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Facebook Article #20



Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Hello Brothers and Sisters,

If time permits, come on in for another fireside chat. We have experienced a very strange three months, have we not? We have been beset by a new disease which, to date has taken over 109,000 lives. We have been shut down as a nation leaving a quarter of the work force unemployed. Politics has compounded an already stressful, complex problem by continuing to divide the nation along ideological and political grounds. We have just begun the process of economic recovery when a most heinous incident occurred in Milwaukee with the death of the African American George Floyd at the hands of over-zealous police. Understandably protests arose in Milwaukee against the police officers involved, but what started out as a local peaceful protest has quickly been hijacked by organized anarchist/terrorist types who have brought chaos and destruction to our major cities. Businesses, public buildings, and even the historic St. John's Episcopal Church in Lafayette Square just 300 yards from the White House have been damaged or destroyed. Over 50 Secret Service agents have been injured by the protesters suggesting a real and present threat to the President. The demonstrations are out of hand and are no longer about the tragic end to George Floyd, but are attempts to injure the nation, if not ultimately overthrow the government. Indiscriminate pain and suffering on top of indiscriminant pain and suffering,

first by a mindless virus and now by a mindless mob. Nothing is sacred to the violent protesters; nothing is secure from their wrath. There is no foundation for conversation and no rational response to reasonable pleas.

We feel sorry for our nation. We are sorrowful for the Floyd family. We grieve for those who have been injured and have lost property to the protests, most of which, ironically, are among the African American community. We feel sorry for many Americans who will most likely find recovery from the far-reaching trauma of the Covid 19 onslaught more difficult than ever. We are concerned that the hard left progressive element could come to power with its goal of re-inventing America, stifling economic recovery, pushing an unrealistic economic agenda, engaging in very expensive and untried energy reforms, continuing to rely on our national enemies for strategic materials, and intensifying a social re-engineering agenda that could finish off our Constitution. They will continue to socially validate immorality, degrade the sanctity of human life, and put Christianity under ever increasing threat.

As bad as the state of the nation is, and it is in a bad state, it is not new to the world. Since the fall of Adam the world has been in a bad state, moving as C. S. Lewis described it from idyllic splendor to a state of “perpetual winter.” In spite of all the efforts of good men and women to make life better and healthier, we find that we never get to an end point. We struggle to find cures for old diseases, but new ones appear before we can find them. Life expectancies may statistically be greater than in the past, but we have mostly extended old age. The good efforts of good men and women everywhere are largely neutralized by evil ones. The human genome continues to deteriorate and all the old sins continue with us unabated and as robust as ever. With the decline of Christian influence, hedonism under the euphemisms of post-modernism, existentialism, humanism, and other isms flourishes. With this scenario it may be hard to see “goodness and mercy follow [us] all the days of [our] lives.”

David lived in as socially and morally bankrupt times as anyone. He dramatically fell victim to sin by committing adultery and murder, yet, he never left the Shepherd. He may have stumbled from time to time, even severely, and he may have suffered some very hard temporal consequences for his failures, but He never gave up on his Lord. He loathed his folly and threw himself upon the mercy of the God of Heaven. Consequently, he found peace in the midst of chaos. His needs were met even to the point of overflowing abundance. He would have had to think, as I often do, “Why?” Why does God continue to show such grace and mercy to such fallen creatures? David wrote, “What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that you visit him (Ps. 8:4).” Why does God pay attention to me at all; much less bless me with abundance?

“God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life (Jn. 3:16).” What am I that God should suffer and die for me? When we look at mankind at its worst, which is again manifested in this present distress; when we look at ourselves when we behave at our worst, how do we comprehend that His goodness and mercy follows us throughout our days, much less that we have been granted the same forever.

When David wrote the end of Psalm 23, “And I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever (Ps. 23:6b),” I am not sure that he had eternity in mind. The verse reads literally, “I will dwell in the house of the Lord for length of days,” meaning to the end of days. Could he have been thinking only until he died or did he have eternity in mind? Perhaps “dwell in the house of the Lord” is the pivotal thought. In this world David did not live in the Lord’s house. Maybe “the Lord’s house” is a metaphor for the eternal dwelling place.

If David did not have a clear expectation of eternity, it appears the translators certainly did. They may have superimposed the New Testament message onto an Old Testament passage, but that doesn’t make the message any less true. Under the New Covenant we have the end of the story. Follow the Shepherd and we will be led to the house of the Lord where we will dwell forever.

We can, we should, and I hope we will look past the present chaos to a better day in a better world where all will be made new, all injustice will be a thing of the past, and all pain and suffering will be replaced with joy and peace. In the meantime we have to live in this world and it would be wise that pray that the Shepherd will lead us through this valley of disease, economic woe, division, and chaos. The Shepherd by His goodness and mercy can lead us through this dark valley into green pastures and peaceful waters.

Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

Until the next time, may the Lord bless you and keep you, may His light shine upon you and grant you peace.

Love,

Jim and Sharon