COVID-19 and the Resurrection.

It’s almost impossible to talk about anything but coronavirus and the chaos that has enveloped our world. Watch the news, check social media, talk with family and friends and the topic inevitably turns to COVID-19. The fact that Easter is just around the corner seems like an afterthought.

But we need to remember the big picture. I doubt that in 2,000 years people will still be talking about coronavirus. And yet here we are still talking about the resurrection of Jesus. Maybe that will remind us how significant Easter is—even in our current crisis.

At Easter time it’s good to stop and think more deeply about Jesus’ defeat of death. I’m reminded to thank God for the hope we have of new life. And I’m reminded that this resurrection hope speaks into all areas of my life. But this Easter the resurrection of Jesus has something important to say as we think about COVID-19.

The new life of Jesus Christ was not just a great miracle that affected one dead person. It is God’s YES to the renewal of
humanity and God’s YES to the renewal of his creation.

The resurrection of Jesus is God’s affirmation and promise that death will not win in the end and our world will not remain corrupted forever. The two things are connected, and both depend on the resurrection of Jesus. In the Bible, Paul wrote to Jesus followers in Rome:

For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the freedom and glory of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption to sonship, the redemption of our bodies (8:20-23).

Since God created the world, the fate of creation has been tied to the fate of humanity. It was “subjected to frustration” (v.20) because of humanity’s rebellion against God (Genesis 3:17–19)—the whole world is out of whack because of it.

That’s why we experience devastating viruses, tsunamis, and bushfires. It’s why our world is full of corruption, poverty, and injustice. Likewise, when humanity is freed from death and brought into glory, so will the entire creation (v.21).

When we are put right, the world is also put right. Those elements that devastate and decimate us will no longer have power to do so. But for now, the creation is groaning like a
pregnant woman about to give birth as it waits for us (v.22).

We also “groan inwardly” in our suffering as we wait for “the redemption of our bodies” (v.23). Our experience of the world is mixed with grief, insecurity, and weakness. But the redemption of our bodies, our physical resurrection from the dead, is assured because we are connected to Christ, who has been raised as the firstfruits of what is to come (1 Corinthians 15:20–27).

His resurrection secures our resurrection. His defeat of death becomes ours.

Coronavirus exists because our world is still subjected to the frustration sin brought with it. It is still out of whack. And so some of us will contract the virus, or we’ll have loved ones who do. Many will wrestle with anxiety, loneliness, and fear. Many are losing their jobs. Some days we may feel defeated. Some days we’ll feel confused.

We may question how God could let this happen. For some of us this may be the first time we’ve had to face a serious threat to our safety, our society, and our families. And all of us will have to face death one day.

But just as we look forward to a resurrected life free from suffering, pain, and death, so the creation will be renewed—free from suffering, pain, death… and coronavirus. We have this hope because of Jesus’ resurrection from the dead—God’s YES to humanity and creation. His resurrection is the promise of a renewed world and life eternal. Let’s take hold of that hope as we reflect on the resurrection of Jesus this Easter.