

Peace in the Pandemic

48 - Ephesians: Rise Up & Walk
Church on the Park | Sunday, 22 March 2020

Text: Ephesians 5:1-5; Psalm 91:1

Theme: You can have peace in the current pandemic.

Intro: Today, I want to speak to you in light of the global COVID-19 (Corona Virus) pandemic. The word 'pandemic' comes from ancient Greek. Pan means 'all' and 'demic' comes from the word 'people' (where we get our word 'demographic'). A pandemic is something that affects all people and it's used to describe the rapid spread of an infectious disease. In the same way 911 changed the way people viewed the world, this pandemic will shift everyone's paradigm. It should also transform our way of thinking as Christians—but in a different way. So how should we respond? And what should we do?

Today, I'm going to teach you 4Ds and show you God's 911.

We know in Australia that for emergencies you call '000'. But I also heard '911' works because the American TV shows made it popular. So what's God's 911?

PSALM 91:1 —> Do you see that? —> Take out the colon —> PSALM 911

יֹשֵׁב בְּסֵתֶר עֲלִיּוֹן בְּצֶל שְׁדַי יִתְלוֹנֵן׃

Yoshev b'seter el'yon, b'tsel shadai yit'lonan

Let me break it down for you.

It begins with *yoshev*, 'The one who dwells.'

1) DWELL (Ps 91:1)

- **At the moment**, there are many who are quoting Psalm 91 and I believe it's what **God is speaking**.
 - Psalm 91 speaks of **God's protection**, even from **deadly threats, pestilence and diseases**.
- But here is the thing we can **forget**.
 - Psalm 91 does not work by **magic**, nor even by **just quoting it**.
- It only **works** if we put the **first verse into practice**.
- Let me quote it to you straight from the **original Hebrew**.
 - **"The one who dwells in the secret place of the Most High/In the shadow of Almighty will stay"** (*my translation*)
- Psalm 91 is a **promise for those** who **DWELL IN THE SECRET PLACE**.
 - It's **not** for those who **visit** the secret place or **occasionally enter in**.
 - Rather, it's for those who find **their permanent residency** there.
 - **Yashav** (the root word) means to **dwell, sit, remain, abide, settle, inhabit, live**.
- God is speaking to his people **to dwell** in his secret place (*b'seter el'yon*).
- God's secret place is **the safest place on earth**.
 - In his **glorious presence** we find **true shelter and protection**.
- So, *what is the secret place of the Most High?*
 - In the **Old Testament**, it was the **Most Holy Place** hidden behind the thick veil in the heart of the tabernacle and the temple.
 - In this secret place, the **Ark of the Covenant** resided. Above the Ark, **stretched the wings of the cherubim**—the awesome creatures closest to God—they are **God's security guards**. Their wings signified both **worship and the shielding of the cherubim ministry**.

- **No sin or sinner is allowed** in this sacred place—it is Most Holy.
 - There had to be **blood sacrifices** made—**atonement**—for the High Priest to be allowed in once a year.
 - The animal died **in the place** of the sinner and the people to cover their sins.
 - You could only come in **through the blood**.
 - **Jesus died to bring you into his secret place.**
- This secret place is not to be taken **lightly or casually**. It's the **place** where God in all his holiness and glory is **enthroned**.
- **But in this place, the humble and hurting heart finds its home.**
- This is the place of **communion and concealment**; it's a space of **sanctity and shelter**.
- **There's no place like it** in the heavens or the earth.
 - Again, **This is why Jesus was crucified**: to make **a way** for you to enter into this Most Holy Place.

2) DECLARE (Ps 91:2)

- In the second verse of Psalm 91, the psalmist says, **"I will say to the Lord, 'My refuge and my fortress, My God, in whom I trust'"** (v. 2).
- *How do you begin to enter in to this secret place?*
 - You begin **by declaring and praying**.
 - What you **say** out of your mouth is **critical**.
- **Don't say what everyone else is saying**. Instead, say, **"God, I'm trusting you** in all this. You are my refuge and my fortress."
- *We all feel fear, but how do we combat it?*
 - We **speak the word of faith**.
 - I'm **not** talking about **hyper-faith**. But I am talking about **bold faith**.
- Notice how God is referred to as **the Most High** and the **Almighty**.
 - Our God is **greater than death, disease, darkness and demons**.
 - Our God is greater than our **employers**.
 - Our God is greater than our **personal struggles**.
- When people see you have **supernatural peace in this pandemic**, they will ask you, *"Where does this peace come from?"*
 - Then, you'll be able to **declare** to them **about Jesus and his Word**.
- This is an **opportunity** for the church to **lead many people to Jesus**.

3) DRAW NEAR (Ps 91:1-4)

- **Listen to Psalm 91:1-4**
 - The picture is God like a **bird**, caring and sheltering his young under his wings.
 - You see how fierce these **magpies** are protecting their young.
 - Well, God is fiercer.
- Listen to the book of **Hebrews**:
 - "This hope we have as **an anchor of the soul**, a hope both **sure and steadfast**, and one which **enters within the veil**, where Jesus has entered as a **forerunner** for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Heb. 6:19-20).
- Many people will have **more free time on their hands**. Use this free time to **draw near to God** in his secret place.
 - Remember, **God is calling** us to **slow down** in order to **wait** on him.
 - **Follow Jesus** who went before us.
 - Let **hope** inspire you to enter in to **God's secret place**.
- Listen to **Psalm 57:1** (my translation):
 - "Be gracious to me, O God, be gracious to me/For in you my soul has taken refuge/And in the shadow of your wings I shelter/**Until the destructive threat passes over.**"
- Also, read Ps 32:7 & Psalm 119:114.

4) DISTANCE (Eph. 5:1-5)

- Today, we are hearing about **social distancing**.
 - But, there is **another type of distancing** that is much **more important**.

- **Distance** yourself from **sin**.
- In order to enter the secret place, you need to **drop sin**.
- You **can't expect God's protection** and **cling to sin** at the same time.
- **Ephesians** warns us about sexual sin, impurity, filthiness, useless talk, unclean humour and covetousness.
 - Why?
 - It's not out of **legalism**.
 - Instead, it's all about us reflecting the image and likeness of God in this world. God's not a sexual pervert, gossip or coarse joker—neither should we be.

Conclusion: In these troubled times, God's Word is your anchor. Remember to dwell with God, declare he is your fortress, draw near to his secret place and distance yourself from sin.