



Dear Friends,

I was asked to write out the preparations for COVID-19 we've been making at our little clinic in Burma. I've done the research. I've thought way out of the proverbial box. My dad is one of the most creative thinkers I know and even he'd be proud. Some of the things we have done are completely practical and some things probably pretty crazy. But we've done everything we can think of to get ready for what surely will be an overwhelming onslaught of death and suffering. For we are under no illusions, we simply don't have access to advanced healthcare resources. The level of available healthcare here will be less than the flattest of social distancing curves. My source of hope comes from a different direction.

One day in early November 2019 as the world unwittingly went about its business, a small particle passed into the body of an unsuspecting victim. Just as unwittingly, on Nov 9, 2019 I woke from a nightmare and wrote it down in an email to a friend.

On Sat, Nov 9, 2019 at 6:59 AM Mitch Ryan <mitch@earthmissionasia.org> wrote:

Nov 9 Saturday Louisville KY

This morning at 4 am, I woke up from a nightmare. I was inside the lower level of a house with two companions. The room was empty of furniture or decoration. The house seemed familiar, somehow associated with my childhood. As I stood there, black filthy water started oozing up from under the floor into the room. It was an old problem that I was aware of. The house had been built over a huge underground reservoir of dirty water, supported by only a thin crust of earth. I was uncomfortably aware that it could crumple and collapse at any moment. And at the edge of my consciousness, I also knew that the limits of the vast pool had not been measured. Perhaps it lay under whole world. The black ooze turned into a torrent and started to fill the room, threatening to trap three of us. I looked outside and was alarmed to see the water somehow was rising even more quickly OUTSIDE the windows. We needed to get out of the house, or we would drown. My two companions were frozen in shock. I pushed them both up and outside through some sort of portal. Outside, the dark water was flooding the whole area... like the whole land was collapsing into the underground lake. And then I woke.

I woke depressed about our dying planet, filled with a sense of despair about our world. I then got up, put headphones on so I wouldn't wake up Caryl and listened to a daily podcast I follow called "Pray as You go" (PAYG). The passage that morning described one of Ezekiel's visions (Ezekiel 47:1-2, 8-9, 12). Like my dream, water poured out from under the building where Ezekiel stood. In complete contrast to my dream, however, these waters brought vibrant Life to everything they touched.

Ezekiel 47:1-2, 8-9, 12

"Then he brought me back to the entrance of the temple; there, water was flowing from below the threshold of the temple towards the east (for the temple faced east); and the water was flowing down from below the south end of the threshold of the temple, south of the altar. Then he brought me out by way of the north gate and led me round on the outside to the outer gate that faces towards the east; and the water was coming out on the south side. He said to me, 'This water flows towards the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah; and when it enters the



sea, the sea of stagnant waters, the water will become fresh. Wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live, and there will be very many fish, once these waters reach there. It will become fresh; and everything will live where the river goes. On the banks, on both sides of the river, there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail, but they will bear fresh fruit every month, because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food, and their leaves for healing.'

The PAYG podcast narrator commented: "By their very nature visions are complicated things to try and understand. In Ezekiel's vision we hear about a glorious Temple but it has been suggested that this Temple is not so much a building but a representation of the body of Christ; both the physical body of Christ but also the Church - the 'spiritual' body of Christ... Ezekiel makes a great deal of the cleansing and purifying properties of the water which flows from the Temple. Imagine yourself in the place of Ezekiel in the vision. See that purifying process now; see the waters becoming clear and the stagnation disappearing; life beginning to thrive again in the water. Now imagine that you are that water; as Christians we are called upon to be a life-giving presence in those places where there is sadness and despair. What are those places in your life?"

The similarity of settings with water pouring from beneath a building combined with the absolute contrast in the nature of the water was so stark, I couldn't help but sense the tug of some deeper meaning. But at the time, I couldn't grasp it. After the podcast, I opened Spotify and played 'Daily Mix 1' - a sampling of similar-type of songs from across my playlists. The very first one played was "Farther Along" by Josh Garrels on the album 'Love and War and the Sea in Between'. This song was originally written in 1911, a few years before the world struggled to survive WWI and another virus. I looped the song for the next hour as I wrote out the email to my friend. See below for the full lyrics.

