

“WHINE FLU REMEDIES”

I MUST SAY AT THE OUTSET THIS MORNING THAT, IN TITLING THIS SERMON “WHINE FLU REMEDIES,” I DO NOT – IN ANY WAY – MEAN TO MINIMIZE THE VERY REAL DANGERS OR SEVERITY OF THE SWINE FLU.

I AM CONVINCED, THOUGH, THAT FAR MORE OF US ARE INFECTED WITH THE *WHINE* FLU VIRUS THAN WILL EVER CONTRACT THE *SWINE* FLU.

I’M ALSO CONVINCED THAT THE WHINE FLU IS FAR MORE CONTAGIOUS.

THAT’S WHY THE THANKSGIVING SEASON & THIS PASSAGE FROM PHILIPPIANS PROVIDE AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY FOR US TO FOCUS ON THIS VERY REAL & VERY SERIOUS MALADY.

NOW THIS IS PROBABLY ONE OF THOSE SERMON TOPICS THAT MAKES YOU LOOK AROUND & SAY TO YOURSELF, “*OH, I WISH SO-AND-SO WAS HERE FOR THIS!*”

I DON’T MEAN TO OFFEND ANYONE HERE THIS MORNING, BUT AS *I* LOOK AROUND, I’M GLAD MANY OF *YOU* ARE HERE FOR THIS SERMON!

AND QUITE FRANKLY, I’M GLAD *I’M* HERE FOR IT AS WELL!

WE ALL CATCH IT SOMETIMES, DON’T WE?

FOR SOME OF US, IT MAY LAST ONLY FOR A BRIEF, DARK PERIOD OF LIFE.

FOR OTHERS, IT’S A LIFELONG AFFLICTION – IT’S A WAY OF LIFE.

YOU KNOW THE EYEORES OF THE WORLD – THOSE WHO SAY, LIKE EYEORE, “*GOOD MORNING – IF IT IS A GOOD MORNING – WHICH I DOUBT.*”

WHEN YOU FIND YOURSELF AFFLICTED WITH THE WHINE FLU & SOUNDING & FEELING LIKE EYEORE, MAYBE WHAT YOU NEED IS A LITTLE DOSE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL.

IF EVER ANYONE COULD SERVE AS A LIVING REMEDY FOR THE WHINE FLU, IT’S PAUL  
HERE’S A GUY WHO HAD BEEN RIDICULED, DRIVEN OUT OF ONE TOWN AFTER ANOTHER,  
SHIPWRECKED, BEATEN & FLOGGED, AND YET, OVER & OVER AGAIN, HE WAS FILLED WITH JOY.

HE SAYS THINGS LIKE, “*THANKS BE TO GOD WHO GIVES US THE VICTORY,*”

“*IN ALL THINGS WE ARE MORE THAN CONQUERORS,*”

“*GOD WHO COMMANDED THE LIGHT TO SHINE OUT OF DARKNESS HAS SHINED IN OUR HEARTS,*”

“*THANKS BE TO GOD FOR HIS UNSPEAKABLE GIFT.*”

HE NEVER STOPS!

WHEN HE WROTE THIS LETTE TO THE PHILIPPIANS, HE WAS IN PRISON AWAITING A TRIAL THAT COULD, QUITE POSSIBLY, LEAD TO HIS DEATH.

IN THIS BRIEF LETTER, THE WORDS “JOY” & “REJOICE” ARE FOUND 14 TIMES!

SO I THINK IF YOU’RE LOOKING FOR A REMEDY FOR THE WHINE FLU, PAUL’S THE PLACE TO TURN.

WITHIN THIS VERY PASSAGE, I WOULD SUGGEST PAUL SAYS AT LEAST THREE THINGS THAT YOU CAN EASILY COMMIT TO MEMORY THAT CAN BE PULLED OUT WHEN YOU FIND YOURSELF COMING DOWN WITH THE WHINE FLU.

ONE OF THE THINGS PAUL SAYS IN THIS PASSAGE IS, *“DO NOT WORRY ABOUT ANYTHING.”*

YOUR RESPONSE TO THAT MIGHT BE, *“EASY FOR YOU TO SAY.”*

THAT’S FINE.

BUT I’M NOT THE ONE WHO’S SAYING IT.

IT’S PAUL WHO’S SAYING *“DO NOT WORRY ABOUT ANYTHING”* AND I DEFY ANYONE HERE TO SUGGEST YOU HAVE A MORE LEGITIMATE REASON TO WORRY THAN PAUL DID!

