

Theological Response of Psalm 91 in the Mid of Pandemic

Daud Naibaho and

Tony Wiyaret Fanggidae

Abstract

This article struggles with two important issues: the coronavirus and Psalm 91. Some churches in Indonesia use this Psalm to justify their worship in the middle of the coronavirus everywhere. This article tries to bring this issue from government matters to theological matters to respond to this issue. We have to meet (interpretation) Psalm 91 used by some churches as our first way to enter the problem. The church response theologically, so we have to face this issue theologically.

Corona Virus and the Church in Indonesia.

In February 2020, there has not been anyone infected with the coronavirus, and I heard a preacher speak, "God your guard, He is not slumped. Despite the coronavirus, God will still protect you." This perspective represents a theological conclusion at the moment when this pandemic had not spread to Indonesia.

In March 2020, the church began to wrestle more with this pandemic when hundreds of people were recorded inverting this virus in Indonesia. Some slogans are called for: The government continues to vociferously appeal to social distancing to drain this campaigner's movement;¹ The media preached the slogan #dirumahaja (stay home) to try to continue to influence the public from carrying out activities that invited crowds to prevent the spread of this virus;² Some church-leaders, such as the priest called for worship at home;³ The medics pleaded with the hashtag "we fought here (Hospital) for you, you guys home for us."⁴

Amid this situation of spreading the pandemic, the church asked theologically, why would Sunday worship remain in progress? This was as if it had been a rhetorical question with four calls earlier: social distancing, #dirumahaja, home worship, and "we fight here (hospital) for you guys, you stay home for us." The church-like wanting to smuggle with all those calls through another 'more holy' call "My guardian's LORD"

¹ "Pentingnya Menerapkan Social Distancing Demi Mencegah COVID-19," *Alodokter*, last modified March 22, 2020, accessed March 26, 2020, <https://www.alodokter.com/pentingnya-menerapkan-social-distancing-demi-mencegah-covid-19>.

² "Belajar #dirumahaja, Berikut 5 Platform Yang Bisa Dimanfaatkan," accessed March 26, 2020, <https://mediaindonesia.com/read/detail/296969-belajar-dirumahaja-berikut-5-platform-yang-bisa-dimanfaatkan>.

³ "Cegah Corona, Pemuka Agama di DKI Sepakat Ibadah di Rumah," *nasional*, accessed March 26, 2020, <https://www.cnnindonesia.com/nasional/20200320002123-20-485166/cegah-corona-pemuka-agama-di-dki-sepakat-ibadah-di-rumah>.

⁴ Solusi Sistem Nusantara, "Dr Restuti: Biarkan Kami Bekerja, Kalian Tetaplah Di Rumah | Kesehatan," accessed March 26, 2020, <https://www.gatra.com/detail/news/472829/kesehatan/dr-restuti-biarkan-kami-bekerja-kalian-tetaplah-di-rumah>.

or other slogans that declare the greatness of the LORD. Biblical texts are cited in favor of asserting this sanctity such as Psalms 91:3–7 “For he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler and from the deadly pestilence; he will cover you with his pinions, and under his wings, you will find refuge; his faithfulness is a shield and buckler. You will not fear the terror of the night, or the arrow that flies by day, or the pestilence that stalks in darkness, or the destruction that wastes at noonday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.”

The church response came theologically that blinked with all four of the earlier appeals that were background in science. These psalms instantly seem contextual and logical. This pandemic cannot wrench the church's faith in God: worship can remain implemented because God is a never sleep and slumber, a constantly working security guard, a cop who keeps patrolling, and whatever guard it is who keeps on alert. This pandemic "will not override" the people who come to God's house to worship Him. These psalms have been a reinforcement to the worrying, bald, restless, and fearful threat of this virus.

Several potentially large premises have grown out of the use of this Psalm, namely (1) The believer must have been in the LORD's protected, so that it is not infected (vers. 6); (2) Uninfected people, 'wait for the time to come.' (3) Sinners infected the virus, unguarded (vers. 8); (4) Sinners, plead guilty, and willing repentance will heal (vers. 15); (5) A sinner, not knowing it will be afflicted with death. This premise is dangerous because people who die of this virus can be categorized as 'invulnerable sinners.' The judgment of the person who contracted the corona occurred. The church moves towards a wrestle between the guarded and the ungodly; the sacred and the sinful; the repentant and the thick. In this situation, the corona has become a theological struggle that requires answers and science logic for #dirumahaja and theological response to #dirumahaja.

Unfortunately, the situation of that theological question (why does Sunday worship still occur) with a blink turning into "how does worship remain implemented even if #dirumahaja? Virtual worship, online worship, or live streaming worship is a solution to this urgency. Sure, all of these online (digital or virtual) one day (possibly) will occur due to technological advances and different ways of thinking over time. However, for the time being, we can take the temporary conclusion that the church can remain worshipful even if #hospitable so that going to church is an unnecessary risk. Some spiritual messages are phrased: worship to God can be anywhere; it's time to gather together with family at home and worship together to corroborate kinship further; worship at home reduces the potential spread of the virus; worship at home for the common good so that this pandemic can be stopped immediately.

