

A Few Thoughts for the Hunkered Down

Thursday, February 18, 2021

Mutation and Revelation

For he had said to him, "Come out of the man, you unclean spirit!" Then Jesus asked him, "What is your name?" He replied, "My name is Legion; for we are many." —Mark 5:8-9

He opened the shaft of the bottomless pit, and from the shaft rose smoke like the smoke of a great furnace, and the sun and the air were darkened with the smoke from the shaft. Then from the smoke came locusts on the earth, and they were given authority like the authority of scorpions of the earth. In appearance the locusts were like horses equipped for battle. On their heads were what looked like crowns of gold; their faces were like human faces, their hair like women's hair, and their teeth like lions' teeth; they had scales like iron breastplates, and the noise of their wings was like the noise of many chariots with horses rushing into battle. They have tails like scorpions, with stingers, and in their tails is their power to harm people for five months. —Revelation 9:2-3, 7-10

As the pandemic continues, we are seeing real signs of hope, and yet there always seems to be an abundance of new worries and troubles tossed at us as we wearily march onward. More recently we have experienced a steady stream of reports on the slow and inequitable distribution of the vaccine. The other major anxiety of the moment is the reports of the COVID virus mutating into a more contagious strain. Once again, we struggle to analyze these reports while trying to keep a healthy sense of perspective and hope in this ongoing war.

It can be hard to keep a calm perspective when we have the word mutation thrown at us, for this is a term laced with fear. Mutation is not a part of our daily vocabulary as it is more associated with horror movies. One is given to imagine armies of mutant monsters conspiring to end civilization as we know it. Just when we are accustomed to hearing of the COVID-19 virus and grasping the ramifications of this particular germ we learn of a new form of the disease and begin to feel overwhelmed. And if it has mutated once, will it mutate again? Viruses, like movie monsters have a way of mutating and multiplying, and we begin to feel as if we are trapped in one of those B-movies, with ever growing armies of zombies pounding at our tightly locked doors and windows!

A deep breath and a little thought can lessen the fear considerably. We know a little more about mutations than we may first realize. Each winter we hear of flu viruses mutating. It has also been long known that viruses commonly mutate, and that they usually mutate into a less dangerous form. The present report is that this is a more contagious variety. We shall see how this all unfolds. We also know that flu vaccines are crafted to battle certain categories and types of virus. Just because a virus has mutated does not mean

that the vaccine is no longer of effective. We will have to see how this all plays out and what the researchers have to say. In the meantime, panic seems quite unnecessary, although the media persists in stirring up fears.

As Christians we also know that the enemy is good at mutating and multiplying into countless shapes and sizes, and the Book of Revelation offers an amazing study of the devil's mutants. We face one enemy in this life, but that enemy has a way of taking on countless disguises and forms. Revelation offers a cosmic perspective on the spiritual battle of these last days (from the time of the Resurrection to the time of Christ's return in triumph) and it is a battle fought against some frightening mutants. Although there is one devil, we find him working in numerous forms and by many titles. We know him as the satan (adversary) and the devil (slanderer). He is both the tempter, and the accuser of those who have succumbed to that temptation. In Revelation we see him revealed in the form of a beast from the abyss, the beast from the sea and the beast from the land. He is also a dragon, and from this dragon's mouth come frog like creatures to harm the earth. From his abyss there come countless scorpions to do us harm. It would seem that we are living in the middle of a horror movie and that we are truly surrounded. When the demoniac faced Jesus the demons within that wretched man boasted that they were legion! How shall we face and fight such a vast army?

The enemy may mutate, but our God is not impressed, nor should we be awed. I have given a laundry list of the enemy's disguises, but this is not the real story of Revelation, nor of the whole Bible. This story is one of victory and of a God who has power over evil, whatever shape it may assume. In these days we may try to keep an eye on mutations, but let us keep an even sharper eye on our God who is our rescue and shelter. In light of the countless demons of worry and trouble which dog us in these days we do well to cherish Luther's confident words from "Mighty Fortress."

*And though this world, with devils filled,
Should threaten to undo us,
We will not fear, for God hath willed
His truth to triumph through us.
The prince of darkness grim,
We tremble not for him
His rage we can endure,
For lo, his doom is sure:
One little word shall fell him.*

That word is Jesus Christ. Let us be handy with this weapon as we battle the countless mutants!

Blessings,

Pastor Jim

*Make us, O blessed Master, strong in heart, full of courage, fearless of
danger, holding pain and danger cheap when they lie in the path of duty.
May we be strengthened with all might by thy Spirit in our hearts.*

—F.B. Meyer, 1847-1929