

How are you responding to 2020?

I. INTRO

- A. Times of stress reveal our idols, and 2020 has been a particularly stressful time. In addition to this, our idols have been squashed or stretched, and that has resulted in turning to all sorts of things to cope.
 - B. Everything is up in 2020:
 - 1. Weight gain. Alcoholism, Drug use, Internet shopping, Divorce, Domestic abuse, adult entertainment, netflix binging, and on and on.
 - 2. Simply stated, the stress of 2020 has revealed that we are out of control and when we feel out of control we act like it
 - C. When we feel out of control, we turn to things we can control <or> we react out of a place a lack of control
 - D. I have isolated a few themes in proverbs that we tend to turn to when we feel out of control. These are default reactions for humans when we feel out of control
 - E. You may not have struggled w/ all of these, but you probably have w/ some
- ## II. How are you responding to 2020? With wisdom or with defeat?

- A. Comfort → During these times, some have embraced laziness and comfort over risk and work. Why work when the government will pay? Why pay rent when the governor has paused evictions? So much danger. Isn't it better to just stay home? Not referring to high risk people, but lazy people
 - 1. *Proverbs 26:12–16 [12] Do you see a man who is wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him. The sluggard says, "There is a lion in the road! There is a lion in the streets!" As a door turns on its hinges, so does a sluggard on his bed. The sluggard buries his hand in the dish; it wears him out to bring it back to his mouth. The sluggard is wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can answer sensibly.*
 - 2. The sluggard loves comfort and for a sluggard there is nothing more dangerous than when his comfort is threatened. COVID has done that.
 - a) Work? I can't work today - I might die of COVID (e.g. a lion)
 - b) Get out of bed? What's the point? COVID messed everything up anyway. Why try?
 - c) Too lazy to eat! Perhaps a better, more modern analogy would be: too lazy to eat what is healthy so lives on fast food.
 - 3. Traits of the sluggard in Proverbs...
 - a) Does not start things; Does not finish things; Will run from difficulty; Is anxious and restless;
 - 4. What is the sluggard's problem? Control and Comfort.
 - a) The sluggard has no control over whether or not his day will run smoothly or be challenging - easier to avoid it
 - b) The sluggard has no control over whether danger lies at every corner - easier to avoid it
 - c) The sluggard gets frustrated when his comfort is disrupted. He is unteachable, wisest in his own eyes, full of excuses

- d) COVID has given the sluggard a reason to embrace his sluggishness
- 5. The sluggard avoids work because he cannot control if it will succeed. Better to do nothing than to fail - this way he can point to the "what if"
- 6. What does the gospel say to the sluggard?**
 - a) God designed us to work and indulging laziness is contrary to our design as humans and contrary to our calling as Christians.
 - b) You cannot will yourself out of laziness despite what the self-help world tells you. Instead, you need to see the grace of Jesus as revealed in the gospel.
 - c) Salvation apart from works motivates us to labor diligently in this brief life on earth for the glory of God, the good of others, and our own benefit.
 - d) The spirit controlled life compels us to grow that we might be useful to our King
 - e) The gospel gives us confidence and courage despite failures and in the face of adversity
- B. Rage → When the various events of 2020 began to unfold people were like a tinderbox ready to burst aflame. I think this was, in large part, b/c of how 'out of control' people felt. After being told what to do, what not to do, being kept from working, getting sick, not getting sick, watching too much news (b/c of having more time), and so on and so forth people were ready to pop.
 - 1. When people get pushed into a corner, they lash out. If you were prone to anger before 2020, you basically became the Hulk this year.
 - 2. Anger is all about control and power idolatries, but the Bible has strong words against angry people.
 - 3. *Proverbs 16:32, Whoever is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city.*
 - 4. *Proverbs 15:18, A hot-tempered man stirs up strife, but he who is slow to anger quiets contention.*
 - 5. *Proverbs 29:22 - A man of wrath stirs up strife, and one given to anger causes much transgression.*
 - 6. *Proverbs 22:24–25, Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare.*
 - 7. The angry person says things like, "They just don't get it. They just won't listen. Don't you know who I am? I can force them to listen!"
 - 8. The angry person makes threats in order to get what they want.
 - 9. The angry person screams at people they can intimidate b/c they think that through fear they can get what they want. They play the bully.
 - 10. The angry person has a control issue. They can't control things so they lose control. COVID stripped all control away so they freak out.
 - 11. The solution, however, is not to give control to him - that will destroy him and everyone around him. You don't give in to a temper tantrum.

