

A Few Thoughts for the Hunkered Down

Thursday, October 29, 2020

The Need for Kindness and a Better Game of Charades

"I am the Lord, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight," declares the Lord. —Jeremiah 9:24

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

—Colossians 3:12

While the medical experts continue to glibly command continued isolation, masks, and distancing, I continue to sadly marvel at the damage being done to the soul. While the human spirit longs for kindness, we now have forced upon us what I have come to think of as COVID rudeness. Consider for a moment all the rudenesses we are now to assume in our regular interactions with others (and only if we must interact with others!). There is to be no shaking of hands, let alone a "holy kiss." (1 Corinthians 16:20) Smiles don't communicate while one is wearing a mask, and young lovers shouldn't sing to one another as singing expels too many germs. At gatherings and meetings, we "welcome" one another by moving away from the person who just sat down from us if they are not at a proper six feet distance. When a fellow worshipper forgets their bulletin or neglects to pick up their communion elements on the way into the sanctuary we don't kindly go and get it for them. We remind them that they must do so. The hearing impaired have an increased difficulty in communicating as our lips are covered by masks and there is little that can be done to enhance such conversations. We don't dare practice the hospitality of opening our homes as that is now a complete no-no! And in nearly every social setting there is a pervasive sense of awkwardness as to how we are to approach (or not approach) others.

It is hard to extend kindness to one another in a time of COVID. Kindness may sound like a trivial or lesser human concern, but think again. God reveals Himself as One *who exercises kindness*, and because of that kindness we have life. As God has shown great kindness to us it is a crucial part of our calling as disciples of Christ that we pass on the kindness to a world starved for such genuine caring. This has always been a daunting task, and now with COVID restrictions it often seems impossible. How are we to embrace those around us with kindness when we are not even supposed to get near them? One feels as though they are fighting through an imposed handicap, as in a party game when one must navigate while blindfolded, or communicate without speaking or writing. What is a believer to do?

I have long since given up on any quick and easy solutions to such problems, but there are actions we must take and strategies we must pursue. First, let us identify that frustration. Our world is now full of frustrated and depressed people, and we are not immune to this in the least. Let us remember the cause of so much of that tension and be patient with ourselves. A human soul cannot be deprived of its full need for kindness and go unaffected. Let us remind ourselves very frequently of the kindness of our God, and the kindness that many would be more fully extending if they could.

Let us get better at charades. If our normal means of communication are cut off, let us be sharpening our skills of communicating kindness in new ways. The digital and electronic means of communication have certainly been put to extensive use in these days. This is good, but we need to keep exploring. Many have rediscovered the written note. Some are getting better at sign language and are becoming very expressive with their arms and hands. Let us keep seeking ways to bless and encourage one another! If a scientific report went out claiming that oxygen levels in our atmosphere were noticeably dropping there would be great panic. A shortage of kindness is just as harmful, so let us rally to the emergency. Let us get better at charades!

And may we keep praying for an end to the virus! I offer no particularly cute ending to this meditation, only a reminder of the genuine crisis before us and a plea for all of us to find new ways to overcome the plague of COVID rudeness in this world starving for kindness.

Blessings,

Pastor Jim