## Sunday, March 29, 2020

2.4

PASTOR: Okay. First, I want to tell our church family how much I've missed your fellowship. I know some of you are listening in and we do miss you. We do miss you, and I don't think God ever intended for us to live our lives alone, and we need each other. So God provided the church for us as Christians and, much like a husband and wife, they were never meant to be physically apart either, and the church needs to be together as well. But until then, we are thankful to be able to use some technology and to be able to use this video messaging to be able to try to connect a little bit with you folks so hopefully that works.

I confess to you, too, on my part I've been feeling a bit discombobulated as well. As a pastor, I'm out of my routine, my regular way of doing things, and life is strange nowadays, isn't it?

We've been experiencing a lot of change in our lives and we are trying to figure out somehow to deal with these things, and I know. I think it's been very stressful for a lot of folks. I think it takes them out of their -- how shall we say it? -- their game a little bit, and for me I've tried to use it in a good

purpose as well. I believe it's intensified my prayer life. Certainly when we think about the mortality of people and the dangers of this particular virus, we are thinking of others, and we're not only thinking about the change and the routine of our own existence but we're thinking of other people as well.

2.4

The other day I was sitting up in the church mezzanine praying and I was looking down on where the congregation sits and I was thinking about, as I was praying, how this is affecting each of our people. I know it affects their jobs. I know a lot of them are sitting at home doing their jobs instead of going to their offices. I realize, too, that some people are concerned about their finances as well, of course, their health. We're not able to do all of the things that we normally would do and so there's change, and the pandemic has reminded me how life can change so quickly.

In fact, we're surprised by the change that has developed in our life and how, other than the virus itself, it seems that so many people are talking about my change, my change, my change, how change has bothered them and how I can't do this and I can't do that and I'm sitting at home, and I think

for some people it's almost depressing for them.

2.4

I think, too, as well -- I was reading a couple of our missionaries' letters overseas, and one said it's hard to believe how things have changed, they said, since February 23rd, the last day they said when things were, quote unquote, normal. And a lot of people are using the term "normal," that this is the new normal. At least it is for a couple of days -- weeks, maybe, or hopefully not a couple more months.

Another missionary said, it's a massive understatement to say that much has changed since we wrote you at the beginning of March, and that's the story we're hearing.

I was reading about someone who recuperated from the Cleveland Clinic from this virus and they said this. He said, today I leave this ICU a changed person, hopefully for the better. I thought that was rather poignant. I thought that was rather startling that he said, I hope that I've left a changed person for the better.

I wonder, as people are talking and they're saying about all these changes in their lives, and this seems to be, other than the virus and the concerns about health, change seems to be the second

most discussed item. So I want to talk about change today if you haven't caught that already. I'm wanting to discuss with all of those that are listening the change that it has presented to us, what we're doing about it, what change means in life, what change means in the Bible.

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And so I want to take you to that place this morning, and certainly change is a normal part of all of our existence. We are changeable people. Every day we're a little different, it seems. We get a day older. We sometimes deteriorate. Sometimes we think to ourselves, I learned more today. I've changed in that sense. We go to school. We get educated. We find health changes day by day. We find life changes day by day, but this is what we would call a radical change.

So I want to talk about that a little bit this morning, and I've entitled the message either surprised by change, dealing with change, and I'm looking at the book of Genesis, at the book of Genesis today, and I understand trials and changes that are thrust on us provide an opportunity maybe for good. Maybe even for good.

I see this in the life of Joseph. I was reminded, too, in Psalm 46:8-10 -- God said in Psalm

46:8-10, he says, Come, behold the works of the Lord. God is at work. Changes are happening, and so we behold the works of the Lord who has made desolations in the earth. He makes wars also cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and cuts the spear in two; he burns the chariots in the fire.

2.4

And then we're told in verse 10 -- I like
this -- it says, be still -- and a lot of people need
to be still right now -- and know that I am God. He
is still the sovereign. He's still in charge.

Changes have come, yes. He says, I will be exalted
among the nations. I will be exalted in the earth.

And so, yes, in the midst of all these changes we
know that God will be exalted. He will be glorified.

And so I was happening to think a little bit about Joseph, and we know that a lot of times trouble and blessings are connected. How are we going to handle troubles and trials when they're thrust on us and they bring change into our lives? The Bible often shows the connection in the lives of the people of God 's word.