12. The solution is for the angry person to realize that he is NEVER actually in control (and he doesn't have to be).

13. What does the gospel say to the angry man?

- a) You've never been able to fight your own battles, which is why Jesus had to come to earth.
- b) Your inability to control the smallest part of your life is designed to point you to the reality that you can't control ANYTHING despite all your best efforts.
- c) If you want to win, you actually need to surrender to Jesus
- d) Put down your fists, acknowledge your inability and surrender
- e) Stop fighting and ask the Lord to fight your battles instead.

C. Escapism → I am an expert escape artist. For people addicted to escape, when the going gets tough you run away. It can be books, movies, video games, food, sports, fantasy football, hunting, fishing, the boat, workaholic, anything. Escapism most frequently manifests itself in the Proverbs as laziness and drunkenness

1. *Proverbs 23:29–35, Who has woe? Who has sorrow? Who has strife? Who has complaining? Who has wounds without cause? Who has redness of eyes? Those who tarry long over wine; those who go to try mixed wine. Do not look at wine when it is red, when it sparkles in the cup and goes down smoothly. In the end it bites like a serpent and stings like an adder. Your eyes will see strange things, and your heart utter perverse things. You will be like one who lies down in the midst of the sea, like one who lies on the top of a mast. "They struck me," you will say, "but I was not hurt; they beat me, but I did not feel it. When shall I awake? I must have another drink."*

- 2. What a liar alcohol is (or any escape). Escapes make so many empty promises
 - a) I can take your pain away. I can remove your sorrow that you feel.
 - b) Had a hard day? Let me make it all better.
 - c) Are you sad and worn out? I will give you comfort.
- 3. But you can't escape. You only think you escape for a brief spell. Reality is still waiting for you when you return - and now you have a headache, or you squandered your years in a bottle, on a screen, or in a book
- 4. The escape artist wants to sneak away b/c they can't control the world around them, but here's the rub:
- 5. **What does the gospel say to the one who craves escape?**
 - a) What you actually crave is only found in the gospel
 - b) Your desire to run away is a desire to return to Eden
 - c) Your desire for adventure is a desire for gospel purpose
 - d) Your desire for rest is a desire for the sabbath of the cross
 - e) Your desire for pleasure is a desire for the new wine of the Holy Spirit
 - f) Everything you crave is found in Jesus if you can fix your eyes on him in faith

III. CONCLUSION: *Psalm 46:8–11*

[8] Come, behold the works of the LORD, how he has brought desolations on the earth. [9] He makes wars cease to the end of the earth; he breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the chariots with fire. [10] “Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!” [11] The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress. Selah

- A. *ESV Psalter commentary: To turn on the television or radio or to drive down a billboard-filled highway is to be bombarded with the message that various products and services are the secret to achieving inner calm. If you can just get the right body, the right education, the right financial structure, the right entertainment system—then you will have achieved that deep “soul-sigh” everyone longs for. Psalm 46 offers an alternative to the world. It says: Be still. Be quiet. Look up. Calm down. God reigns.*
- B. *This psalm does not offer a Pollyanna view of life. This psalm gives us sober realism. Even though the earth goes haywire (vv. 2–3), even though nations assault each other (v. 6), all of this is under the wise and far-reaching hand of God.*
- C. *What troubles you today? What is it about which you think, “If I can just get that sorted out, life will become manageable”? What worries your heart as you lie awake in bed? God says: I, not any circumstantial solution, am your refuge amid your adversities. I am a very present help in trouble. I am God. Be still.*
- D. I think the solution for all of these struggles is to find our rest in Jesus. To be still. Be still in the midst of COVID. Be still in the turmoil. Not TOO STILL, Sluggard!
- E. Being still isn't inactivity. It is active surrender. Humbling yourself before God, acknowledging you have no control, acknowledging you aren't content outside of Jesus, acknowledging that you need more of Him, he doesn't need more of you.
- F. The opposite of being still is manipulation. Manipulation people w/ your anger, manipulating your comfort w/ your excuses, manipulating your pleasure with escapes.
- G. We must wait for Jesus. Wait for the Lord. Stop. Be quiet. Look to him. Crawl on that altar and stay there. Stop striving. Surrender.
- H. Friend, have you surrendered? After Christian's message, have you surrendered? In the midst of 2020, have you surrendered?
- I. Are you striving? Are you panicking? Are you anxious? Are you worried? Are you angry? Be still. Drop your hands. Stop fighting God. Stop fighting the world.

IV. TABLE TALK

- A. How have you seen the struggles of this sermon most frequently reveal themselves in your life this year?
- B. Practically, what does it look like to be still before God?
- C. Do you have margin in your life to be still? Do you take advantage of it? How?
- D. Come up with a quick plan for being still during this final month of the year.