

Hide in the Lord

And a good Sunday to all you Christian warriors of Spring Valley Bible Church.

Judith and I are in constant prayer for each one of you and request that you remember us in your prayers!

Let's begin this morning with an interesting passage from the Word of God

Isaiah 26:20 Come, my people, enter into your rooms And close your doors behind you; Hide for a little while Until indignation runs *its* course

Well, it looks like President Trump and his advisors are biblical. Is it cowardice to hide in your homes? Is it a sign of not trusting the Lord to hide in your homes? Well, people, read the Word of God! God is telling them to go into their homes and shut the doors and hide! Have you ever heard the saying—*the good sense to get out of the rain?* Well, we are battling an invisible rain. Note the three verbs of safety **enter, close doors behind you and Hide**. People, this is God's advice for coming disaster! Ok, this is not referring to Coronavirus, but this is referring to coming disaster upon the land. Which is what we are now facing! Go inside your houses! Close the doors behind you and Hide.

To hide. Hebrew word meaning just that—to *hide oneself somewhere from something or someone*.

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Here in Isaiah 26:20, God is going to send tribulations on the earth, famines, diseases, swarms etc. and for the people of Israel to hide themselves from the dangers. By application, we can take heed of this passage and go into our homes, with our families, shut the doors behind us and hide or conceal ourselves from Covid-19.

Now, Warning: Do not think you can ever hide from God! No one can hide from God. Nor would any Christian want to hide from God.

We hide our bodies behind closed doors but what about our souls? Where do we hide them? (Worry, fear is capturing so many believers.) But look at

Psalm 17:8 Keep me as the apple of the eye; Hide me in the shadow of Your wings

Apple of the eye: To be the apple of someone's eye clearly means that you are being gazed upon and watched closely by that person. Your very image is dancing in the eyes of that person!

Being hid by the Lord is a comforting blessing:

Psa. 27:5 For in the day of trouble (this is what we are in today) **He** (our God and Savior) **will conceal me** (hide me in protection) **in His tabernacle;** (For us this is His Word and His Spirit)

**In the secret place of His tent He will hide me;
He will lift me up on a rock** (the rock is His son, Jesus Christ)

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It may seem as though God is hiding from us in times of trouble:

Psalm 10:1 Why do You stand afar off, O LORD? Why do You hide Yourself in times of trouble?

Psalm 13:1 How long, O LORD? Will You forget me forever? How long will You hide Your face from me?

Please note that in Psalm 10 and 13 David starts off with crying out to God who seems to have hid Himself from David. But, please note how he ends each of these great psalms.

Read Psalm 10:16-18

Psalm 10:16 The Lord is King forever and ever; Nations have perished from His land.

Psalm 10:17 O Lord, You have heard the desire of the humble; You will strengthen their heart, You will incline Your ear

Psalm 10:18 To vindicate the orphan and the oppressed, So that man who is of the earth will no longer cause terror.

Read Psalm 13:5-6

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Psalm 13:5 But I have trusted in Your lovingkindness; My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.

Psalm 13:6 I will sing to the Lord, Because He has dealt bountifully with me.

People, so many including Christians in their fears and worries are revealing not only their ignorance of resting in the Lord but also their ignorance of history. I love history.

George Santayana once said: “Those who **do not learn history** are **doomed to repeat it.**” In its original form it read, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to **repeat it.**”

Today, let’s learn from the word of God and from history.

The **Spanish flu** (1918) infected 500 million **people** around the world, or about 27% of the world population of between 1.8 and 1.9 billion. The **death** toll is estimated to have been anywhere from 17 million to 50 million, including 675,000 Americans; and possibly as high as 100 million, making it one of the deadliest epidemics in human history.

And people, it was not the end of the world. It was not even the end of America. We recovered and became stronger than before World War 1. And the Spanish Flu – yes, many people died, and many people will die due to Coronavirus!

One hypothesis is that the Spanish flu originated in the UK. Per Wikipedia, “The major UK troop staging and hospital camp in Étaples in France has been theorized by researchers as being at the center of the

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Spanish flu. The research was published in 1999 by a British team, led by virologist John Oxford.”

