All around the world people are looking forward to ‘lockdowns’ being lifted so that they can return to their normal lives again. We are longing to go back to work, back to school or back to university. We want to visit our friends and family again, go to our favourite restaurant, watch sports on the television and attend our local church service again. Everyone just wants the coronavirus crisis to come to an end and have things return to normal, but for many people that ‘normal’ will not last very long.

Whether it is war, famine, earthquakes, hurricanes or floods; people around the world are caught up in some sort of crisis at any given time. Just because you are in a crisis, or have just been through one, does not exempt you from other crises. On 26 March, the island nation of Vanuatu declared a state of emergency due to the coronavirus pandemic and on 6 April it was hit by one of the strongest cyclones to ever make landfall on the Pacific nation. The USA has the highest number of coronavirus cases and deaths, and during April they also had 240 tornados, resulting in 40 deaths. Nations in East Africa has been battling the worst locust swarms in over 25 years, while simultaneously trying to contain the coronavirus outbreak.

Times of crisis are always around us, some of us have to face multiple crises at once, others will have a short break before the next crisis hits, and some of us might be fortunate to go for a prolonged period of time before we have to face a crisis again. Christians are the one group of people who should not be surprised by this reality – we were foretold that the frequency of crises would increase as we move closer to Jesus’s second coming. Whether you read Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21 or Revelation, it is clear that crises are unavoidable.

In Matthew 24 and 25 we are specifically encouraged not to lose our focus during these times of crisis, but to continue living out our faith during these times. Throughout INcontext’s existence, we have seen that it is precisely in a time of crisis that the harvest fields of the Kingdom are at their ripest. Whether it is earthquakes, floods, wars or a virus; when people are confronted with their own frailty and mortality, they start looking at the possibility of an eternal Saviour differently. It is precisely in these times that the Church should be actively living out their faith, by serving with compassion and sharing the hope that can only be found in Jesus Christ.

During crises, Christians portray the heart of their Saviour to their community, by caring, giving, serving, loving, encouraging and giving hope when people need it most. And when this is all done through the supernatural peace of the Lord, people cannot help but be attracted to Him. We are called to give food to the hungry, water to the thirsty and to clothe the naked – whether there is a crisis or not – our serving should never stop.

The coronavirus, together with the ‘lockdowns’ that comes with it, should not stop us from being “salt and light” in our communities. It is precisely in these dark times that our light should shine even brighter. In a country like South Africa, the ‘lockdown’ has created even greater needs in our communities than the actual virus. People struggle as they are unable to generate an income, and as a result, cannot buy food. Yet again, the Church can be the answer to so many peoples’ prayers, we should simply allow the Lord to show us where He wants to use us.

As we long for the coronavirus to blow over and the ‘lockdowns’ to end, let us remind ourselves, that even though our daily circumstances might have changed, our mandate to be “salt and light” has not changed. And let us remind ourselves that this time of crisis is not our last time of crisis. We must learn from this crisis, in order to serve even better during the next crisis.