

Dear Leominster Church Family Letter 3

Greetings friends from my little study here on Silver Lake St. Allow me to share a few thoughts I've had and some things I've come across since I last wrote. It's my hope that these weekly "epistles" will bring you a measure of peace, guidance, comfort and hope as we navigate the challenging and unique path we all find ourselves on at this time.

As I've spoken with people and gotten their feedback as to how they are dealing with this unprecedented crisis, I've been encouraged to find that many are allowing the Holy Spirit to work in their lives as never before. These times, for many, have driven us to our knees and caused us to examine our hearts as never before. Certainly, this is a good thing. Many have become keenly aware of their need for an experience that they have not previously had, and have found in this difficult time, an opportunity for a deeper commitment and renewed spiritual growth. Praise God for his mercy and love.

I have also heard some people...well-meaning I'm sure, sounding the alarm with words like this... *"Time is short; we have to get right with God."* As I said, I'm sure they mean well, but when I hear things like this I'm so glad we have the pen of inspiration which gives us this insightful perspective in response to such urgent imperatives. **"The shortness of time is frequently urged as an incentive for seeking righteousness and making Christ our friend. This should not be the great motive with us; for it savors of selfishness. Is it necessary that the terrors of the day of God should be held before us, that we may be compelled to right action through fear? It ought not to be so. Jesus is attractive. He is full of love, mercy, and compassion. He proposes to be our friend, to walk with us through all the rough pathways of life. He says to us, I am the Lord thy God; walk with Me, and I will fill thy path with light. Jesus, the Majesty of heaven, proposes to elevate to companionship with Himself those who come to Him with their burdens, their weaknesses, and their cares. He will count them as His children, and finally give them an inheritance of more value than the empires of kings, a crown of glory richer than has ever decked the brow of the most exalted earthly monarch."** *That I May Know Him* pg. 320

Yes, it is sad but so true that times of crisis bring out unbalanced thinking and some, who Paul said, "have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge." Romans 10:2. You know, the ones you've read about (not in our church thank the Lord) who are still holding public worship services, claiming that God will protect them in church or that their first amendment rights were being violated by this

government shutdown. Now I can assure you I'm all for defending individual liberties. Our faith points to a time when our consciences will conflict with the laws of the land, but that time is not now, nor is this health crisis a correct comparison as to what we know is coming in the future. We need like never before the wisdom of Daniel, who in a strange land, understood when to be a good citizen and when to take a stand for truth.

Speaking of the need for wisdom and prudence, I came across some correspondence written 500 years ago by Martin Luther who was writing to a fellow pastor during a time when a disease call "The Black Death" was scourging the land. The title of his letter was, "*Whether one may flee from a Deadly Plague.*" His answer speaks to us today. "I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance inflict and pollute others and so cause their death as a result of my negligence. If God should wish to take me, he will surely find me and I have done what he has expected of me and so I am not responsible for either my own death or the death of others. If my neighbor needs me however I shall not avoid place or person but will go freely as stated above. See this is such a God-fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy and does not tempt God."

So during these stressful and trying times, I pray we will all be doing a lot of looking. May we look inward, to examine our own hearts to see if we are in the faith. (2 Cor. 13:5) May we look around us to see who we might be able to help. Let's look away from anything that draws our hearts from Jesus. (Mat. 5:8) And most importantly, let's continue to look up, and lift up our heads, knowing and believing that God, who is love, will continue to supply all our needs. (Phil. 4:19)

I leave you with a thought I saw this week... If such a microscopic virus can cause so many bad things, just think about how much good a mustard seed faith can accomplish.

With our love and prayers, Pastor Mark and Pam