PAUL HAD LEARNED THAT WORRY GETS YOU NOWHERE.

HE HAD LEARNED TO CAST AWAY HIS FEARS.

JESUS HIMSELF SAID, TIME & TIME AGAIN, *“HAVE NO FEAR.”*

HE SAID, *“LET NOT YOUR HEART BE TROUBLED. NEITHER LET IT BE AFRAID.”*

THE LEGENDARY SWISS PSYCHIATRIST CARL JUNG CLAIMED THAT HE NEVER MET A PATIENT WHOSE PROBLEMS DIDN’T STEM FROM FEAR OF ONE VARIETY OR ANOTHER.

IF YOU WANT TO BEAT THE WHINE FLU, CAST AWAY YOUR WORRIES & SET ASIDE YOUR FEARS.

A PASTOR WAS TALKING TO AN ELDERLY MEMBER OF HIS CONGREGATION.

AMELIA WAS 99.

THE PASTOR ASKED HER THE TYPICAL QUESTION THAT IS ASKED OF SOMEONE READY TO ENTER THEIR SECOND CENTURY OF LIFE.

*“TO WHAT DO YOU ATTRIBUTE YOUR LONGEVITY?”*

IN THE SAME WAY THAT THE QUESTION IS A TYPICAL ONE, THE ANSWER USUALLY IS AS WELL.

AMELIA GAVE THE STANDARD RESPONSE: *“I DON’T DRINK. I DON’T SMOKE. I’VE LIVED A CLEAN LIFE.”*

AMELIA KNEW THOSE WERE THE EXPECTED ANSWERS – THE OBLIGATORY RESPONSE TO AN EQUALLY OBLIGATORY QUESTION.

BUT THEN SHE PAUSED & REALLY BEGAN TO THINK ABOUT THE QUESTION.

FINALLY, SHE SAID, *“I’LL TELL YOU WHAT’S REALLY GIVEN ME THIS LONG LIFE. I’VE LEARNED NOT TO BE AFRAID.”*

PERHAPS THAT’S THE REAL SECRET & THE MOST IMPORTANT KEY TO A LONG LIFE.

AS PAUL SAID, *“DO NOT WORRY ABOUT ANYTHING.”*

HOW MUCH SIMPLER COULD A REMEDY BE THAN THAT.

WHEN YOU FIND YOURSELF COMING DOWN WITH SYMPTOMS OF THE WHINE FLU, REMEMBER THE APOSTLE’S SIMPLE WORDS – *“DO NOT WORRY ABOUT ANYTHING.”*

A SECOND THING THAT PAUL SAYS HERE – TUCKED AMID A DOZEN LITTLE LITERARY GEMS – IS  
*“THE GOD OF PEACE WILL BE WITH YOU.”*

THERE’S A STORY ABOUT AN ANCIENT, FARAWAY LAND THAT WAS RULED BY A VERY JEALOUS KING.

HE RULED WITH AN IRON FIST & HAD CONTROL OVER EVERY AREA OF HIS KINGDOM, SAVE BUT ONE.

HE WAS UNABLE TO DESTROY HIS PEOPLE’S BELIEF IN GOD.

HE CALLED HIS GREATEST ADVISORS TOGETHER & ASKED THEM A VERY ODD QUESTION: *WHERE CAN I HIDE GOD SO THE PEOPLE WILL AT LAST FORGET ABOUT HIM?”*

THE FIRST ADVISOR SUGGESTED THAT GOD BE HIDDEN ON THE DARK SIDE OF THE MOON.

*(I’M NOT SURE, BUT I THINK MAYBE THIS ADVISOR’S NAME WAS ROGER WATERS).*

ANYWAY, AFTER LONG DEBATE, THIS IDEA WAS REJECTED BECAUSE IT WAS BELIEVED THAT SOME DAY SCIENTISTS MIGHT DISCOVER A MEANS OF SPACE TRAVEL & GOD WOULD BE FOUND AGAIN.

ANOTHER ADVISOR CAME UP WITH THE IDEA OF BURYING GOD BENEATH THE DEPTHS OF THE OCEAN FLOOR.

THIS IDEA, TOO, WAS REJECTED BECAUSE IT WAS FEARED SCIENTIFIC ADVANCEMENT WOULD EVENTUALLY REACH EVEN THERE.

FINALLY THE OLDEST & WISEST OF THE KING’S ADVISORS HAD A FLASH OF INSIGHT.

