

Prudence, Precaution & Prayer Rather than Panic & Fearfulness

You can probably gather from the heading that this email is just another reminder to the saints of God to respond to the Coronavirus, or any other threat, in a way that brings glory to God. Prudence would call us to recognize and assess the situation and to also put our theology into practice. We are to calmly assess the situation around us, and ask the Lord to help us obediently trust Him through the storm.

Anxiety is part & parcel to our human experience, whether believer or not. Any and all threats provide the believer with an opportunity to remind himself of the repeated biblical teachings. It also provides opportunity for the Gospel, to introduce others to the God of all hope.

Personally, He's called us to wait and watch. To do battle with our own fleshly concerns, to bring our thoughts obedient to Christ, and to remain hopeful of the Lord's sovereign control over every detail of life. Wait in the presence of God, praying for His will, reminding yourself of His promises, bringing your fears to Him. Our Great High Priest sympathizes with our weakness and metes out every affliction to grow us in our walk with Him. Remember Sunday's sermon, that Jesus is in the boat with us, controlling the storm, and exemplifying calm and confident trust in the Father, resting securely in His everlasting arms. He's our refuge, the rock and security, whose kingdom agenda cannot be shaken (Heb 12:26-29).

Further, He's called us not to remain silent or immobile, but to reach out with the Gospel and serve Him with every fiber of our being until He comes or calls us home. This includes an active love for our neighbor and bearing one another's burdens (Gal 6:2). We don't want to minimize other people's fears, but to provide a confident witness to them. This negates a "head for the hills", hoarding, or selfish mentality. Watching means recognizing danger, including being very tuned into those with compromised immunities, besetting breathing issues, or elderly. Perhaps you would hold off on the nursing home or other visits for the time being.

The threat is real. Possibly things are not to the level of the media hype, as there are lots of other health threats. Yet, many leaders (those we're commanded to pray for) are seeking to mitigate risks, even in calling churches to suspend worship gatherings.

We read in Scripture that we are not to forsake the assembly (Heb 10:24-25) & we are also to be submissive to governing authorities (Rom 13:7). Our gatherings are the public proclamation of the unity of the body of Christ and serve to bear witness to the reality of the resurrection (Eph 4:4-5; Phil 1:27). This request in various parts of the nation has not risen to the level of demanding civil disobedience. Nor have we been banned from gathering.

As of now, we're continuing services as regularly scheduled! After all, where should troubled souls, caught up in fear, find solace and support if not in a house of worship! This is true for the world, as well as citizens of a heavenly land. The regular stirring up unto love and good deeds will continue regularly.

Plus, the beauty of a small church plant is that large crowd restrictions don't apply to this small crowd of worshippers at Grace Community Church ☺

Consider how we can serve and come alongside those who become sick or are quarantined. Pray for the medical profession, 1st responders, and leaders locally and nationally.

And 1 evangelical leader encouraged folks that get sick, or choose to stay home "not to quarantine the great commission." People simply forget to give to the Lord's work, when they are not present. There's the offering box on location, as well as online giving. As we are enabled, let's remain faithful in our attendance, our giving, and our serving as the Lord provides opportunity.

Practical church gathering considerations...

- though there is always hand-sanitizer present, please be intentional in using it for the purpose of serving your neighbor
- consider an elbow nudge and warm smile, rather than the handshake, at least for the short term
- there will be extra sanitizing of door handles, nursery toys, & other surfaces
- if you have any symptoms of sickness, please consider staying home, but let us know so we can pray & serve (we will get the preaching posted as soon as possible, but pray with us about the "if, how, and when" of livestreaming in the future to serve those who are ill)

Let's intentionally engage in hand-sanitizing, thinking of our neighbor as more important than self (Phil 2) and ALSO engage in soul-sanitizer as we pray in much dependence on the Lord, washing away the anxieties that are too prevalent. Pray through and meditate on Matthew 6:25-34 & Philippians 4:6-9, drinking deeply of Gospel truth. Let's faithfully and diligently wash and wait.

Panic is unnecessary, but prayer is merited at all times, especially now.

Lean into Jesus' promise "that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world!"-Jn 16:33

The Lord providentially allows for constant threats, so whether it's the present Coronavirus, cancer, swine flu, etc, we need to be ready to give a reason for the hope within (1 Pet 3:15). We're always living on the cusp of tragedy so we need to think through the issues of potential fears biblically, clearly, and practically.

Friends, let's be unflinching in our biblical resolve, while flexing with the hysteria! Blessed are the flexible who won't be bent out of shape ☺

God is sovereign.

Love your neighbor.

Soldier on!

*Feel free to pass on to family/friends/neighbors to help reduce the current panic and help folks remain calm, or possibly open the opportunity to speak more with them about the Lord.