Another hypothesis is that the Spanish flu originated in the US. Again, per Wikipedia, “There have been statements that the epidemic originated in the United States. Historian Alfred W. Crosby stated in 2003 that the flu originated in Kansas, and popular author John Barry described Haskell County, Kansas, as the point of origin in his 2004 article.” [Both quotes are from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spanish_flu]

More recently, experts have proposed a third hypothesis: The **Spanish flu originated** somewhere in northern China in late 1917 and swiftly moved to western Europe with the 140,000 Chinese laborers the French and British governments recruited to perform manual labor to free up troops for wartime duty.

Even though **epidemics** can spread quickly and kill millions of people, they eventually **do** come to an **end**. Eventually, the **epidemic** slows down and comes to an **end**. Seasonal - Some diseases are seasonal. The flu, for example, is spread more easily during the winter and tends to die out come springtime.

- Spanish influenza killed 40-50 million people in 1918.
- Asian influenza killed 2 million people in 1957; 116,000 in the US. And guess what? The world and America survived -- and became stronger.
- Hong Kong influenza killed 1-4 million people in 1968. And the world and America survived and became stronger. Yes, many died.
- Coronavirus –close to 12,000 have died (150 in the US).

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The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimates that as **many as 56,000 people die** from the **flu** or **flu-like illness each year**. SOURCES: National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases: "Common Cold."

In **1957**, the **Asian flu** pandemic resulted in about 70,000 **deaths** in the United States. In excess of 30,000 **deaths** occurred in England and Wales.

But let's take a quick look at Church History---Western Civilization.

During plague periods in the Roman Empire, Christians made a name for themselves. Historians have suggested that the terrible **Antonine Plague** of the **2nd century** pandemic, brought to the Roman Empire by troops returning from campaigns in the Near East, which might have killed off a quarter of the Roman Empire, estimated deaths: 5 million—2000 deaths a day! **led to the spread of Christianity**, as Christians cared for the sick and offered a spiritual model whereby plagues were not the work of angry and capricious deities but the product of a broken Creation in revolt against a loving God.

But the more famous epidemic is the Plague of Cyprian, named for a bishop who gave a rather sobering account of this disease in his sermons. Probably a **disease related to Ebola**, the Plague of Cyprian helped set off the **Crisis of the Third Century** in the Roman world, killing some 5000 people a day!! But it did something else, too: It triggered the explosive growth of Christianity. Cyprian's sermons told Christians **not to grieve for plague victims** (who now live in heaven), but to redouble

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efforts to care for the living. He described how Christians, “Heedless of danger took charge of the sick, attending to their every need.”

Cyprian’s prayer: “This trial, that now the bowels, relaxed into a constant flux, discharge the bodily strength; that a fire originated in the marrow ferments into wounds of the larynx, that the intestines are shaken with a continual vomiting; that the eyes are on fire with the injected blood; that in some cases the feet or some parts of the limbs are taken off by the contagion of diseased putrefaction---*that is the process of decay or rotting*; that from the weakness arising by the injury and loss of the body, either the *manner of walking* is enfeebled, or the hearing is obstructed, or the sight darkened;—is profitable as a proof of faith. What a grandeur of spirit it is to struggle with all the powers of an unshaken mind against so many onsets of devastation and death! What sublimity, to stand erect amid the desolation of the human race, and not to lie prostrate with those who have no hope in God; but rather to rejoice, and to embrace the benefit of the occasion; that in thus bravely showing forth our faith, and by suffering endured, going forward to Christ by the narrow way that Christ trod, we may receive the reward of His life and faith according to His own judgment!

Historian Kyle Harper writes: “*Or do we not see the rites of death every day? Are we not witnessing strange forms of dying? Do we not behold disasters from some previously unknown kind of plague brought on by furious and prolonged diseases? And the massacre of wasted cities? Whence we can recognize what great dignity there is in martyrdom, to whose glory even the pestilence is beginning to compel us.*”

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“And so that we may pass over all the rest, let us recall how great a glory it is to come to Christ without stain, to be a colleague in his passion, to reign in all eternity with the Lord, to be absent from the looming destruction of this age, and not to share the common fate of others amidst the bloody destruction of ravaging diseases.”

