

Sunday, June 14, 2020 am

LESSONS FROM THIS PANDEMIC

Last week we presented a lesson that I entitled, Covid-19 and sin. It is based on a lesson presented by my son Joshua as the church there resumed worship last month. In that lesson we made a comparison between this virus and sin. They are parallel in many ways (and I might add different in some ways as well). Today, I want to notice a few more lessons as we look back at this virus thus far and what remains ahead. Again, many of these points we presented in my son's lesson (but don't blame him for what I say).

I. The need to prioritize

- a. **What is most important to you?** Within a matter of weeks, our lives as we knew them changed. All of a sudden, there were things we could not do. We had to learn to live without many of the extracurricular activities we take for granted - live sporting events (college conference basketball tournaments were cancelled right in the middle), movies theaters and even amusement parks that don't close for anything, have been shut down FOR MONTHS, going to a park or other outing, getting on an airplane, etc. and even going out to eat at a restaurant – they all came to a screeching halt. For some, they have lost jobs or had to adjust their jobs and income. AND doing without these things, while inconvenient, WE ARE HERE! Which means we have survived. This virus has taught us the difference between necessities and wants. Have we learned the lesson?
- b. **Things are temporary** – 1 John 2:15-17 – we are called upon to not love this world or the things in the world.
2 Peter 3:12-13 – elements will melt with fervent heat. What do we really NEED? There are some ways this virus has taught us
1 Peter 1:24-25, because “All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, And its flower falls away, But the word of the Lord endures forever.” Now this is the word which by the gospel was preached to you. (cf. Isaiah 40:6-8)
- c. **Are we truly content?** Philippians 4:11-12, Paul had learned in whatever state he was in to be content.
1 Timothy 6:6-8, Timothy was told that godliness with contentment is great gain. With food and clothing, are we content?
- d. **Is God really first in your life?** Matthew 6:33 – seek first the kingdom of God...
Luke 14:26-31 speaks of the seriousness of this commitment. (NOTE: Jesus was not advocating hating your family just to do it. The context is about priorities – God MUST come first!)
Luke 12:13-21 – the parable of the rich fool – in which a man is blessed with abundance but forgets about God. That night he lost it all. The emphasis of the text was to remember God in your plans. Is Jesus really LORD to you? Galatians 2:20

II. The need for preparation.

- a. **Were you prepared for this virus?** I do not mean that you know it was going to happen, like you plan for a vacation. But there were some who were better prepared because they make preparations for life in general. We can also think of this as we would earthquake preparedness – things we are told to have in place in case of an earthquake. Far too many live their lives thinking about nothing but what is happening right now and that NOTHING will happen in the future to change that. How often are people surprised by some drastic turn of events. THIS VIRUS, did that for EVERYONE. And some were prepared than others - financially, healthwise, in their jobs (i.e. able to work from home), etc.?
There is something to be said about saving for the uncertainties of life. Those who have a full

“emergency fund” in place (enough to sustain you for a few months) were better off financially. Those who take better care of themselves healthwise, are more likely to overcome this virus quickly.

- b. **Spiritually, are we prepared to meet God?** Amos 4:12, that was the message of Amos as he prophesied about Israel and Judah’s (and other nations) ungodliness and rejection of God. I was a message of coming judgment.
- In scripture, we are warned that the Lord is returning. At least 5 times, the NT speaks of the Lord’s return as a thief (Matthew 24:43-44, 1 Thessalonians 5:2-4, 2 Peter 3:10, Revelation 3:3, 16:15). Jesus elaborated upon His sudden and unexpected coming in Matthew 24:36-51, a passage I believe at least includes His second coming – people eating and drinking and living as if life has no end. Then suddenly its over. O how things change!
- We are told in James 4:14 tells us our life is a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Hebrews 9:27, It is appointed for men to die once, and after that the judgment. There’s a great day coming, are we prepared?
- c. **We need to prepare for that day.** Thankfully, we CAN prepare for that day. By becoming a Christian and living like a Christian. It is those who are in Christ who will enjoy that eternal reward - *“That I may be found in Him...”* (Philippians 3:8-11)
- 1 John 2:28, *And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.*
- Mathew 7:24-27 – Jesus concluded the “sermon on the mount” with the parable of the wise and foolish builders. The wise man was prepared as he built his house on the rock and it stood firm when tested. HOW prepared are you for that day when your eternal fate will be sealed – whether it be the ending of your life on earth, OR His return?

III. What have you learned about yourself?

- a. **2 Corinthians 13:5** – examine yourself in this? This is a passage that challenges us to take inventory occasionally.
- Usually, it is when we face trials that we are tested – cf. James 1:2-4, 1 Peter 1:7 speaks of the genuineness of your faith being tested with fire and hopefully you will stand firm.
- b. **How did you do? How ARE you doing?** (This isn’t over yet!) What has this pandemic (and 2020 for that matter) taught you about where God stands in your life? Are there areas where you have discovered deficiencies? Are there areas you have not been doing too well? I know I have some work to do in various areas.
- i. **Do I consider others as I should?** We still need to be considerate and think about others. Did you make some changes to do more for others? What does it mean to love your brother? Would you wear a mask if that meant others would attend? (I know of a congregation where some members refuse to wear a mask, and others refuse to attend because they will not wear a mask. This is a clear case of Romans 14 and 1 Corinthians 8:9-13 – liberties and THINKING about your brethren in the decisions you make).
 - ii. **Have we taken our spiritual freedoms for granted?** Both freedoms nationally and in Christ? For the time being, we are blessed to be able to assemble publicly and profess our faith in Christ Jesus. We can evangelize within the community, and in these times we have at least become aware of other methods of teaching.
 - iii. **The blessing of togetherness** – a particular spiritual freedom we enjoy. We are a support system – we are a spiritual family there for each other. Jesus in Mark 10:30 notes those willing to sacrifice the things of this world, will receive “a hundredfold” some of those things as this spiritual family. It is as if God knew what He is talking about. Hence Hebrews 10:24-25, 3:12-13, etc.) Have you missed being with your brethren? For some you had to give up many of those secular activities as well – sporting events, movies, eating out, even school. **WHICH HAVE YOU MISSED MORE?** Psalm 122:1.

What does the Lord's Supper mean to you now? 1 Corinthians 10:16-17 – it is a communion (fellowship) with both our Lord and with one another. Acts 20:7, they came together to “break bread” on the first day of the week. God has given us this memorial for many reasons. Do you have a greater appreciation of our fellowship as we partake? Not having been able to partake, how does it feel now that we together again?

- iv. ***Have you found some better or different Biblical related habits*** – such as studying the Bible more, or perhaps some more detailed study. Have you prayed more or the same? Have you found other ways to let your light shine online and in other places?

And thus we can see some lessons to be learned from this pandemic. I am sure more could be added to these, but this is more than sufficient. My point in lessons such as this is for us to take a look around us and find spiritual applications to what is going on, and perhaps in some way use these things to draw you closer to God and your Lord. Isn't that what Jesus did with His parables?

In conclusion, this pandemic is not over with. In fact, with recent activities, we are seeing somewhat of a spike in cases in various places. So we need to continue to be prepared and do the best we can with what we have as we move forward. And no matter what happens, don't forget your faith and in whom you trust. Think about it!