Instantaneous, Psalm 91 earlier with its set of premises manipulated byways of responding to questions differently. The result is, does God not keep us, so we are home? This managed question will be wrestled back (possibly), but I don't know when, or maybe being wrestled secretly, or perhaps it's still being wrestled by the

church. This writing was a theological response to such theological questions (perhaps with an introduction, a hefty long background of problems).

Psalm 91

The first question, does Psalm 91 speak of the fear of the Lord and one who fears plague? Let's go along with this Psalm. There are several types of Psalms: hope, promise, blessing, prayer, statements of faith, reinforcement, plea, protest, and assurance. Psalm 91 has some features of the namesake of faith as well as assurance (1–13) and the blessing of God (14–16) ⁵. This Psalm is unique because there are three subjects as speakers, and 1 in three it is the listening object. Listeners are presupposed like a person asking for a guarantee of protection from someone else (perhaps the priest, his parents, or someone else close to him) and God when he is about to go somewhere. Verse 1–2 constitutes the good beginning of this psalmist who at once became this listener, He expressed his faith, claiming to believe in God: “My refuge and my fortress; my God, in whom I trust.” This statement of faith represents the recognition that God is my shelter, so that wherever his feet step, he remains in the protectives of God as the home of his shelter.

Verses 3-13, the guarantee is stated by telling of God's protection, e.g., "You will not fear the terror of the night, or the arrow that flies by day, 6or the pestilence that stalks in darkness, or the destruction that wastes at noonday." The psalmist is about to assert to the listener that wherever he goes, pilgrimage, or venture both night, day, and evening, the listener will remain in God's protectiveness. A nomad (imagining the nomad at the past time, not the present, without knowing what should do at the place of overseas or how his home of stationery and without means of transport), he was assured that he was in the Lord's protected. Various variants of disease or so-called danger from verses 3-6, 10-13 represent an on-trip threat, which comes abruptly, unnoticed. Nevertheless, God will protect him because God is his shelter, his refuge, and his fortress. Verses 14-16, God himself who assured him would obtain a safe journey: “I will be with them in trouble, I will rescue them and honor them.”

Some Praxis Responses

From this simple research, there are some small decidable conclusions in conjunction with the corona pandemic.

1. Psalm 91 tells a person who confesses his faith to God as a home (shelter) when he is about to take place the journey so that the potential danger to occur upon it is a sudden one, unnoticed like a pilgrim. On his way, the psalmist was not seeking risk, then tested he the Lord's declare protection upon him. He has been convinced that God protects him. In contrast to that, the person who rejects #dirumahaja may not be in the psalmist position, but rather as "a peril." He endangers others, even his family.

⁵ Walter Brueggemann, *The Message of the Psalms: A Theological Commentary*, Augsburg Old Testament Studies (Minneapolis: Augsburg Pub. House, 1984), 156–158.

2. #dirumahaja is a theological slogan of the psalmist who when in danger, he takes refuge in God as his shelter is not seeking in danger. God is the shelter that asks us to #dirumahaja as His way of protecting us. #dirumahaja simply to be our war of fighting danger (coronavirus).
3. As a result, the person who rejects "stay home 'potentially' becomes the enemy of God that endangered the lives of others as endangered the lives of the psalmist.
4. The coronavirus does not afflict a person so abruptly that it is different from the psalmist's intentions. Warning against this virus has been echoed everywhere. Someone in God's protection doesn't have to test back God's protection by going out of the house because #dirumahaja is how God protects us.
5. The potentially inferred premises for granted with a snap to the relationship of Psalm 91 and the coronavirus could not be enforced simply because it was infected by the coronavirus or not; there was No. close connection to this Psalm. This Psalm speaks absolutely no sin and death. This Psalm does not call that the sinner will not be in the protection of God or will not be struck by a virus, even Job as a righteous man before God endures terrible suffering. Thus, we cannot divert the context of the psalmist who speaks of being in God's protective custody when he travels by being in God's protective custody even if he goes out of the house as the pandemic spreads everywhere.

Then, why do we worship #dirumahaja? This question is not a matter of online worship or virtual worship (because it is a matter of being sidetracked), but rather a theological issue against the plague of coronavirus. #dirumahaja does not mean passive, but with #dirumahaja, we take part in being a shelter for the family and the others once as God has become our shelter. #dirumahaja does not mean passive and can't do anything. We can help our sisters and brothers who fought against this virus in the medical sector by not expanding the spread of the virus.

For the last, if God is our shelter, with #dirumahaja is the shelter; then worship #dirumahaja is worship in God as our shelter.

Sources

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