

Tuesday Reflection for July 14, 2020

*Philippians 4:8-9*

*Finally beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.*

While reading The Morning Call on Sunday, July 12, my eyes almost fell out of my head when I read the following headline: *“Is America the Most Selfish Society on Earth.”* Wow!!! The article written by Gary Olson who is a Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Moravian College is an opinion piece. Well done, Professor Olson, you captured my attention. I will admit I often do not take the time to read opinion pieces usually because I do not devote that much attention to the daily newspaper. Obviously, I had to read this piece.

As you can imagine, the article is related to the current COVID-19 pandemic. According to Olson, *“The widespread, willful refusal to wear masks and social distance confirms that, indeed, the United States is “exceptional.” We inhabit the most exceptionally selfish, callous and indifferent society on the face of the earth.”* Clearly, Olson is not one to tread lightly, and I respect that approach. Some would argue, correctly, that I often adopt that same approach. Olson puts it in black and white in a clear and concise manner guaranteed to capture our attention. I read the entire article and commend it to you. I will also admit that I had begun thinking about how we are responding to and dealing with the ongoing pandemic.

I said from the very beginning, before COVID-19 reached our shores that the United States would have difficulty dealing with the pandemic because of our emphasis on the individual. It saddens me that my initial instincts are correct. As a society, we have seen religion removed from the public square and we have moved from a “religious” society to a society where more people argue that they are more spiritual than religious. While I believe it is fine to be more spiritual than involved in organized religions, I also believe that many of the non-religious but spiritual people have extraordinarily little connection to any sincere spirituality.

True spirituality according to the Oxford dictionary is the quality of being concerned with the human spirit or soul as opposed to material or physical things. If we are concerned about the human spirit or soul, would we not be willing to do our part to protect each other from COVID-19? I know that social distancing and masks are cumbersome and not something we enjoy. And I understand there is great debate on the value and type of masks. With COVID-19 there always seem to be more questions than answers but at some point, are we not called to be part of the solution and not the problem? Is it not appropriate for each of us to do what we can to mitigate the spread of COVID-19? It saddens me that our society puts so little value on human life.

This is a long overdue call for those of us who profess to be followers of Jesus Christ to return God to the public square. The God of all, Christians, Jews, and Muslims should be the primary value that we all share. It is time to put God first, in our lives and in our communities. It is time to put our needs second and put the betterment of our community first. Martin Luther often argued that we have a responsibility to each other to seek the greater good in our society. My prayer for us this day is to reclaim our identity as children of God, return God to the public square, and work together for the greater good of all God's children.

In Peace,

Pastor Suzanne