

Finding God in an Infinite Present: Theology in a Time of Covid19

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During the time of Covid, American journalist Helen Rosner coined the term “an infinite present” to capture her frustration of living in a Covid19 world with “no future plans, no anticipation of travel or shows or events or celebrations. It’s an endless today, never tomorrow.”¹ One of Covid19’s side effects were that we have found ourselves trapped in the unending cycle lamented also in Ecclesiastes 1. All rivers run into the sea, but the sea never is full (v. 7). The sun rises; the sun sets, only to rise once more tomorrow (v. 5). Round and round the wind blows, only to return to where it started (v. 6). Many of us found ourselves stuck in an infinite present with no vision of tomorrow and frustrated by our inability to plan for a future.

But perhaps even grimmer, we have been hurled into a world of Jeremiah where we are no longer allowed to celebrate weddings. Or to enter a house of mourning where we may engage in rituals of lament and comfort of the bereaved (Jer 16:5-9). In terms of the inventory of seasons in Ecclesiastes 3, it seems as if there is no longer even a time for mourning and weeping, or laughter and dance.

And yet, in both Ecclesiastes and the book of Jeremiah, one finds how, amidst a time of uncertainty and duress, there are traces of a theological response that refuses to accept the new normal. This paper will explore the possibilities of experiencing God in nothingness and in everything amidst a time of Covid19 by fostering a creative conversation between the Sage of the book of Ecclesiastes and the Prophet of the book Jeremiah. Each of these two biblical figures has had to endure their share of trauma and travail – the prophet Jeremiah, in particular, speaking about the sons and daughters of Judah who “shall die of deadly diseases” (Jer 16:4). However, in both these biblical books, one finds valuable theological resources to help us consider how to continue to live amidst the infinite present wrought upon us by this current pandemic.

¹ Rachel Moss, “Without Future Plans, We’re Living In An ‘Infinite Present,’” *HuffPost* 17/5/2020. Available at https://www.huffingtonpost.co.uk/entry/without-future-plans-were-living-in-an-infinite-present-heres-why-thats-hard_uk_5ebe6f1bc5b6500cdf66b468 Accessed 28/5/2020