I was thinking about Joseph as I was preparing this sermon. He was this prized son. In Genesis 37:3-4 it says this: Now Israel, who is Jacob, loved Joseph more than all his children.

I guess that's kind of sad when you think about it. You don't want to have favorites, but we're told people do. Parents do have favorites, and you say, oh, no, that can't happen. Well, we read this passage and we know it does happen. We know it happens experientially, and we know it happens as well from scripture.

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So he loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age. gives us the reason. Also, he made him a tunic of many colors. When his brothers saw their father loved him more than all his brothers, guess what the response was? It seems like -- and it comes natural. See, they were ten brothers, various mothers, same dad. All of the sons, of course, wanted the attention of Dad. Then Jacob has this son, Joseph, in his old age we're told. Rachel. And he loves Joseph. Later on Benjamin came around, too, but this particular son was so favored that he made this very exclusive outfit for him. He decked him out, so to speak. And this was noticed by all the brothers and so there's a change in relationship. There's a change in relationships.

I hope that in the midst of this virus, folks, that, perhaps, your own families are being

bonded fresh, that there may be some positive changes even in your families, that maybe husbands and wives and children and parents and siblings will all find time in this physical proximity or in this checking on each other that there will be a greater love for each other. I think that is a positive result and a positive change.

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But when somebody sees someone love someone more than themselves, jealousy rages and there's a change in relationship, and we find that particularly in this verse. It said, the brothers hated him and could not speak peaceably to him. When it says they couldn't speak peaceably to him, you know that it means there's a lot of venom. There was a lot of venom in the family. When I say venom, I mean, in other words, they spoke very badly to each other. They would speak to Joseph in derogatory ways. They spoke to him in such a way that they put him down and he felt bad whenever he was around his brothers.

Well, Joseph had a dream, and the dream basically had him exalting himself over his brothers. Do you think that cemented his relationship with his brothers? Obviously not. They hated him even more.

But I want to drop down to verses 23-24 in that chapter. I'm trying to make my point quickly.

It says, so it came to pass, when Joseph had come to his brothers -- Dad sent him out. Check on the brothers who were shepherds -- and it said that they stripped Joseph of his tunic. Isn't that interesting? They took his tunic, his multi-colored outfit, his tunic as it's called here, they took it off. It seems to be a sticking point, don't you think? They didn't want to see it on him. So they took it off of him.

2.4

And verse 24 says: They took him, and cast him into a pit: And the pit was empty, there was no water in it. So they threw him in a hole, basically. He couldn't get out.

And they sat down to eat a meal. Then they lifted their eyes and they looked and there were a company of Ishmaelites.

So by the time you get down a few more verses, to verse 28, it says Midianite traders passed by, so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit. What they did was they sold him to the Ishmaelites for 20 shekels of silver and they took Joseph to Egypt. What a change.

The reason we're bringing Joseph up is if there's one fellow that had multiple changes in his life, it happened to be Joseph, and they seemed to be

from one extreme to the other. First he's the exalted son. Then the next thing we know he becomes a prisoner to these Ishmaelites who were basically bedouins who traveled around, and they picked him up to trade him as a slave.

2.4

Can you imagine being part of this terrific group of sons who would someday be the 12 tribes of Israel, and he being so exalted and next he is a slave? He becomes a slave, and so we see what happens to him.

By the time we move down a little bit to chapter 39, we're told in verses 1-4: Joseph had been taken down to Egypt, and we see what happens to him. And Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had taken him down there. So we see he is bought by a rather well-known individual in Egypt. He is the captain of the guard so he has a good position, he has slaves, and so he uses them, and Joseph is blessed by God, and I want you to understand something. That even in the midst of all of these trials -- maybe much like some of you folks are going through and you're patiently trying to get through this and you're concerned about getting a virus and you don't want your health to change and

you don't want your position in life, perhaps, to change -- but you're seeing something here with Joseph. God is continuing to be gracious and merciful, but you know there are gaps of time. You know what I mean? There are gaps of time here. He gets taken to this long journey, he gets taken into this house of slavery, and in your mind's eye you know that he was put up for auction and he was bought, and in the midst of all these things changes are happening in this young man's life and yet God is with him every step of the journey.

2.4

I'm reminded always of Psalm 23: Though I walk through the what? The valley of the shadow of death. Guess who's with me? Thou art with me.

Isn't that consoling? Though the changes in life are going to continue to happen, we understand that God is with us.

