

## From The Pastor's Study Trying Times

First, I apologize once again for not including the actual scripture, perhaps it is time we bring our Bibles to worship, I know, a novel idea, Jim changing things up, doing you know, Presbyterians don't break tradition that often. Anyway, the scripture would have taken up so much space that there wouldn't be room for my rambling.

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century there were a number of epidemics: 1900-1904 Cholera-800,000 died, 1915-1926 Encephalitis Lethargica-1.5 million died, 1918-1920 Spanish Flu-100 million died, 1957-1958 Asian Flu 2 million died, 1968 Hong Kong Flu 1 million died, 1920-present AIDS 32 million died and fear of Ebola caused many to panic. These are but a few that have thrown people into a panic. And yes, but we are on the other side of these and we did okay.

We have an advantage over many of those diseases, we have tens of thousands of scientists working on treatments and cures. I anticipate there will be a vaccine within a year and firm treatments in the very near future. But if we trust in God's promises, and we offer up prayers, perhaps the end of all this will end sooner.

Why isn't God doing something, surely those faithful to God would be spared this disease. You know, God gets blame for every bad thing that happens. Why didn't God bring an end WWII before the US felt forced to drop two devastating bombs on Japan? Why does God cause children to starve on the world's streets? Why did God cause almost 59,000 men and women to lose their lives in Vietnam? Why is God now causing this disease to devastate the world?

I saw on the web where a preacher claims that God sent this disease to devastate the world because of our lack of faith, that we are only getting what we deserve. Why stop with this disease, let's blame God for hurricanes, floods, tornados and any other devastation? Is God to blame for draughts, for rising oceans, for hunger, for automobile accidents? Why don't we just blame God for everything, particularly those things over which we have no control? Did God give me cancer?

If this is the God people believe in, this cruel God who causes children to starve, who unleashes disease on the people who love Him, it is no wonder our churches are dying. Yes, God in the Old Testament called on pestilence, famine, plagues, wars, infestations, and even curses to come upon people but is that what God is doing now with COVID-19? I don't think so.

God even called for a flood to wipe out His creation because the people turned from him, because they had turned to a sinful life. Certainly He has every right to bring on this pandemic, after all, even churches are accepting societies determination as to what is right and wrong. We accept lifestyles that were once rejected by God. But God sent His Son to take on our sins, to cover the ugliness that is taking over our churches, we are calling wrong right and right unacceptable. If we stand for what God calls right, the world will call us fanatics, they will be offended. So, do we offend the world or do we offend God.

You know, Paul placed less importance on the brick and mortar church and more the church as the body of believers. While I don't believe God sent this virus it just might be time to review the present worship practices. Just some thoughts during a time that change is certainly going to come, in fact already has.

We are certainly facing some uncertain times, and if yelling at God or blaming Him makes you feel better, go for it. Then when you come back to reality, try prayer, it is much more effective than being angry with God, He is the only one who knows what is going on.

When I was researching cancer after being informed I was now part of the Big C crowd I read a number of articles about the disease and discovered some interesting facts. Attitude has a lot to do with fighting the disease, remaining positive is a large part of the recovery and healing process. I know, easy to say, not so easy to follow. Try having a discussion with God, He will be happy to hear from you and the response may surprise.

Our little church is here to help when we can, don't hesitate to call, my cell is 757-777-5517. If I don't answer it may be because I don't recognize your number, leave a message. If you text me I will respond as soon as possible. All of us need to remain in contact, prepared to help one another.