagious Christianity always find a way to serve Christ the King, while “living above the noise” of the world.

When life gives you lemons… make lemonade!

Set a good example for other Christians by fishing for souls.

Another important quest is; How can I continue to be faithful to God in my giving during this time of suspended worship? I’m glad you asked! Because the church’s mortgage payments and financial obligations do not stop because of a virus…

In Malachi 3:10 God promises us a blessing that we do not want to miss out on… especially in times of Crisis like the one we are facing today!

There are a variety of ways you can remain faithful to the Lord by;

1. Driving by the church during the week and dropping your tithe/offerings in the church’s secure mailbox (someone did that yesterday).
2. You can also mail your tithe/offering and I will even provide a self-addressed & stamped envelope for you if you chose that method.
3. You can also drop off you’re tithe off Tuesday-Friday 9am-Noon. The church will be open!
4. I am working on checking out an APP that will allow tithes that way, but usually it is less expensive for the church if you use one of the other three methods.

I will be staying in contact with each of you personally by phone/text/email throughout the time we are apart, to offer you encouragement, help with groceries and to take down your prayer requests and praise reports.

Those prayer requests and praises will then be offered up to the Lord that following Sunday morning.

As I reminded us last week, we are family! You are not alone, we are going to get through this together!