

'God's eye is on those who respect him, the ones who are looking for his love. He's ready to come to their rescue in bad times; in lean times he keeps body and soul together.'

Psalm 33:18 MSG'

SHORT UPDATE ON CORONAVIRUS FROM HARVEST MINISTRIES

AMBASSADORS OF THE LITTLE KINGDOM

The novel coronavirus which has been galloping to several countries across the world has entered India too. This pandemic which has become outrageous and has been bringing tremors has become a threat to the entire world. Speaking of India, the first case was reported here on the 30th of January, 2020. Since then, the corona cases have been increasing gradually. However, by religiously following certain measures, the impact of the virus is relatively lower than the European countries and the USA. According to the Indian Union Health Ministry, as of now, the corona positive cases across the country are above 3000 and around 70 people have succumbed to the epidemic. Thankfully, our country has taken the right measures at the right time to flatten the curve which indicates the spike of the corona positive cases by restricting the entry of people from foreign countries.

At the same time, as a measure to prevent the further invasion of the virus within the country, several state governments took an initiative to shut down the educational institutions, malls, theatres, mass gatherings, etc. Our Telangana state government has also done the same and it was declared to close down the schools from the 16th of March to the 31st of March.

It was on a Saturday (14th) evening when I got to know about this news while I was at a memorial meeting. At first, I decided to shut down the school and let the children stay back rather than sending them to their homes as they are more vulnerable to the virus in their communities. So, I drove down to the school and had a quick meeting with the staff and the students. We decided to suspend the classes in submission to the various state and central authorities but allow the students to stay on the campus and have a special schedule for them.

However, after I checked the news and sought the advice of some of the well-wishers and board members, I understood and decided that it is better to send the children back to their houses and thereby not violating the rules of the government.

So, with a heavy heart, I let the children go to their hometowns on the 18th of March 2020. Before that, we had a time of prayer and meditation on the word of God where the children were taught to practice the protocols such as washing hands frequently, maintaining social distance, being confined to their houses which help in protecting them from falling prey to the virus and to stay safe at their locations. The best part is, I have commissioned them as TEACHERS to their families, relatives, and communities. Here, I would like to share an incident which has surprised

me. On Thursday (19th), during my visit to one of our Alumni students at a remote community, I heard some of the parents saying how they were educated by their children on protecting themselves from the virus. Surely, there are the ambassadors of the little kingdom at work!

We have also closed down our HIV/Aids clinic because 6 corona positive cases have been confirmed in the nearby town and the whole area has been locked down

UNCERTAIN TIMES: WATCH AND PRAY

On the 19th of March, Thursday night, our Prime Minister spoke to the nation and appealed to the citizens to practice social distancing as a way to curb the spread of coronavirus. He also called for Janata curfew (self-curfew) on the 22nd of March (Sunday) from 7 am to 9 pm. This meant that we had to stop conducting the Sunday worship services which usually consist of mass gatherings. I passed the instructions to all our pastors and asked them to refrain from calling the members to gather on that day for Sunday service as a demonstration of our concern not only as our social responsibility but also as a witness to the nation. All our services were cancelled but a few of them conducted on Saturday and a few of them on Monday.

Four pastors and I were scheduled to do a Dental Training in Mumbai and the hosts had told us that it is better to cancel the event. However, we were keen on doing in-house training rather than having a camp. But in the prevailing situation, we have decided to call off the training.

The entire world is struggling due to the shortage of hand sanitizers and masks. But the stores are still open and the essential supplies are not affected much. We are allowed to step out to buy groceries/vegetables/essentials in a time slot, within a 3kms radius. We do not know what kind of situations are lying ahead.

We have our fingers crossed and have been praying fervently. Please pray for us while we do the same for you. By looking at the massive size of our population, if the virus doesn't get contained, it could end up having a catastrophic effect on the lives of the people and the economy of the nation.

28th March:::::::

The COVID-19 pandemic is wreaking havoc everywhere and I find myself in an unprecedented situation. It looks like the entire world has come to a standstill position. Never in my life, I have been confined to home in this manner - seven days at a stretch and the possibility of being confined to our houses for another month is on the cards. I have seen the worst possible scenarios in different parts of India but they are nowhere close to this. It is unprecedented and quite scary.

On 22nd of March, our Prime Minister has imposed Janata curfew across the nation and as we were eagerly waiting for it to get over, our state government announced that the state has to be locked down till 31st of March. Even before it could end, on March 24, things turned critical when the Prime Minister of India said that the lockdown has to be extended to three weeks starting from March 25, 2020. No flights, no trains, no buses – virtually no public transport is allowed and restrictions were imposed on the movement of private vehicles unless an emergency arises. It has turned into a nightmare.

While I was locked down at home, 30 of our school teachers and 10 students were locked down at the school. Hence, it is not just the survival of me and my family but also about the well-being of 40 people who are locked down at the school campus.

On Sunday the 22nd of March, we have canceled all our church services and instead opted for house churches. Now we have to think of different ways to worship as the lockdown is till April 15, and it may extend beyond. It is day seven of the lockdown and by God's grace, we are doing well. We have switched to simple meals and motivating our team to stay strong through video conferencing and WhatsApp.

I have also managed to order and get the supplies from the city, which was an adventurous story by itself. It seemed like a military operation but we are assured of supplies at least for the following six weeks. On the personal front, we are doing good. We managed to store essential commodities for a few weeks. I am now able to stay at home and get the much-needed rest and I am able to spend quality time with the family. We are able to cook a good meal and watch movies that I never did before. I am trying to find all the old movies on YouTube. Day in and day out, the WhatsApp messages keep pouring in. Filtering and forwarding them seems to be new work for me during this siege.

This situation seems like a time bomb ticking away even as we wait for the lockdown to end. While in rural India, the lockdown seems to be effective and is being practiced in total spirit, in urban areas, especially in cities, people are still going out for picking up the essentials. It is painful to watch the police beating up such people who step out on the road without a genuine reason.

With the little information flowing in, most of our children seem to be safe as of now. With no clear indication when the school will resume and the examinations would take place, not sure when I will be able to see them back in the campus.

On the family front, we are doing well, too. Usha is doing most of the cooking and I pitch in here and there. Abner is facing some health issues and we are earnestly praying for him. Acsha and Jonathan are having best time together staying home.

I need your special prayers as I intend to break the isolation and go out and check out with the Govt official where we could pitch in and do our bit in helping the poor, daily wagers and migrant workers in and around the neighbourhoods of our school.

Please continue to pray for us, for the pastors in the villages, and for our school team that has been locked down at the campus. We are praying for you too since we understand from the news that your country is at an even more critical stage at this time.

In His grip,

Caleb Rayapati

Servant of the servants