

April 20, 2020 Article 9

Greetings Once Again from the Hyests,

It is sunny this morning, but it remains unseasonably chilly. It is supposed to warm up a bit this afternoon and I hope to get out and work on bringing in some firewood for next winter or some such thing. At the moment I am sitting in my den pondering whether to write and, if I do, what to write. I wish sometimes that we could talk so that we could share thoughts as we ponder the peculiarities of this strange new journey we are in. But writing to you seems at this point the best that I can do even though it makes the conversation a bit one sided.

I don't have to remind you that we are in a historic period unique to even the oldest of us. When I write to you I try to assess the worst prospects for the future by which we might better equip for a long and difficult battle, but at the same time remind us that God is a great resource for His people by which we can engage that battle successfully. I try to reassure us, as many of us do, that He will be gracious to His people who are resolute in their trust in and service to Him, but His grace may not take the form that we would most desire. Generally speaking God is not interested in conforming life to our expectations. He expects us to trust Him to help us to navigate the world according to His purpose. Often the two schemes, what we want and what He delivers, do not match up very closely.

Many questions abound about when we as a nation will, as it were, open up; when we will get back to work, be able to return to normal, be free to return to our assemblies, and be able to shake hands or embrace one another again. I think I sense there is an atmosphere of anxious impatience forming to get back to where we were. But no one can predict when that will be; when all will be "back to normal." I think while we want it to be sooner than later, we had better prepare that it will be later than sooner.

As the intensity of the brunt of the viral attack diminishes, the Monday morning quarterbacks will emerge, the past will be reinterpreted by present results and information, cries of outrage will emerge that we have been made to suffer more extensively than needed, and the urge to cast off all restraints will intensify. The number of deaths look like it may level off in the 60,000 to 70,000 range, rather than the 100,000 to 200,000 originally projected with mitigation policies or the 1,000,000 to 2,000,000 projected without them. Some will argue that 60,000 to 70,000 deaths to Covid-19 is not much higher than what we experience from ordinary influenza which is roughly 50,000 +/- 10,000 per year (statistics from influenza are not very precise). The result will be that many will impugn the highly restrictive measures and find justification to returning rapidly to our previous norms.

The more the current strategies are successful and the more that is learned throughout the process, the more powerful egos will emerge that will rewrite the past to bring attention to themselves in the present, an unfortunate and inescapable phenomenon of human life. We must take into account that the typical influenza related deaths result not only without extreme mitigation efforts, but with no mitigation efforts at all. Even with extreme measures being taken we will probably outstrip the best year with influenza. Consider also that if we would apply the experience of Italy and Spain who both implemented very extreme mitigation practices to the U.

S., our death toll in proportion to population would be between 130,000 and 150,000. If we would apply the experience of New York City where the public officials were as late as March downplaying the Covid-19 threat, the country would have lost 5,500,000 to the virus.

This is obviously not a spiritually uplifting message, but neither was it the point. That type of message has come before and will come again. The point of this message is to provide a framework for making decisions as the country opens up again and we have to decide what to do about re-assembling. I am certain considerable calculation and analysis in conjunction with prayer for guidance is called for to make the decision. When the nation goes back to work, the virus is still out there. It is still deadly. The vulnerable will still be vulnerable. It still attacks young and old alike, and often those who are vulnerable are not always known. A vaccine is still a long time off and remedial treatments are still in the discovery process. Judicious caution will have to be exercised. A thoroughly considered plan will have to be devised and great cooperation will have to be practiced as we begin our venture out into the assembly. We must be sure that God is our guide and not our impulses. The situation call for considerable patience. David wrote by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, "But those who wait on the Lord, they shall inherit the earth (Ps. 37:9)." If waiting on the Lord, patience, can bring us the whole world, we can wait for the right time by the Lord's hand to return to our normal habits. Lord give me patience!