

A Few Thoughts for the Hunkered Down

Thursday, March 18, 2021

When in Doubt....

"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me."

—John 14:1

Things are looking up and it appears that before long the pandemic will no longer be a real threat to our country. It is heartening to see so many seniors getting lined up for vaccinations (and my sympathies to those who may still be having trouble arranging a shot) and it looks as though all our vulnerable will soon have had the opportunity for inoculation. Things are looking so good that I am even finding newspaper articles which sound hopeful! For many months I have been lamenting the cascade of articles and reports which relish hysteria and fear, and are punctuated with scolds for all of us allegedly not doing our part. My concern is not merely my own annoyance at the steady diet of negativity, but at the harm which this atmosphere has caused among ordinary people and even among believers.

A recent news article gave me a little insight into the nature of this fear, and such insight is valuable as we are all vulnerable to worry. It spoke a word of optimism about mutations—that these are natural and usually become less harmful—and it reported on studies showing that the vaccine was still effective against these slightly different viruses. I was taken aback by the positive attitude of the report and wondered why the change of tone from earlier articles. A second look showed me the reason for the new and positive attitude: certain studies are now *proving* these positive outcomes. The scientist only speaks a word of hope once the studies overwhelmingly back up that optimism, but when in any doubt they presume doom!

The scientist is probably doing the right thing by seizing upon every negative scenario and then investigating these gloomy possibilities. For the sake of their life-serving investigations they do well to dwell on the negative. The problem develops when the media and certain leadership seize upon all the negative possibilities and broadcast them as the final word! It has been known for decades that mutations are usually less dangerous than the original bug, and that flu vaccines have been effective against similar strains of virus. Until there is proof that Covid mutations are not more dangerous than the original, or that the vaccine can protect against these mutations, there may be some reason for caution, but must this be a call to fear?

For a year we have been subjected to the reports of folks who will not allow optimism or hope until all doubts and fears have been disproven. According to their thinking there must be no rest until every possible danger is thoroughly understood and eliminated—and that just ain't gonna happen! Our lives are packed with uncertainties in far more than just the medical realm. As a friend of mine used to say: *Yesterday's history and tomorrow's a mystery!* So how shall we face this uncertain future? Shall we assume that every troubling possibility will necessarily lead to disaster? This would soon lead us into an unbearable despair!

On the night of Jesus' betrayal, the disciples were becoming uneasy and sensed that something terrible was about to happen. Jesus comforted them with an exhortation to trust. *"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me."* We are being told in bold terms that though we cannot see through the myriad of life's uncertainties, we are not to be afraid, and this is not meant as optimism for optimism's sake. Our trust is to be based upon a gracious and sovereign God who will see us through the most difficult of circumstances. Our lives are to be lived with hope and a godly wisdom which will guide us through ambiguous situations. Our hope is based upon the Resurrection and the track record of a loving God who has already seen us through countless challenges. When in doubt, trust!

It is now permissible for the media to speak of hope because certain scientists and media leaders have now allowed it. I am glad that this time has finally come, but I am even happier that we did not have to wait until now to live in a joyful hope!

Blessings,

Pastor Jim

Tender God, gentle protector in time of trouble: pierce the gloom of despair and give us, with all your people, the song of freedom and the shout of praise, in Jesus Christ our Lord. —Michael Vasey