And here's Joseph in some of the most precarious positions that you could imagine. He was being sold as a slave. Yet God is with him in the midst of this. And I want you folks to know, though many of you are feeling confined in your homes, confined by your lives, you are being somehow huddled up, I want you to know that God is there for you and he is there with you. He has a plan, he has a

purpose, and this change may turn out to be a very positive situation in your life before it's over. God has never left you. He's never left you.

2.4

Well, let's check out what happens with Joseph. He's in Potiphar's house, the Lord was with Joseph, and that is important in Genesis 39:2, and he was a successful man. Even though this dramatic, radical change in Joseph's life happens, the Lord was with Joseph. Don't miss it. Don't miss it. But he's a slave. How terrible, yes, but the Lord's with Joseph.

He's a success. He was in the house of his master, the Egyptian. His master saw that the Lord was with him. It was evident in his life that the Lord made all he did to prosper in his hand so Joseph found favor in his sight and served him. He did his job. He did what he was supposed to do, just like we're all trying to do what we're supposed to be doing even though it seems like our patience maybe is at the end of the rope. Maybe we're saying, I'm out of my routine; I'm out of my schedule. What am I going to do next? I hope this is over. Yes, yes, we understand, but I want you to know that we can derive success in the midst of this change even as we draw near to the Lord.

You say, but look what happens to Joseph?

Do you remember Potiphar's wife? Oh, man, are you kidding me? She goes chasing after Joseph. Joseph continues to give her the stiff arm. Stay away from me, lady. You know, I can't do this. I can't do this to my master. I belong to God. And so this terrible situation happens and so she feels spurned. She feels like Joseph turned her down flat and she is upset. She's angry. And so she tells her husband, makes a big deal about it.

And we find by the time this is over here in verses 19 and following: So it was -- in chapter 39:19 -- when his master heard the words which his wife spoke to him, saying, your servant did to me after this manner, that his anger was aroused. Of course the husband is upset. How dare he? Even though it's a lie.

And Joseph's master took him, and put him into the prison, a place where the king's prisoners were confined. Oh, here's a change. I thought you said he was prosperous, he was successful. He didn't even do anything. He gets thrown in jail. Oh, no.

But did you notice in verse 21 of this chapter? The Lord was with Joseph. I can't help but tell you this keeps jumping out of the pages of

scripture to me. The Lord's with him in all of these dire changes and circumstances that have cropped up in Joseph's life. Can you imagine? Now he's thrown in jail. Well, that must have been fun. Talk about a change of your routine, huh? Talk about a change in your life. Talk about being quarantined. You're in prison.

He showed him mercy. Guess what happened? God's with him. And he gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison, and the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's hand all the prisoners.

It's fascinating to me how God keeps working. In fact, by the end of the chapter we're told, so the reader will not miss it, he is in prison but notice the last phrase in verse 23. He says, because the Lord was with him, and whatever he did the Lord made it to what? Made it to prosper. I think it's wonderful. God continues to be with him.

So what happens? Oh, everything must be terrific now; right? Everything is great; right? Well, he's still in prison.

Well, you may remember there was a couple of the Pharaoh's close servants: The baker and the cupbearer. They get thrown into prison, too. Joseph is able, through God's blessing, to read their

dreams. So he reads their dreams and it comes out exactly as Joseph said.

2.4

And then we find out in chapter 40:23,
Joseph had asked the chief butler to remember him,
but what happens? Where's God at? You're sitting at
home maybe right now and you're saying, oh, man, I
can't deal with this change anymore. You may feel
like Joseph may have felt for that moment. It said,
yet the chief butler did not remember Joseph but
forgot him. And so Joseph spent this period of time
in prison being seemingly forgotten. Do you feel
forgotten, folks? God's there. God's there every
step of the journey.

I kind of -- and you remember the rest of the account, too. By the time you get to 41:37 and following, you see that it says, so the advice was good in the eyes of Pharaoh. Do you remember?

Nobody could interpret Pharaoh's dreams and Joseph is finally remembered. Why? Because God brought him back to that servant and so out comes Joseph. They clean him up out of prison, they bring him to Pharaoh, and he interprets the dream because God's with him.

And you talk about radical. You talk about a radical change, which is what many of you are

experiencing. Here is a radical change. You go from prison to -- notice what happens here. So the advice was good in the eyes of Pharaoh and in the eyes of all his servants, and Pharaoh said to his servants, Can we find such a one as this, a man in whom is the spirit of God? Interesting term.

