

## It's About Time: A Lay Leader's Perspective

As a senior in college I took a seminar course on the works of the great British author Charles Dickens. I love Dickens' eloquent phrasing and have been known to borrow a quote or two from him to illustrate a point. On the heels of Governor Northam's issuance of a "stay at home" order yesterday, the state's latest salvo in the attempt to combat the spread of the coronavirus, I thought about how Dickens opened his classic **A Tale of Two Cities**: "*It was the best of times, it was the worst of times...*"

**A Tale of Two Cities** takes place in London and Paris during the French Revolution. Our current situation has some similarities for indeed we are in a war of sorts — combatting a spiky virus that has put our county's health care system in real peril. In many instances, this is indeed the worst of times. But the beauty of the worst of times, is it often brings out the best in people. They rise to the occasion — by volunteering; still running an education system when classrooms are closed; helping out neighbors, friends and even strangers; working to create a vaccine; and, in the case of health care workers, even being ready to risk their own safety to help those who need help.

Lately I have been reading Chuck Swindoll's daily devotional blog called "Insight for Living." He has been studying the book of Esther. Esther and her cousin/adoptive father Mordecai put their lives on the line when the lives of their people — the Jews— were at risk. When Mordecai urged Esther to go into the king's presence to beg for mercy for her people, she was initially afraid because entering into the king's presence without being summoned is cause for being put to death. But Mordecai in his wisdom knows that God has a plan here. He tells Esther, "*And who knows but that you have come to royal position for such a time as this.*" Esther heeded Mordecai's plea, at her own peril, and the outcome was her people were saved. As noted in Esther 9:20-22 "*Mordecai recorded these events...as the time when the Jews got relief from their enemies and as the month when their sorrow turned into joy and then mourning into a day of celebration.*" Yes, the worst of times became the best of times for the Jews then.

Who knows why we are in the position we are now in, but let's pray that this worst of times brings out the best in His people. It may seem like we can't do much now that we are on house arrest, but God can show us when, how or if to step forward. Just like Esther, we may be a wee bit fearful, but we'll know what He is requiring of us. We can be a comforting voice on the phone to someone who is lonely; we can help someone who needs a hand, while still observing precautions; we can commit to not letting our church's finances falter during this time and keep on giving our tithes and offerings; and of course, we can pray for specific needs. In the end, we know what time it is — it's is God's time, we just don't know his timing yet. But we can still give him our best in such a time as this.