

## WHEN YOU COME TOGETHER

*Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls? Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and tomorrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you...?*

Those are the words of our Lord found in Luke 12. In context, Jesus is dealing with our tendency to place too much value upon the cares of this world, and He reminds us that God should be our pursuit. In verse 31 we hear Him give those well known words, *“But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you”* (v31). God is always sovereign and always in control; therefore, we can (and must) look to Him for all things...all the way down to our food and raiment.

As we consider that thought, I want to look at it in terms of our socialization. No doubt one of the biggest buzz words of 2020 is “social distancing,” and due to the current crisis, it has its place. However, God made us to be social creatures. In the creation, God said that it was *not good for man to be alone* (Genesis 2:18), so He created Eve to be a corresponding partner to Adam. He then called them to populate the earth and subdue it. By Genesis 4, we see how men began to congregate in cities, develop the arts, and introduce a variety of occupations. From that point on, the testimony of the earth is that mankind comes together as social creatures whose dominion brings order to the earth. God has created us to socialize so that we can provide care, solve problems, advance technology, and ultimately further God’s kingdom.

Yet while we were made to be social, our current crisis calls for us to be socially distant. In some ways that has been good thing. From Facebook, to Zoom, to YouTube, the internet is proving to be a huge asset as churches and business stay in contact with their people. Neighborhoods are being cleaned up, yards are being tidied, and people on the street seem to be more friendly. However, despite all of the good, social distancing carries gigantic drawbacks and troubles. Our once vibrant economy has become a train wreck. Jobs have furloughed millions of people who now struggle to keep their lights on. Many are afraid to visit public places, and many more tend to look at everyone else as if they are already contaminated. In short, fear is separating a people who were created to be social.

So what is to be done? Let me make a few suggestions. Some of these suggestions will be on the horizontal level of daily life. Some will be on the vertical level of Kingdom living. Let’s start with the horizontal...

First, I would suggest that we embrace and appreciate the circumstances in which divine providence has placed us. Romans 13 reminds us that God has placed government officials over us in order to bring good. We don’t always agree with them (especially when they make decisions that clearly violate Scripture), but we should always respect their authority. In our current situation, such men and women have been led to take the extreme measure of implementing a stay-at-home order (with varying exceptions). While that is hard to do (especially on these beautiful days of Spring), I would suggest that we find ways to creatively pass our days. In good weather, plan to wash your car, take a walk, prepare your garden, go fishing, etc. When weather keeps you indoors, what projects need attention? Unless you are Mary Poppins, I’m sure there is plenty to do. How long has it been since the “junk drawer” was cleaned out and sorted? Got paint? Reunite with the vacuum, and introduce yourself to the dust cloth. In short, embrace and appreciate the extra time the Lord has given you through the provision of those in power over us.

Second, I would suggest that you show love to your neighbor through various means. If you have any medical professionals in your neighborhood or immediate vicinity, bake some cookies and take a “thank you” note to them. When you mow your lawn, is it possible to hop over to your neighbor’s and mow his? If you are praying about starting a redemptive relationship with someone on your street, call them up and see if they want to take

a walk every day before dinner. As you are out and about, take the time to say hello to people. We all have time on our hands, and we all know how encouraging it is to be greeted with a smile, so look for ways to show yourself friendly.

From a vertical point of view, my first suggestion is to keep your eyes fixed upon the Lord. He has provided outlets whereby we can gain information regarding the virus and its affects, but if we are not careful, such information can quickly overwhelm us. Sometimes it is best to simply to turn off the news and open up our Bible in order to direct our focus to real, eternal Truth. Scripture shows us the love, the care, and the provision of God. We also see that there is nothing that can separate us from Him. We even see that He uses the direst circumstances for our good. So while the world spirals and reels, let us go to the Word of God to find our sure, steadfast, confident hope.

Finally we look forward to the day when we can once again come together to worship. In my last article I mentioned that there are two significant events that are forthcoming. One is Easter, which we will celebrate this week, the other is the Lord's Supper. Normally we observe that ordinance on the first Sunday of the month, but we are prevented from doing it during this unusual season. Truthfully, we could get creative and do what some churches are doing. I've heard of things like "drive-up communion" where people stay in their cars and receive the bread and juice from their window, and I've heard of "video communion" where people use their own crackers and grape juice at home. However, the Bible points us to observing this ordinance when we can all be together. In 1 Corinthians 11, Paul speaks of the Corinthians waiting for each other so that they can "come together" (v33), and it seems as if that is the best approach for us to take. We are social creatures, and when we consider our worship involving the Lord's Supper, we are instructed to do it corporately not individually. As a believing family, we come together to remember the Lord's broken body and shed blood. We come together to remind each other of our mutual need for Christ. We come together to remember what it took to make us righteous and give us peace with God.

In the end, while we are distancing ourselves from one another, we have things to do that allow us to show our love for God and love for our fellow man. However, there are also things that we cannot do. Let the absence of such things create within us a thirst. While we consider the ravens and the lilies, and while we seek first the kingdom of God, let us long for the day when we can once again come together to worship the Lord and be with our fellow man.