2.4

Then Pharaoh said to Joseph, forasmuch as God has shown you all this, there is no one as discerning and as wise as you. You shall be over my house and all my people shall be ruled according to your word. Only in regard to the throne will I be greater than you. And Pharaoh said to Joseph, see, I have set you over all the land of Egypt. You talk about rags to riches; right? Now he's a big boss. He's second in Egypt.

And then you remember famine breaks out, as the account goes, and people are looking for food, and Joseph had this great plan put into action and he takes care of his father and all of his brothers and their families and, of course, this brought all of Israel to Egypt and they prospered there until the exodus.

But there's a particular passage at the end of all this that is really, really important and you can't miss it. In Genesis 50:20 he says this to his

brothers: But as for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good.

2.4

Don't forget this, folks. All this virus seems evil. It seems terrible. It seems debilitating. It seems to be such a struggle. What a change in all of our lives. It's a pandemic. It's global. I'm getting missionaries contacting me telling me all over the world what's happening in their lives and how it's affecting them. We know it is. One of our missionaries couldn't make it to South America. He has to wait. What a change. You see, it's affecting people everywhere, but maybe in the midst of this God meant it for good.

I thought about Paul. He had a radical change, too. Talk about a radical change in his life. Remember in Acts 9 -- we are not going to turn there because of time -- but remember in Acts 9 what happened to Paul? Do you remember? He was on the road to Damascus. He was walking down the road. Do you remember what he was doing? He was walking down the road and he was breathing threats and slaughter against Christians. He wants to put them in jail. He wants them beaten. He wants them put to death, if possible, and God reveals himself, the Lord Jesus Christ, in a bright light and a voice, and Paul was

never the same. Talk about a radical change. And in the midst of all of these things, it was never easy for Paul in his life, but you talk about a man who is radically changed was Paul.

2.4

It reminds me that the greatest change in any of our lives is being born again, don't you think? Maybe you wrestled with sin in your life. Perhaps you wrestled with sin and maybe you're wrestling with sin yet in your life, but the greatest change is being born again.

The Bible tells us in John 3 you must be born again. Great passage in John 3. Jesus comes to Nicodemus. Nicodemus is also a big shot, and in John 3 it says, there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, Rabbi, we know you are a teacher come from God. He says, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.

Jesus answered and said to him, most assuredly I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God.

There is no greater change in a human being's life unless they're born again. It is a metamorphosis. It is what is called being regenerated in scripture. What happens is simply God

changes you, your life, through the spirit of God.

He changes you from the inside out. Not from the outside in but from the inside out. And what he gives you is eternal life. You are born again, and there are radical changes even in your outside life.

2.4

But one of the things that we may find out in the midst of this terrible virus is that maybe some people will tune in and listen to people give the gospel of Jesus Christ and they may see their desperate need of Christ. They may understand that Christ came into the world to go to the cross of Calvary. Why did he go? He died on that cross for sinners.

Scripture says, for by grace are you saved by faith and not of yourselves. It's not of works, folks. It's a gift of God.

We're told in scripture that if you want to be born again you need to come to a place where you confess your sin, where you repent of your sin, and you believe in Christ Jesus alone. That's why we're told in scripture faith alone in Christ Jesus, there is no other means of salvation. He is the way, the truth, and the life, and so we want you to understand that scripture points out that the most radical change a human being can experience is salvation,

being born again.

2.4

Of course Nicodemus was confused and he said, do I have to go back into my mother's womb?

Jesus said, most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and of the spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you you must be born again.

So, yes, it's a work of God when people repent of their sin and turn to Christ alone for their soul salvation. Change is a positive influence in your life and so we want to share that with you, too, that the most radical and the greatest and the most wonderful and the most blessed change of all is being saved, is being born again.

The Bible tells us that someday we're all going to be changed, you know, changed in a moment.

1 Corinthians 15 -- I kind of enjoy telling you there's changes all the time. The Bible is filled with changes. Our life is filled with changes.

Sometimes we just can't deal with the change, but I want to tell you that there are things that may be happening in your life that may be very positive.

Perhaps you may need salvation. You may need to

understand that this change is the hand of God in your life like in Joseph's life, like in Paul's life. You may need to understand that there's going to come a change someday on resurrection day.

2.4

In 1 Corinthians 15 we're told we're going to be changed in a moment. There is a day coming.

