

GraceNotes

A Monthly Newsletter of Grace Christian Church

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GROWING IN GRACE “Faith Over Fear”

COVID – 19.....It’s the headline that has exploded on the scene with talking points that include “pandemic,” “quarantine,” “national emergency,” “social distancing,” “flattening the curve,” etc. And the 24/7 news cycle is dominated by discussion of the same.

COVID is the acronym for “Corona Virus Disease” caused by a newly identified viral pathogen designated SAR-COV-2. It was first diagnosed in Wuhan, China, and has now spread around the world with no end in sight. There have now been approximately 400,000+ cases and 20,000+ deaths. Some say the overall risks have been sensationalized, especially by the media. But sensationalized or not, the global disruption has been massive. Slowdowns and shutdowns of every venue where people have contact is commonplace. As W. I. Thomas said, “It’s often not what is real, but what people believe to be real that is true in its consequences.” Of course, each person must engage the situation with a response that settles his/her own standard of wisdom, prudence, and conscience. But in the big scheme, this much is certain: No matter how dangerous a threat, the worst pandemic of all is one of fear.

Fear pandemics are legion in world history and they correlate to both real and imagined threats. The fallout is always destructive in ways that go far beyond the original context of threat. The case at hand proves as much. Fear of a COVID epidemic has caused irrational response in the stock market, millions of lost jobs in the restaurant industry, thousands of small businesses closing (some permanently), and speculation that IT servers will not be able to handle the exponential increase in on-line traffic, therefore, gridlocking the educational progress of millions of students. So as the bigger picture unfolds it portends untold damage, threatening jobs, families, and well-being at a level that rivals the virus itself. That’s always what happens when fear reigns. The ripple effects become unanticipated tidal waves that wreck havoc and ruin. Fear always diminishes life.

It is not easy to avoid fear, especially when the threat is real. Some would say it is unavoidable because fear is such a primal instinct. And yet, dozens of times the Biblical exhortation – even commandment – is “*Fear not!*” To be specific, here are seven exhortations: Fear not.....

1) Man – “*The Lord is with me; I will not fear. What can man do to me?*” (Ps. 118:6-7);

2) Evil – “*I will fear no evil, for Thou art with me.*” (Ps. 23:4b);

3) Pestilence – “*You will not fear the pestilence that stalks in the darkness.*” (Ps 91:6);

4) Enemies – “*Do not fear them; the Lord your God will fight for you.*” (Deut. 3:22);

5) Tomorrow – “*Do not fear. I am the first and the last.*” (Rev. 1:17);

6) Fear – “*Do not be afraid of sudden fear.*” (Prov. 3:25a); and

7) Death – “*Through death Jesus rendered powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.*” (Heb. 2:14-15).

(continued)

“Easier said than done” is the likely response of flesh. And, indeed, as Jesus said, *“the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak”* (Mt. 26: 41b). That is precisely why in his season of fear David prayed: *“I sought the Lord and He answered me; He delivered me from ALL MY FEARS”* (Ps. 24:4).

As we continue GROWING IN GRACE, let us remember that faith is the great remedy for fear. So while corona virus courses its way around and throughout the world, be sure to use your head, be sure to wash your hands, and, most of all, be sure to know that *“faith is the victory that overcomes the world”* (I John 5:4), including COVID – 19.....20, 21, 22, 23, etc.??

In Christ,
Ed

IMPORTANT MESSAGE RE: “COVID – 19 Mitigation”

On Sunday, March 22nd, TN Governor Bill Lee issued “Executive Order 17” to mitigate the continued spread of COVID – 19. The order calls for ‘social distancing provisions’ that limit gatherings to 10 or less people. As Grace Christian Church respectfully responds, we enter a season of altered practice.

During this time period there will be no Sunday school, Sunday morning services, Sunday evening services, or Wednesday evening services. Ed’s sermon’s will be recorded each Sunday morning at 11:00 AM and will be available for viewing on the church website or on the church’s Facebook page. The church building will be open just before, during, and after the recording, (appx. 10:30 – 12:00) for those who would like to take advantage of the time for prayer and communion.

Hopefully and prayerfully we may be able to resume our regular schedule by mid-April, in time for Easter week services. Until then you are encouraged to remain prayerful, read your Bibles, stay in touch, and “keep the faith”.....Oh, and don’t forget, wash your hands. We will be evaluating the situation weekly so stay in the know with the church’s website and Facebook.

Also, thank you ahead of time for remembering that the financial needs of the church continue even when we are not meeting.

Blessings to one and all.....Ed