

4/23/20 Article 10

Greetings from the Hyests,

I need to start today with a personal note, or maybe I should say disclaimer. Obviously I have been driven onto social media by Covid 19 and I recognize that Facebook has been very useful to us. As a result of utilizing the medium, some have requested to be a Facebook friend. If I see it and I recognize the name, I automatically approve it, but I have to apologize to all of you...I don't know what to do with it. So if you are expecting responses from me in some way, don't; at least not for a while. Eventually I may get further into Facebook and use it in some way or see something that you would want me to see, but for the moment it is not happening. I'm not being anti-social or anti-social media; I just don't know what I am doing and I don't know when I will. So, enough said on that point and onto more important things.

In my last conversation with you (I like to think of it as a conversation however one-sided it is), I expressed some words of caution about trying to return to normalcy too soon. I think we should be cautious about gatherings for some time because there remains little defense against Covid 19 except social distancing. Furthermore, as the nation begins its incremental return to work, they will be under rigorous guidelines. Large group gatherings for things other than work will be discouraged and even when we do attempt a return to them we will be expected to follow the same rigid guidelines as those for businesses that are re-opening. The prospect is we may remain isolated yet for some time to come. Unfortunately, this contributes to and exacerbates an already troubling problem: isolation and the loneliness, angst, and depression that often comes with it.

Even Sharon and I who are used to living out with minimal social interaction are feeling the effects of both the lock-down and the disruption of familiar habits the virus has caused. It surely has to be affecting nearly everyone negatively to some degree. The projections into the future, whether among my postings or from the news media, also can add to the emotional and psychological burden accompanying the physical health threat. The news can be literally depressing.

We can dismiss some of the messages out of the news media 1) because they like to sensationalize a story to create more drama than is really there and, usually, more than is needed and 2) because so much of it is tainted by political propagandizing or ideological leveraging. Unscrupulous ideologues cannot pass up a good crisis without trying to twist it to a political advantage. They are adept at creating a crisis or the appearance of one even in good times. We should not expect they will let a real one go. To them the suffering and damage that comes from twisted, exaggerated, edited, contradictory, and fabricated reporting is simply collateral damage to a greater cause.

On the other hand when recognized medical experts, such as Dr. Tony Fauci, suggest that we may never return to social interaction like what we had before Covid 19, we can find such reports very disturbing. Dr. Fauci, whom I greatly respect, said recently we may never shake hands again. Some are comparing the current pandemic to the terror attack of 9/11/01 which changed air travel forever. Truly we will never return to the days when anyone could enter the airport like entering the shopping mall whether they were catching a flight or not. We will

forever go through checkpoints and scanners en route to our flight gates. Will Covid 19 similarly forever change social interaction? I don't think so.

We may be many weeks before returning to normal; perhaps even months. It could even take as much as a year or more. But even after the scourge of the Spanish flu of 1917-18 which killed approximately 675,000 people in the United States alone when we had a population estimated at 103,000,000 (.65% of pop.) and 20,000,000 deaths worldwide with an estimated population of 1,800,000,000 (1.1% of pop.), the nation and the world recovered and people once again socialized, shook hands, kissed, and embraced. A world where we could never come in contact again would be a fate worse than Covid 19 at its worst. As bad as the disease is and as long as it might take to return to normal, we **will** get there.

History tells us that we will survive this pandemic and social distancing will return to the medical tool box until the next pandemic arises. But, beyond the expectations from history, I think the revelation of God declares that social contact will unquestionably resume. It is not natural for humans to live in constant isolation. Some of the most troubled people are found living lonely lives isolated in apartments of cities surrounded by millions of people. We were designed to be in contact with one another. From Genesis where God declared, "It is not good that man should be alone (Gen. 2:18) to Paul's encouragement that we "greet one another with a holy kiss (Rom. 16:16; 1Cor. 16:20; 2Cor. 13:12)," there is the ever-present theme from Scripture that man is a social being made to be in physical and social contact with others. Jesus healed with a touch, even the lepers? He shared a meal with the twelve where He broke the bread and passed it around before His terrible ordeal. The blessing of Heaven is often compared with a feast where many are gathered around a table. Feasts and celebrations throughout the Bible called for many people to come together to share in the experience. Multitudes came together in close assembly to hear Jesus speak (ex. The Sermon on the Mount). Man was created a social being that reflects the familial and intimate relationship among God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Social closeness where one can often see more about a person in their eyes than in their words; where a handshake reinforces through the sense of touch the sincerity and strength of spoken words; where an embrace brings comfort and expresses love that words themselves cannot speak are parts of being fundamentally human and quintessentially Christian. Family, communion, sharing, contact are such fundamental parts of God's design for man there can be no doubt that God will bring us back to that part of the "normal" which we yearn for. Just be patient and let the Shepherd lead us to green pastures and quiet waters in His own good time. I do not know how, when, or by what means we will hear His directions, but if we pray, wait, be quiet, and listen we will assuredly hear Him. We **will** make it back, and relatively unscathed. Until that time,

May the Lord bless you and keep you, may His light shine upon you and grant you peace,

Jim and Sharon