The new testimony – in a sermon about martyrdom – tightens the connection between the Plague of Cyprian and the so-called Persecution of Decius, a notorious and novel empire-wide order to sacrifice to the pagan gods, which resulted in a dragnet that caught up many Christians who refused. Sacrificial rites were a common response to pestilence in the ancient Mediterranean world, and I draw out the possible connections between the terrifying empire-wide disease event and the empire-wide order to sacrifice.

Nor was it just Christians who noted this reaction of Christians to the plague. A century later, the actively pagan Emperor Julian would complain bitterly of how “the Galileans” would care for even non-Christian sick people, while the church historian Pontianus recounts how Christians ensured that “good was done to all men, not merely to the household of faith.” The sociologist and religious demographer Rodney Stark claims that death rates in cities with Christian communities may have **been just half that of other** cities.

This habit of sacrificial care has reappeared throughout history. In 1527, when the bubonic plague hit Wittenberg, Martin Luther refused calls to flee the city and protect himself. Rather, he stayed and ministered to the sick. The refusal to flee cost his daughter Elizabeth her life. But it produced a tract, “**Whether Christians Should Flee the Plague,**” where

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Luther provides a clear articulation of the Christian epidemic response: We die at our posts. Christian doctors cannot abandon their hospitals. Christian governors cannot flee their districts. Christian pastors cannot abandon their congregations. The plague does not dissolve our duties: It turns them to crosses, on which we must be prepared to die.

For Christians, it is better that we should die serving our neighbor than surrounded in a pile of masks we never got a chance to use.

And if we care for each other, if we share masks and hand soap and canned foods, if we “are our brother’s keeper,” we might actually reduce the death toll, too.

To modern people acquainted with the germ theory of disease, this can all sound a bit foolish. Caring for the sick sounds nice, but it’s as likely to infect others as to save lives. In an intensely professionalized medical environment, should common people *really* assume a burden of care?

Here, a second element of the Christian approach appears: strict rules against suicide and self-harm. Our bodies are gifts from God and must be protected. Or, as Luther says in his essay on the topic, we must not “tempt God.” The catechism Luther wrote for Christian instruction elaborates on the Fifth Commandment (“Though shalt not murder”) by saying that this *actually* means we must never even *endanger* others through our negligence or recklessness. Luther’s essay encourages believers to obey quarantine orders, fumigate their houses, and take precautions to avoid spreading the sickness.

The Christian motive for hygiene and sanitation does not arise in self-preservation but in an ethic of service to our neighbor. We wish to care

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for the afflicted, which first and foremost means not infecting the healthy. Early Christians created the first hospitals in Europe as hygienic places to provide care during times of plague, on the understanding that negligence that spreads disease further was, in fact, murder. Florence Nightingale, the first professional nurse was a Christian who believed in helping everyone!

So, my dear people, yes, many will die from Coronavirus, but it is not the end of the world! This too will pass...and those who remain must spread the gospel that saves for all eternity!

2 Chronicles 7:13 If I (the Sovereign God) shut up the heavens so that there is no rain, or if I command the locust to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people,

2 Chronicles 7:14 and My people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

Please while in your homes, you will find the hiding place for your souls is with the Lord:

Read Psalm 31:19-24

**Psalm 31:19 How great is Your goodness,
Which You have stored up for those who fear**

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**You, Which You have wrought for those who
take refuge in You, Before the sons of men!**

**Psalm 31:20 You hide them in the secret place
of Your presence from the conspiracies of
man; You keep them secretly in a shelter from
the strife of tongues.**

**Psalm 31:21 Blessed be the Lord, For He has
made marvelous His lovingkindness to me in a
besieged city.**

**Psalm 31:22 As for me, I said in my alarm, “I
am cut off from before Your eyes”;
Nevertheless You heard the voice of my
supplications When I cried to You.**

**Psalm 31:23 O love the Lord, all you His godly
ones! The Lord preserves the faithful And fully
recompenses the proud doer.**

**Psalm 31:24 Be strong and let your heart take
courage, All you who hope in the Lord.**