According to 1 Corinthians 15, it says this in verses 51-52: Behold, I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep. Sleep meaning death. We're not going to continue to be in just the spiritual state of where we are all at. There's going to come a resurrection day for our physical bodies as well, if you understand what I mean. In other words, sometimes in scripture Paul relates sleep as death, and we see that the death that we are talking about is in regard to the fact that our physical body someday, if you know Christ, will have a glorious resurrected body. In fact, this is what it says: We shall all be changed.

Isn't that neat? Isn't that great? Isn't that just wonderful? We've got an anticipation, if you know Christ as your Savior, if you have been born again, of a resurrection day. It says, we shall all be changed in a moment, it says, in a twinkling of an eye, the very glimmer of your eye. It's going to

happen that quick. It says, at the last trump, for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we -- I like this -- shall be changed. We shall be changed.

2.4

What happens is this very simply. No more sickness. Heaven eternally. You're going to have an incorruptible body. When it says incorruptible body, right now we have a corruptible body. That's what this COVID-19 is all about, this virus is all about. It shows our corruptibility. It shows us that our body can break down. It shows us that this virus can consume us. But you see, you're going to have an incorruptible body someday at the resurrection. What's going to happen is you will have a literal physical body when you stand in glory that will never ever break down. It will never get sick. It will never age. None of these things that are happening to us now will happen to us in glory. That's a great change, don't you think?

By the way, that body will last eternally.

Talk about incorruptible; right? God is a God that's changeless. You know that, don't you? One thing that never changes is God. He's the same yesterday, today, and forever.

Malachi 3:6 tells us this: For I am the

Lord, he says, I do not change. I do not change.

Hebrews 13:8 says, Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.

God is changeless. That is one of his characteristics. He is immutable. He never changes. That's our God. Isn't that great to know? We change; he never changes. Our situations, our circumstances change, not his, so you can rely on him.

Just think. All of the promises that he's ever made to you in scripture, do you think he's ever going to change his mind? Say, hey, you know, life's changed. You're different. I change my mind. God is changeless. If he's made a promise, it's forever and ever.

One last thing as we close. What's changed about you in the midst of this virus? It's been already a long time for a lot of us, but it may last even longer. Much like Joseph, is God still dealing with your life and can some positive changes be rescued in the midst of this rather strange and difficult time? We believe it can.

And I believe adversity tests our spiritual strength. In fact, Proverbs 24:10 says this: If you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is

small.

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That verse has been on my mind and my heart a lot, too, and sometimes I listen to the news and you feel bad about all that's going on in life and you say, you know, you're concerned about your church, your own families. And I think about my own personal strength and I think to myself, well, I don't have a lot of strength on my own but I do know that the Lord is sufficient and I know when I'm weak, Paul said, then I'm strong. And so when I read this verse and it says, if you faint in the day of adversity, your strength is small, well, I've got a really big God and my God is so big that he can give us strength in the midst of a very difficult time and so I want to remind you of that as we close today, that our God is a big God. My God is not a small God.

Is your God too small to handle all these adversities in your life? Is your God too small to carry you through? Is your God too small to not continue to deal with your heart?

I have found a greater intensity, I know, in my own prayers. How about your prayer life? Is it causing you to pray more? Is it causing you to not only pray about your own life and your own

condition but about the life of other people?

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Has it caused you to consider what's really important: Your mortality, your eternal destiny?

Has it caused you to think about what's really important: Your family, even your church, your relationship with Jesus Christ? Has it caused you to take an inventory of your life and say, maybe I need to look over my life a little better? Has it caused you to forsake some sin? Will this make you a stronger Christian? Will this enhance your walk with God? There may even be some people listening to this that will say, I desperately need Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior. Oh, we plead with you. We plead with you.

You need to understand death is always near. It's always near if there's a virus or no virus, and we understand from scripture that those that do not know Jesus Christ as their Lord, as their Savior are bound for hell and that has been every one of our conditions without Christ, and so we desperately plead with you to trust Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior.

Heavenly Father, we ask today that you might work in the hearts of people that are hearing messages just like this, that the spirit of God will

work in such a way that people will understand their need of the Lord, not only for salvation, but people may again take that inventory in their life and say, I need a closer walk with you, I will forsake sin, I will bring a greater intensity to my prayer life, I will see what's important and valuable, I will redo my priorities in my life, and so we pray to that end Lord. In Jesus's name. Amen.