*“WHY DON’T WE HIDE GOD WHERE NO ONE WILL EVER THINK OF FINDING HIM?”*

THE KING WAS INTRIGUED & ASKED FOR FURTHER EXPLANATION.

THE ADVISOR SAID, *“IF WE HIDE GOD IN THE ORDINARY EVENTS OF PEOPLE’S EVERYDAY LIVES, THERE’S NOT A CHANCE THEY’LL EVER FIND HIM.”*

AND SO IT WAS DONE & THEY SAY THAT PEOPLE OF THAT LAND ARE STILL LOOKING FOR GOD EVEN TODAY.

IT HAPPENS TO US, TOO, DOESN’T IT?

WE DON’T EXPECT GOD TO BE IN THE MIDST OF THE ORDINARY.

WE THINK OF GOD AS BEING OUT THERE SOMEWHERE – MAYBE SHOWING UP EITHER IN TIMES OF ENORMOUS CRISIS OR GREAT OVERWHELMING JOY – BUT NOT IN THE MUNDANE, ORDINARY EVENTS OF LIFE.

PAUL SAYS, *“THE LORD OF PEACE WILL BE WITH YOU.”*

WHAT DIFFERENCE MIGHT IT MAKE IN YOUR LIFE IF YOU KNEW WITH ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY THAT GOD WOULD ALWAYS – ALWAYS BE WITH YOU – THAT GOD WOULD NEVER REJECT YOU OR TURN AWAY FROM YOU – THAT GOD WOULD ALWAYS ACCEPT YOU & LOVE YOU?

IT WAS KIERKEGAARD WHO NOTED THAT IF AT EVERY MOMENT – BOTH PRESENT & FUTURE – I WAS CERTAIN THAT NOTHING HAS HAPPENED OR CAN EVER HAPPEN THAT WOULD SEPARATE ME FROM THE INFINITE LOVE OF GOD, THAT WOULD BE THE CLEAREST REASON IN THE WORLD FOR JOY.

I THINK THAT'S WHAT PAUL IS SAYING HERE.

GOD IS ALWAYS PRESENT IN ALL TIMES & IN ALL CIRCUMSTANCES - IN ALL YOUR HIGHS & IN ALL YOUR LOWS - IN ALL YOUR SUCCESSES & IN ALL YOUR FAILURES – IN TIMES WHEN YOU'RE FAITHFUL & IN TIMES WHEN YOU'RE NOT.

GOD IS ALWAYS WITH YOU & THERE IS NOTHING THAT WILL EVER SEPARATE YOU FROM THAT LOVE.

IF THAT'S NOT A REASON TO QUIT YOU'RE WHINING, I DON'T KNOW WHAT IS!

WHEN YOU FEEL THOSE WHINE FLU SYMPTOMS STARTING TO GET HOLD OF YOU, REMEMBER THOSE SIMPLE WORDS OF PAUL – *“THE GOD OF PEACE WILL BE WITH YOU.”*

LET'S END NOW WHERE PAUL BEGINS.

HE BEGINS THIS ENTIRE SECTION WITH THE WORDS, *“REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS; AGAIN I WILL SAY, REJOICE!”*

THIS SEEMS TO BE HIS OVERRIDING THEME HERE BECAUSE HE RETURNS TO IT AT THE END: *“FOR I HAVE LEARNED TO BE CONTENT WITH WHATEVER I HAVE. I KNOW WHAT IT IS TO HAVE LITTLE, AND I KNOW WHAT IT IS TO HAVE PLENTY. IN ANY AND ALL CIRCUMSTANCES I HAVE LEARNED THE SECRET OF BEING WELL-FED AND OF GOING HUNGRY, OF HAVING PLENTY AND OF BEING IN NEED.”*

AND PARADOXICALLY, ISN'T IT TRUE THAT WE ARE MOST THANKFUL WHEN WE HAVE THE LEAST?

ISN'T IT WHEN OUR LIVES ARE AT THEIR LOWEST THAT WE ARE MORE INCLINED TO FIND ROOM FOR GOD & FEEL THE BLESSINGS OF LIFE, NO MATTER HOW SMALL THEY MAY BE?

HOW ELSE CAN YOU EXPLAIN THE PILGRIMS' CELEBRATION OF THE FIRST THANKSGIVING IN THE MIDST OF THE CRUEL AGONIES THEY HAD ENDURED?

