

## **A prayer for Afghanistan**

Almighty God,

Creator and preserver of our world. We pray today for peace. Have mercy on our broken and divided world and banish the spirit that makes for war. We ask that leaders of nations and governments will pursue freedom, justice and the welfare of all people.

We pray especially for all affected by the escalating turmoil and tragic events in Afghanistan. Help the leaders of nations to protect the vulnerable and to establish justice and peace. Restrain the forces of evil and protect men, and especially women and children from Taliban forces.

We also pray for Christian brothers and sisters in Afghanistan. Preserve their lives and strengthen their witness in this land of deep spiritual darkness and despair.

We pray for Afghan refugees who have made Australia their home and for those who are anxious about family in Afghanistan. Comfort them we pray and may they know the hope and peace that is found in our Lord Jesus.

And we pray, Father, for the veterans of our Defence Force who have served in Afghanistan, and their families. Sustain these men and women who have served our country. May they receive the care and support they need at this time of disappointment and discouragement.

Heavenly Father, in an uncertain world, please turn the hearts of all people to your Son Jesus Christ our Lord and to the peace that passes all understanding.

We ask these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

# Sickness, COVID and the hope to come



Kanishka Raffel

**J**ohn's Gospel records an episode in the life of Jesus that is both deeply personal and powerfully universal. As far as Scripture records, Jesus never experienced illness himself. He did, however, experience hunger, thirst, the barbarous physical cruelty of flogging and crucifixion. And of course, Jesus experienced death.

Jesus is famously recorded on numerous occasions being swamped by people who were ill or suffering from some mental, physical or demonic affliction. His reputation as a healer was documented even by non-Christian ancient sources.

In John chapter 11 we are given a window into how Jesus was affected by the sickness of others. He evidently had a special and close relationship with the little family of Mary, Martha and their brother Lazarus in Bethany. When Lazarus becomes ill, his sisters send word to Jesus: "Lord, the one you love is sick". When Jesus comes to Bethany and stands outside the tomb in which the body of Lazarus has been laid, John records that "Jesus wept".

Christianity does not promise its followers a life free from illness. On the contrary, faith in Christ isn't a protective bubble from the ordinary sorrows and suffering of this fallen world, which groans for its liberation from death and decay. The ancient account of the disobedience of the man and the woman in the garden at the beginning has unfolded in myriad cascading sorrows and calamities throughout history. The presence of sickness in the world is a wretched reminder of this continuing reality.

But in the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, Christians proclaim that there is a new world coming – restored, healed and liberated from disease, decay and death. Jesus demonstrated the presence and power of this new world in his healing of the sick around him and in commanding the dead, including Lazarus, to rise. By his death and resurrection Jesus secured the certainty of that coming, future world as its King and Redeemer.

So, what does all this mean in light of the continuing COVID-19 pandemic? First, Christians approach this crisis with confidence that, in life and death, Jesus is Lord. Nothing is more pressing than reconciliation with him, nothing is more wonderful than the promise of his presence with his people in this life and the next.

As a result, second, we may live in times of crisis not in fear or

anxiety but in prayerful trust and loving service of others. We take action on the basis of what will honour Christ and serve our neighbour; we resist temptations to selfishness or neglect of others.

It's important to be as well informed as we can be. The website [sydneyanglicans.net](http://sydneyanglicans.net) has a COVID-19 page full of information relevant to the conduct of ministries across the Diocese, including resources and advice about maintaining spiritual and physical wellbeing in this time of lockdown. Anglicare provides counselling services and can be contacted on 1300 651 728.

I'm grateful for the way in which local churches have responded creatively and cheerfully to the needs of members and their own communities, and for forbearance with the restrictions that have been placed on our ability to meet in person. God approves law abiding, and Scripture calls us to submit to our governing authorities and to pray for them as, "This is good, and pleases God our Saviour, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim 2:3-4).

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Sovereign Lord, you are the hope and healer of your people and have promised a world where there is no more sickness or crying or death. By your death and resurrection, you have set your people free from the penalty of sin and death. We pray your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

Please prosper the work of those who are administering the rollout of COVID vaccines. Please strengthen those who are treating the sick. Please comfort those who are mourning the loss of loved ones or living in fear of this disease.

Uphold those facing financial stress or social isolation and make us a generous and caring people.

Please give governing authorities wisdom in their management of this crisis, and give your people your peace beyond understanding, generous and wise hearts and a renewed trust in your sovereign goodness and glory.

Turn the hearts of many now experiencing fear and anxiety that they may find that peace that is the fruit of the death and resurrection of your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, in whose name we pray. Amen.

## Lockdown prayer

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Father we come before you with aching hearts.  
Father we live in this beautiful world but it is  
damaged by our sin and we need you. The  
Corona virus is spreading so quickly, so far &  
wide.

Please contain the virus, give your wisdom,  
energy and perseverance to the testing & contact  
tracing teams, our leaders making decisions that  
have such a huge impact on our community We  
especially pray for our leaders at this time, Scott  
Morrison our Prime Minister and Gladys  
Berejiklian, our Health Minister Brad Hazzard  
and Chief Health Officer Kerry Chant.

Please also protect our workers in essential  
services - teachers, police, those in aged care,  
doctors, nurses, paramedics, retail workers, so  
many roles Lord - Uphold them when their  
spirits and energy levels flag and anxiety rises.  
Where there are Christians in these roles may  
they be your instruments of peace, showing  
constant love and kindness, ever ready to give a  
reason for the hope they have in you.

We pray for those who are fearful, those living in  
abusive relationships or with serious financial  
challenges, those who are lonely, isolated, sick or  
in pain or grief. By your presence, protection and  
provision please bring them your peace.

Psalm 73 reminds us: *Whom have I in heaven but  
you? And earth has nothing I desire besides you. My  
flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength  
of my heart and my portion forever (v.25-26)*



Father we pray for those nations, especially our near neighbours like Indonesia, Fiji & Papua New Guinea, where the CORONA virus is running rampant & the distribution of aid is impeded by inadequate health care systems, corruption, lack of resources. May wealthy nations like ours be generous in sharing with those who are poor, may we be generous to others in need.

We pray for our parishes and churches at this time. Lord you said, "I will build my church", we ask you Lord to fulfil your promise even in the Covid season, may our parishes and churches grow and be strengthened at this difficult time.

We know more Australians are thinking about the meaning of life than was the case before Covid, and more are turning to prayer. Lord help them to find the Living Hope of the Lord Jesus at this time.

We pray for our Diocesan organisations at this time, and we remember Youthworks and Anglicare.

For Youthworks we pray as presently SRE in schools and Christian camps for schools and churches cannot meet. Please Lord, bring an easing in restrictions so these important ministries can resume.

For Anglicare we thank you that our Chaplains in Hospitals, Prisons and Aged Care are still working and can care and support patients, inmates, residents and staff while family visits are not permitted. At this Covid time may your love, care, hope and peace of the Lord Jesus Christ be shared with all those in need.

In Jesus name. Amen