

Midweek Message

The past week I received an email from a family member that included this quote and many claim is from C.S Lewis's book, *The Screwtape Letters*." However, it seems that might be incorrect and yet what this quote indicates is something I'd like for us to consider. So, here it is.

Satan, "I will cause anxiety, fear and panic. I will shut down business, schools, places of worship and sports events. I will cause economic turmoil."

Jesus, "I will bring together neighbors, restore the family unit. I will bring dinner back to the kitchen table. I will help people slow down their lives and appreciate what really matters. I will teach my children to rely on me and not the world. I will teach my children to trust me and not their money or material resources."

Scripture is very clear in that God always brings good out of every situation He ordains in our lives and that includes this pandemic. You see, there's two ways we can look at the current crisis we're facing in this world. We can sit back and let fear consume us as we focus only on the trouble we're facing and the chaos this virus is causing or we can keep our eyes on Jesus and what He's actually doing in and through this pandemic.

I've been utterly amazed at the great outpouring of love that's constantly being expressed by so many who are stepping up during this pandemic. What really amazes me is that it's not just those of us who've experienced the great love of God that's ours in Jesus Christ but also those who don't know Him and are acting in accordance to God's common grace in ways that are truly astonishing. You see, it's in times like these that people begin to look at their lives, all the crazy areas in which we tend to focus when our lives aren't being threatened, and we begin to grasp what's really important in life.

Last week as I was reading several articles that are being put out by pastors, elders, and other Christian leaders, I came across one that really made me think. It was titled "Sustenance over Sweets" and was talking about this very issue regarding what's truly important to us. It seems the writer had gone to the grocery store only to find that many of shelves were bare as many of us have experienced. However, when he walked down the sweets aisle, where all the candy is located, he noticed that it was undisturbed. People just weren't interested in the junk food as they had no desire for candy but were genuinely and intently interested in the main courses of our meals. They wanted to ensure they would have enough of what was actually good for them. As the writer said, "In a time of suffering or crisis, people go for what they need most, not what they like most." How very true!

There's a wonderful spiritual lesson in that story for us today, don't you think? When life is going well we often forget those things that are really important and we turn our gaze, our desires, our efforts, to those things that are only intended to make us happy, wealthy, and able to live at ease, in comfort, while we continue on through life in this world. As we focus on the pleasures of life and the pursuit of our individual happiness, we lose sight of the significant, the important, what truly brings unending joy.

The Apostle Paul tells us *"If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory"* (Colossians 3:1-4 ESV).

What a beautiful call of God to we who believe in Jesus. As he tells us, we're to set our minds on the reality of heaven and that our Savior is governing this world in every aspect since He is seated at God's right hand. That's a phrase that's meant to inform us that Jesus is indeed the Lord of heaven and earth. He has a purpose, a glorious purpose, through what we're facing today with this pandemic. And if we focus on Him, not only will we ourselves find peace and comfort, but perhaps, we'll look forward with anticipation at what the end result will be as God is acting for His glory and our good.

Listen, as believers in Jesus our focus should always be on the Kingdom and its continued progress in this world. We should understand that we're not to be of the world even though we're in the world and are greatly affected by what happens in the world. Did you notice in that Scripture that we're dead to the world but alive in Jesus? Even though there are elements of this world that bring us joy and make life good for us, even though there are things in this world that are necessary for our well-being, our hope is not in them but in the God who lavishes us with His grace and who promises to provide for us as we face the struggles of life.

You see, we must always look forward with hope and anticipation of what God is up to in this world as He continues His great plan of redemption. We're to keep our emphasis and our endeavors on living for Jesus, knowing that when "Christ who is our life appears, we also will appear with Him in glory." Even this virus cannot stop the purpose and plan of God to redeem His people and bring them to glory. I truly believe that this pandemic could very well lead to a great revival in our world and even in the church as God uses it to ween us all of our idols, those areas in life in which we've sought personal security instead of looking to the Lord.

May God continue to bless and keep each of you in this time. *Pastor Mark*