

A Few Thoughts for the Hunkered Down

Thursday, February 25, 2021

A Worrier's Guide to the Panic Industry

The prudent see danger and take refuge, but the simple keep going and suffer for it. —Proverbs 27:12

But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Therefore, do not worry about tomorrow for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.
—Matthew 6:33-34

The panic industry is working overtime in these days, and I cannot think of a time when the media has worked so hard to put the public into a fit of worry. Politicians are eager to prove the seriousness of the crisis so that we will turn to them for salvation. Experts love having audiences, and the media lives by ratings, and all these folks have a vested interest in keeping us in a high state of anxiety. Worse yet, believers continue to fall prey to the drumbeat of gloom and too often we find our spirits dragging. I realize that I have dwelt on this matter before, but with such a steady drumbeat of gloom, we need on a regular basis to get our bearings on the situation that peace and not panic would be the last word.

Following the news may be helpful, but our real hope is found in the Good News and in the priceless Word of God which offers valuable guidance. In Proverbs we are told the wisdom of responding to danger when we see it, and this does involve looking ahead on life's road. Lest we become too caught up in anxious anticipation of coming troubles we find this scripture balanced by our Lord's cherished words from the Sermon on the Mount: *do not worry about tomorrow for tomorrow will worry about itself*. These scriptures are not contradictory, as detractors may be quick to claim, but they give us reference points, and the wise find a middle road (I like to think of it as a dynamic tension) between the two. In the present moment it is obvious that we are looking down the road far too much and need a good dose of *do not worry*. Consider for a moment the panic which is being pitched to us these days:

- The virus will be with us forever.
- Masks and distancing will be practiced for years to come.
- Mutations are breaking out all around us and they could be dangerous.
- The vaccine may prove weak, ineffective and short-lived.
- Having had the virus or the vaccine is only of minor help in not catching it or spreading it.
- The 20% of the population who will probably never receive the vaccine may keep this disease alive and dangerous indefinitely.

Can you add any more scary headlines to the list? I'll bet that you can, but let us move on to other matters.

Note how each of these fears has to do with the future. This is exactly what Jesus was warning us against, and our Lord knew that immersing ourselves in such worries was absolutely toxic. This is not to say that all the possibilities of problems are completely unfounded. Scientists need to consider *all* the possibilities and we would be naïve to presume that further troubles are an impossibility, but read these articles closely and listen carefully to those reports. Many articles are collections of worrisome possibilities from numerous scientists all around the world, each with their own words of doom. Note how frequently the following phrases are used: "It is suspected that..." "Experts fear that..." "Some suggest that..." Remember also that each of the scientist's suggestions and fears have a counter-argument and qualifying points which the media cannot be bothered to report. One of my favorite media lines is, "The numbers of cases is dropping significantly, but experts fear this is just the lull before the storm!"

Yes, this pandemic has caused real pain and suffering, and it is not yet over, but this is no reason for us to let fear run rampant. I love Jesus' reminder that *Each day has enough trouble of its own*, and this is one of those quotes that I like even better in the King James Version: *Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof*. We have enough troubles without borrowing tomorrow's worries. Jesus' overall exhortation in this teaching is to *seek first the kingdom of God*, trusting that God will take care of us and guide us through this troubled world. You might do well to take a moment and make a list, written or mental, of all the rough waters through which God has guided you in your lifetime. Life is hard, and it has always been that way, but God is faithful and shall continue to be, and so we trust!

The media, experts and politicians will keep on trying to throw us into a tizzy, so we must be diligent in keeping our heads screwed on straight and our spirits right with God. Jesus said, *The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full*. Let us be wise that our peace not be stolen from us, and may we be sure to take our cues from the One who came to give us life.

Blessings,

Pastor Jim

O Lord God, in whom we live and move and have our being, open our eyes that we may behold thy fatherly presence ever with us. Draw our hearts to thee with the power of thy love. Teach us to be anxious for nothing, and when we have done what thou givest us to do, help us, O God our Savior, to leave the issue to thy wisdom. Take from us all doubt and mistrust. Lift our hearts up to thee in heaven, and make us to know that all things are possible to us through thy Son our Redeemer. —Brooke Foss Westcott, 1825-1901