

What Have We Learned from Covid?

Earlier this week I quipped that I had learned a couple of things about myself from the pandemic. Firstly, that I was lazier than I thought- having some “extra” time to get things done does not necessarily equate to getting things done. And secondly, apparently I have less self-control than I presumed, since working primarily at home has put me much closer to the pantry and refrigerator (and thus a constant supply of food and snacks)!

But on the plus side (no fat jokes or puns please), being forced to deal with a world-wide disease and its ramifications have hopefully also taught us some important **spiritual lessons...**

- **That preserving one’s life at the cost of the soul is pointless.** Of all we possess, nothing is more precious than our soul- not even *physical* life and health. The fragility and brevity of life/health (cf. Jas.4:14), which the pandemic has well manifested, is pitted against the eternal nature of the soul. Though we should cherish and take care of our physical health, as it too is a gift from God, those who prioritize it over the spiritual well being of the soul may well end up losing them both. *“For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it. For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?”* Matt.16:25-26. Which is more important to you: *physical life and health* or *spiritual life and well being*?
- **That we need to meet together to worship God and encourage one another.** *Mutual worship* is vitally important, cf. Heb.13:13-17. *Praise, thankfulness, sacrifices, and submission* (to God and leaders) are all essential components of it, and as v.17 indicates, *profitable for us*. But *mutual edification* is also needed. God wisely and mercifully so composed the body of the local church to provide for this benefit too. Although the first part of Heb.10:25 draws a lot of attention (the “*not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some*” part), the previous verse reads, “*and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,*” and the rest of v.25 concludes with, “*encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.*” We not only need **to worship** together, we also need the spiritual **stimulation** and **encouragement** that mutual worship provides.
- **That thinking of and regarding others as more important than self can be challenging.** Were we doing so when hoarding toilet paper and food? Were we doing so when adopting “every man for himself” attitudes and activities regarding other issues of health and safety? Or, did the pandemic provide us with greater understanding of, and seeing the significance of, “*being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one (spiritual, PCS) purpose*” and “*Doing nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each one of you regard one another as more important than himself; do not merely look out for your own interests, but also for the interests of others,*” Phil.2:2-4?

While the opportunities for “lessons learned” and “we’ll do better next time” are, as usual, multitudinous, perhaps the most significant thing this disease has demonstrated is as old as Jer.10:23, “*I know, O Lord, that a man’s way is not in himself; nor is it in a man who walks to direct his own steps.*” Our dependence on God **in everything** is a lesson worth learning regardless of the cost. I hope and pray that people everywhere *will* and *do* learn it sooner rather than later, cf. Rom.14:11-12; Phil.2:10-11. (Philip C. Strong; Southport Church of Christ; 7202 Madison Ave, Indianapolis, IN 46227; online at southportcofc.org)