WHAT SENSE DID IT MAKE FOR ABRAHAM LINCOLN, IN 1863, IN THE DARKEST DAYS OF OUR NATION'S HISTORY, TO ESTABLISH THE 4<sup>TH</sup> THURSDAY OF EVERY NOVEMBER AS A TIME OF NATIONAL THANKSGIVING?

HOW ELSE DO YOU EXPLAIN THOSE TIMES IN YOUR OWN LIFE?

PAUL SAYS, *“REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS; AGAIN I WILL SAY, REJOICE!”*

ONE OF THE GREATEST EXAMPLES OF THIS IS THE STORY OF A GERMAN PASTOR NAMED MARTIN. HE WAS CALLED TO SERVE A CHURCH IN EILENBURG AT THE BEGINNING OF THE THIRTY YEARS WAR.

ON THREE SEPARATE OCCASIONS EILENBURG WAS PLUNDERED – ONCE BY THE AUSTRIANS & TWICE BY SWEDISH FORCES.

BECAUSE IT WAS A WALLED CITY, EILENBURG BECAME A HAVEN FOR REFUGEES FROM THE SURROUNDING AREAS.

UNSANITARY CONDITIONS, AGGRAVATED BY OVERCROWDING, BROUGHT A PLAGUE UPON THE CITY.

IN THE YEAR 1637 ALONE, 8,000 PEOPLE DIED WITHIN THE CITY WALLS, INCLUDING MARTIN'S WIFE.

MARTIN CONDUCTED AS MANY AS 40 FUNERALS A DAY & A TOTAL OF 4,480.

MORE THAN 80% OF THE HOMES IN THE CITY WERE DESTROYED IN THE FIGHTING OVER THE YEARS.

MARTIN, THOUGH, MAINTAINED HIS FAITH & HIS GENEROSITY.

HE TOOK REFUGEES INTO HIS HOME & GAVE SO MUCH TO OTHERS THAT OFTEN HE & HIS CHILDREN WERE LEFT WITH LITTLE TO EAT & LITTLE TO WEAR.

A FAMINE FOLLOWED THE PLAGUE & IT WAS SAID THAT *"STARVING WRETCHES FOUGHT IN THE OPEN STREETS FOR A DEAD CAT OR A COW."*

IN THE MIDST OF ALL THIS, PASTOR MARTIN RINKART COMPOSED A HYMN.

IT IS PERHAPS THE MOST UNLIKELY HYMN IMAGINABLE TO BE WRITTEN AMID SUCH HORRIFIC MISERY & SORROW.

BUT MARTIN RINKART KNEW WHAT PAUL MEANT WHEN HE SAID, *"REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS; AGAIN I WILL SAY REJOICE!"*

THE HYMN THAT MARTIN RINKART COMPOSED IN THE MIDST OF HIS PAIN & SORROW & MISERY WAS *"NOW THANK WE ALL OUR GOD."*

TAKE THE WORST EXPERIENCE OR TIME IN YOUR LIFE, MULTIPLY IT BY A HUNDRED, AND THINK OF WHAT IT WOULD TAKE FOR YOU TO WRITE THESE WORDS:

*"O MAY THIS BOUNTEOUS GOD THROUGH ALL OUR LIFE BE NEAR US,  
WITH EVER JOYFUL HEARTS AND BLESSED PEACE TO CHEER US;  
AND KEEP US IN HIS GRACE AND GUIDE US WHEN PERPLEXED,  
AND FREE US FROM ALL ILLS, IN THIS WORLD AND THE NEXT."*

WHEN YOU THINK YOU'RE COMING DOWN WITH THE WHINE FLU, YOU MIGHT WANT TO REMEMBER THESE WORDS OF MARTIN RINKART.

YOU MIGHT WANT TO REMEMBER HIS STORY.

AND I SUGGEST YOU REMEMBER THE WORDS OF 99-YEAR OLD AMELIA WHO SAID, *"I HAVE LEARNED HOW NOT TO BE AFRAID."*

AND YOU MIGHT ALSO WANT TO REMEMBER KIERKEGAARD'S CLAIM THAT THE GREATEST REASON FOR JOY IS THE CERTAINTY THAT NOTHING WILL EVER SEPARATE YOU FROM GOD'S LOVE.

AND REMEMBER PAUL'S SUREFIRE REMEDIES FOR THE WHINE FLU:

*“DO NOT WORRY ABOUT ANYTHING.”*

*“THE GOD OF PEACE WILL BE WITH YOU.”*

*“REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS.” AMEN.*

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