

A Few Thoughts for the Hunkered Down

Tuesday, December 8, 2020

Boredom

The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly. —John 10:10

Do your best to come to me soon. When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, and also the books and above all, the parchments.

—2 Timothy 4:9, 13

The other evening, I experienced an odd and unpleasant sensation which I have not known for many years. After a little thought and self-examination, I realized that I was bored. It has been a very long time since I have been bored as working folks with growing families have plenty to keep life interesting. Later in life, as limitations and mobility restrictions may come my way this will likely change, but up to now boredom has not been one of my regular associates.

The dictionary explains boredom as the feeling of weariness from something being dull, uninteresting or monotonous. This could certainly be a season for boredom as the virus and its accompanying restrictions have deprived us of many of the gatherings, activities and contacts which make life rich. Our activities are limited and we become bored.

It was a little embarrassing to confess that I felt bored. It feels like such an act of ingratitude, and someone at my stage of life with newly arriving grandchildren and interesting work should not be troubled this way. Boredom is a real and valid emotion and has long been familiar to countless shut-ins. Paul must have dealt with it in his several imprisonments. He did his best to keep busy while in prison but certainly the confinement took its toll. Children regularly become bored, and little ones who are especially vocal about their boredom can be very annoying to a parent. I suppose my embarrassment over my boredom may also be due to my not wanting to be associated with such immature demands to be entertained.

All can agree that boredom is not pleasant, but is boredom necessarily bad? It certainly does bad things to people as it brings out our worst side and can lead to foul moods and laziness. Years ago, I heard a researcher report that much big city gang involvement is related to young people simply being bored. An intense and discouraging kind of boredom certainly had a part in the city riots of the late summer.

There are, however, positives to boredom. All of us have had quiet seasons in our lives where we have experienced boredom, and quite possibly passed through it into a rich

and quiet time of reflection. While I would make a terrible monk, I must insist that all need quiet times in their lives, when life can be evaluated and God can be experienced in a powerful way. So many people have testimonies to celebrate of coming to faith while bored and restless, and far from home in the service or at school. Boredom also serves as a motivator to rise and face challenges which we might otherwise evade, whether that be cleaning out the garage or pursuing a new ministry. I fear for our children who are successfully evading every possible moment of boredom with over-scheduled lives and the ever-available entertainments of our digital world. It seems that a little bit of boredom might do us all some good.

So if you are feeling a little bored, know that you are not alone. Do what you can to avoid the negative side effects, and seek the Lord through it all. Perhaps God has something special in store for you in this boring time.

Blessings,

Pastor Jim

Lord,

I'm bored.

I've lost my vision.

I've lost my sense of vocation.

Nothing seems to have any meaning anymore.

I keep on putting one foot in front of the other;

but where am I going, and why?

What's the use?

Everything used to be full of life;

now it's all silent and empty.

Lord, if only I were somewhere else,

if only things had turned out differently,

if only I could see where it's all leading,

if only....

if only I didn't feel so depressed!

But these are the circumstances you've given me:

it's here

and not somewhere else

that I have to learn to trust you in patience and humility.

Lord, help me to remember

that they that wait upon the Lord

shall renew their strength.

—Margaret Dewey (USPG)