"No idea what this all means or who it is for... but the 3 different inputs all about the same theme feel more than coincidence. Please prayerfully consider. In the end the very strong feeling was joy. Not something to worry about. But that it would happen, and in the end, as beloved by Jesus... all would be put right.

Love you brother. Looking forward to seeing you.

Mitch

The preparations we make for COVID-19 are probably important. But what is essential is that we are operating in faith... not fear. Some of us will see the work of our hands crumble and fail. Some will watch loved ones die. Some of us will probably face our own famous final scene and leave behind countless unfinished symphonies. By all appearances, the world is filling with black deathly ooze. But even as that happens, on another dimension beneath the dark waters, as Christians, we should know that we are part of the cleansing, Life-bringing waters flowing from the Holy of Holies. Through faith and God's very real help, may we all live and act selflessly and courageously... in this time of dark floods, may we all be Jesus to everything we touch.

So be it.

NOTE: In any outbreak, scientists strive to identify the very first patient who came down with the disease in question... patient zero. This helps to determine how the disease spreads and if there might be a hidden reservoir sheltering the disease. According to a Hong Kong English newspaper (South China Morning Post), based on their review of unpublished Chinese government records, the first patient



stricken with the COVID virus could have been a 55-year-old from Hubei province. For my purposes of my dream, however, it's not the who that is so important, but the when. Currently the best candidate for patient zero presented to Chinese doctors on 17 Nov 2019, weeks before the first official case was acknowledged. An analysis of terms used in WeChat, a Chinese social media platform, agrees that the first cases started presenting in mid-November. Projecting backwards an average incubation period, the first person was probably infected with the COVID virus sometime early to mid-November 2019.

Farther Along

[Chorus]

*Farther along we'll know all about it
Farther along we'll understand why
So cheer up my brothers, live in the sunshine
We'll understand this, all by and by*

[Verse 1]

*Tempted and tried, I wondered why
The good man dies, the bad man thrives
And Jesus cries because he loves em' both
We're all cast-aways in need of rope
Hangin' on by the last threads of our hope
In a house of mirrors full of smoke
Confusing illusions I've seen*

*Where did I go wrong, I sang along
To every chorus of the song
That the devil wrote like a piper at the gate
Leading mice and men down to their fate
But some will courageously escape
The seductive voice with a heart of faith
While walkin' the line back home*

*There's so much more to life than we've been told
It's full of beauty that will unfold
And shine like you struck gold my wayward son
That deadweight burden weighs a ton
Go down to the river and let it run
And wash away all the things you've done
Forgiveness, alright*

[Chorus]

*Farther along we'll know all about it
Farther along we'll understand why
So cheer up my brothers, live in the sunshine*



We'll understand this, all by and by

[Verse 2]

*But still I get hard pressed on every side
Between the rock and a compromise
Like truth and a pack of lies fightin' for my soul
And I've got no place left go
Cause I got changed by what I've been shown
There's more glory than the world has known
Keeps me ramblin' on*

*Skipping like a calf loosed from its stall
I'm free to love once and for all
And even when I fall I'll get back up
For the joy that overflows my cup
Heaven filled me with more than enough
Broke down my levees and my bluffs
Let the flood wash me*

*And one day when the sky rolls back on us
Some rejoice and the others fuss
Cause every knee must bow and tongue confess
The Son of God is forever blessed
His is the Kingdom, and we're the guests
So put your voice up to the test
Sing Lord, come soon*

Mitch Ryan, EMA Program Director

SAVE THE DATE.

YOU'RE INVITED to attend "From Burma: A COVID-19 Perspective" - a LIVE WEBINAR with Dan Ryan (EMA's Executive Director, Chiang Mai, Thailand) and Dr. Mitch Ryan (EMA's Program Director, LerDoh, Burma) on **Sunday, April 5 at 7PM Central Time (USA)**. Please share this invite with others!

1. Reserve your spot now at www.earth-mission.org.
2. To access the webinar, click on the link below:

https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_Ub5G9pJETF-0srtO-vGd8w