

## A Few Thoughts for the Hunkered-Down

Friday, May 29, 2020

# *As God Waits—A Modest Proposal for Prayer*

*Therefore the Lord longs to be gracious to you,  
And therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you.  
For the Lord is a God of justice:  
How blessed are all those who long for Him. —Isaiah 30:18 NASB*

For weeks I have thought of this time as a season of national praying and waiting. That may be true for many, but I am realizing that I may be naïve in my appraisal. It would be cruel and dishonest to deny that there are many praying for relief and deliverance from this plague, for there are countless prayer warriors in battle as we speak, but a recent reading in Isaiah got me thinking that this may not be an accurate statement for our nation and our world.

The Prophet Isaiah told Israel of God's longing to be gracious to them, and how God was waiting on high to do a work of compassion. This all sounds very odd! What is God waiting for? What's the delay? Couldn't God see how miserable they were? Isaiah, like many other of the prophets, was pleading with Israel for them to turn to God and to ask for divine help, and at the time it was not a successful appeal. It was deafness to God and lack of any appeal to Him that got them into the Exile, and it was that same deafness that prolonged and intensified their miseries. Jeremiah lived through the fall of Jerusalem, and one might expect that after this long-predicted disaster had occurred he would have gained the people's attention, but such was not the case. They continued to reject the leaders God called them to obey, and kept on making sacrifices to the queen of heaven and other pagan gods. In short, even as the exile unfolded Israel was not a nation that demonstrated widespread repentance or called out to God. God longed to be called upon that He could demonstrate His grace, but Israel was looking in other directions.

Has our nation turned to God in this day of trouble? Some certainly have, but what are the greater movements and sentiments that we are hearing and reading? We hear a great deal about politics, government, legislations, science and experts. Judging from what is seen and heard from modern media, God is but a minor footnote in the story. Some people of faith have been hastily presumed to be anti-science, and discussions of restrictions on religious gatherings have been handled more from a civil liberties angle than from a passionate desire to worship the Almighty. Are we hearing general calls to prayer against this terrible illness? (And perhaps I should bear part of the blame for not stressing more regular prayer.)

God longs to rescue us. Will we simply humble ourselves and ask Him to do so? I make no loud prophetic claim that all of this is judgment sent from God for our sins, although I will certainly not deny that very real possibility. I offer no bold call to fasting, loud repentance and lengthy prayers, though perhaps I should. My call is far more modest than that. Can we all take at least a moment and ask God to lift this plague from us? We may have cried and complained, moaned and lamented the situation, and made our pronouncements of who is to blame, but have we humbly, directly and regularly asked God to destroy this virus? Let us remember to pray to God against this virus, and pronounce our trust in God as the power that can do this. And let us ask others to join in this plea to heaven.

Every parent has heard the accusation from their child at one time or another, “you never let me...,” or “you never gave me...“ More often than not the answer to this charge is brief and simple: You never asked. Just as earthly children can mope and accuse their parents of being uncaring or stingy, children of God can fall into the same sad error. The solution to the problem is rather simple. Let us be sure to ask.

Blessings,

Pastor Jim

*Lord of compassion, you loved me; you called me as a mother calls to her child. But the more you called to me, the more I turned away. Yet you were the one who taught me to walk; you took me up in your arms. But I did not acknowledge that you took care of me. You drew me to you; you picked me up, and held me to your cheek. You bent down to me and fed me. Lord of compassion, do not give me up; do not abandon me. Do not punish me in your anger!* —Philip Law (based on Hosea 11:1-9)