

SERMON: DON'T YOU DARE WASTE THIS PANDEMIC

2nd Corinthians 11:24-28

(24) Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. (25) Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; (26) In journeying often, in perils of water, in perils of robbers, in perils of mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathens, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren: (27) In weariness and painfulness, in watching often, in cold and nakedness. (28) Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches.

Introduction

Christians are spiritual folks, but we can learn a few things from nature. Some people say nature is the “face of God.” Nature does not waste anything. Dead leaves decay and become nutrients for the trees. Fallen pine needles become great building materials for a bird’s nest. Other animals use the burrows abandoned by armadillos. Even those things that seem repulsive to us are nature’s ways of letting nothing go to waste.

Farmers realize this principle; they use manure to fertilize their crops. Gardeners take advantage of this principle; they build compost heaps. As gross as it sounds, buzzards eat carrion. Why let a “good” dead animal go to waste? I will not mention the dung beetle; that would really gross you out. I say again, nature does not waste anything. We humans are the only species that waste things. Winston Churchill was famous for many things including the phrase, “Never waste a good crisis.” He meant that no matter how bad things may become, there is some good that can be squeezed out of them. The bad may temporarily outweigh the good, but there is still some good that can be extracted from the situation. I must admit that many individuals have taken Churchill’s phrase out of context and applied it in a self-serving, unchristian way.

In our text, it sounds as if Paul is patting himself on the back or maybe having a pity party. Oh no! He is defending himself from those who claim he is not a true apostle and has no credibility as a minister of the gospel. He is saying, “I have paid more dues than all of my accusers put together. I did not ask for these hardships, but I did not let them go to waste. I used them to the glory of God as I established and educated church congregations.” Likewise, we did not ask for this pandemic, but it is here. It has changed every aspect of our lives. Let’s not let it go to waste. What can we learn from it? How can we use it to make us better? What good can we squeeze out of it? How can we use it to glorify God? Here are a few suggestions. I am sure you have thought of some of these already and perhaps many more.

Exposition

1. Take time to get closer to God (Psalm 46:10)
(Let God give you direction for the future-Proverb 3:6)
(Let God heal your wounds-Psalm 109:21-22)
2. Take this time to get closer to family
(Check out the family of Cornelius-Acts 10:1-2)
(Our culture has made family quality time difficult)
3. Take this time to develop greater patience
(Romans 5:3; James 1:3-4)
(Patience is not procrastination)
4. Take this time to reboot yourself
(Rebooting clears out all of the buffers-Psalm 51:10)
(Make this an unexpected forced mini-sabbatical)
5. Take this time to count your blessings
(Ephesians 1:3)

Closing Thoughts

Let's not let this pandemic go to waste. I pray when the dust settles we will realize how little we need, how much we actually have, the true value of human connections, how selfish some of us have been, and how many of us have taken our blessings for granted. Give God Glory! Give God all the glory!

End Notes

1. Let me expound a little more on my metaphor about rebooting a computer. (Most of us know this already.) When you shut down an application and the computer is still running other applications, the memory does not clear out all of the information about that application. It keeps some of the details so that if you reinitiate the application in that session it can come up more quickly than the original start up. This is why, sometimes, a computer will stall when running several applications back-to-back. The applications did not stall when they were launched in isolation. Really, the memory in a computer is like your kitchen counter. It is work space. If you keep adding things to your kitchen counter and do not put enough items back in the cabinets and refrigerator, soon the counter would not be able to accommodate another pot, pan, or bowl and your work would stall. That would really be a serious problem if you had nowhere to put a hot pan just taken out of the oven. I have been a spectator at many presentations when the computer stalled at a critical time. If only the presenter had rebooted before beginning the presentation. Our minds operate the same way. If we don't reboot our minds, we have leftover parts of failed relationships, unforgiveness, vestiges of malice, and a

plethora of negative memories and experiences. When we reboot, all of the memory and buffering are cleared out totally. We can reboot our computers, but only God can reboot our spirits and our minds. Let Him do it! He is able!

2. Some historians assert that Winston Churchill was not the first to use the phrase, "Never waste a good crisis." We will let the historians debate the origin of this aphorism.

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