

FROM INDEPENDENCE TO PEACE  
5<sup>TH</sup> SUNDAY IN LENT  
MARCH 29, 2020

I THINK I WAS IN 7<sup>TH</sup> GRADE WHEN I FIRST READ H.G. WELLS CLASSIC SCIENCE FICTION WORK, “**WAR OF THE WORLDS**” THE BOOK HAD A FRIGHTENING THEME THAT THE WORLD WAS INVADED BY A FOREIGN FORCE OF MARTIANS WHO WOULD CONQUER THE WORLD.

LATER I LEARNED OF **ORSON WELLS** INFAMOUS RADIO BROADCAST IN 1938 OF THIS STORY. SUPPOSEDLY THE BROADCAST CAUSE WIDESPREAD PANIC AS LISTENERS BELIEVED IT TO BE A REAL LIFE EVENT.

POTENTIAL WORLD WIDE DISASTERS AND LIFE THREATENING FOREIGN FORCES ARE A **POPULAR HOLLYWOOD THEME**. MOVIES LIKE “**ARMAGEDON**”, WHERE THE EARTH IS THREATENED BY AN ONCOMING METEORITE OR “**INDEPENDENCE DAY**” WHERE THE THREAT IS INVADINTING ALIENS.

WE ARE LIVING NOW IN A TIME WHICH ECHOS A HOLLYWOOD STORY, BUT **LIFE TODAY IS NOT A MOVIE**, IT IS VERY REAL!

6 MONTHS AGO IF YOU WOULD HAVE DESCRIBED OUR DAILY LIFE MANY WOULD HAVE SAID THAT IS ONLY A HOLLYWOOD MOVIE OR THE WRITING OF SCIENCE FICTION.

OUR WORLD WILL ONLY CHANGE WHEN EACH OF US TAKES ACTION AND RESPONSIBILITY. WHAT WE ARE FACING IS **NOT AN ALIEN FORCE THAT WILL DIE** BECAUSE IT’S IMMUNE SYSTEM CAN’T FIGHT OFF THE GERMS OF THE WORLD LIKE THE NOVEL, “WAR OF THE WORLDS”. WHILE OUR TECHNOLOGY OFFERS HOPE IT IS NOT GOING TO BE AS SIMPLE AS SENDING SPACECRAFT TO A

HURTLING METEORITE TO BLOW IT UP LIKE IN “ARMAGEDON” OR JET FIGHTERS BATTLING THE INVADERS LIKE IN “INDEPENDENCE DAY”

EACH ONE OF US HAS A RESPONSIBILITY TO PRACTICE “SOCIAL DISTANCING”, USE GOOD SANITATION AND HYGIENE PRECAUTIONS.

WHEN WE WORK TOGETHER WE WILL OVERCOME THIS HORRIBLE INVASION OF OUR WORLD BY THE CORONA VIRUS.

OUR FAITH CAN ALSO SUSTAIN US AND GIVE US A SENSE OF PEACE AND HOPE. TODAY’S GOSPEL READING IS THE STORY OF JESUS REURRECTING HIS DEAD FRIEND LAZARUS. I DON’T BELIEVE THAT JESUS OR GOD IS GOING TO PERFORM SOME HOLLYWOOD STYLE MIRACLE AND MAKE THE VIRUS DISAPPEAR.

I FIND MORE HOPE IN TODAY’S SECOND READING FROM ROMANS.

### ALIEN INVADERS AND CHRIST’S RESCUE

MANY PASSAGES IN PAUL’S LETTER TO THE ROMANS SOUND LIKE LINES FROM A SCIENCE FICTION FILM. IN THE SEVENTH CHAPTER, PAUL EXPLORES THE “WORLD-DESTROYING WORK” OF SIN, DESCRIBING IT AS A FORCE THAT IS COMING INTO OUR LIVES TO WIPE US OUT. IN THE MIND OF PAUL, WE ARE SLAVES TO SIN, AS OPPRESSED AS THE HUMAN BEINGS IN THE MOVIE *INDEPENDENCE DAY*.

OBVIOUSLY THE THREAT WE FACE IS NOT A RESULT OF OUR SIN, BUT MANY PEOPLE’S RESPONSE OR BLANTANT DISREGARD OF MEDICAL GUIDELINES IS A SIN.

“IT IS NO LONGER I THAT DO IT,” SAYS PAUL, “BUT SIN THAT DWELLS WITHIN ME.” ACCORDING TO PAUL, **SIN IS AN ALIEN FORCE THAT TAKES CONTROL OF OUR WILL** AND DIRECTS OUR ACTIONS, A POWER THAT CORRUPTS EVEN OUR BEST EFFORTS AND INTENTIONS.

**BUT I DON'T PARTICULARLY FIND COMFORT IN THESE WORDS.** I DON'T FIND COMFORT IN SEEING OTHER PEOPLE'S SIN OR EVEN MY OWN.

WHAT I WANT; WHAT I NEED TODAY ARE WORDS OF COMFORT AND HOPE. **I WANT SOMETHING CONCRETE.** I WANT SOMETHING REAL THAT I CAN HANG ON TO AND FIND HOPE AND COMFORT.

I CAN'T OFFER YOU ANY MYSTERIOUS OR MAGICAL WORDS THAT WILL MAKE YOUR FEELINGS OF FEAR DISAPPEAR!

I DO BELIEVE THAT **EACH OF US CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE** AND CAN GIVE SUPPORT AND HELP WHEN WE REACH OUT TO OTHERS AND SIMPLY TALK. THESE WORDS MUST BE MORE THAN SIMPLY THE SHARING OF THE LATEST NEWS REPORTS. WE MUST **COMFORT ONE ANOTHER BY SAYING:** “I CARE ABOUT YOU; WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP? DO YOU NEED ANYTHING? DO YOU JUST WANT TO TALK?”

PAUL WRITES IN ROMANS HOW **JESUS CAME TO OFFER FORGIVENESS OF SIN AND NEWNESS OF LIFE.**

ONE WAY TO THINK OF FORIVENESS OF SIN IS TO LOOK AT A PIECE OF BROKEN POTTERY OR DISH. WE MAY HAVE BEEN ABLE TO TAKE THE BROKEN PIECES AND GLUE THEM BACK TOGETHER. HOWEVER WHEN YOU LOOK CLOSELY AT THE RESTORED ITEM YOU WILL MOST LIKELY **STILL SEE THE FAINT LINES** OF WHERE IT HAD BEEN BROKEN AND PUT BACK TOGETHER.

**THAT IS HOW OUR LIVES ARE.** WE CAN PUT BACK THE BROKEN PIECES EITHER BY OURSELF OR WITH THE HELP OF OTHERS, BUT THE FINE LINES, THE MEMORIES, AND PERHAPS THE PAIN **MAY STILL REMAIN.** THE PROMISE THAT OUR FAITH OFFERS IS THAT THROUGH GOD THESE LINES WILL BE REMOVED. WE ARE GIVEN THE PROMISE THAT OUR LIFE WITH BE MADE WHOLE.

**DOES THIS OFFER YOU HOPE OR COMFORT?** MAYBE YES; MAYBE NO. WHAT I DO FIRMLY BELIEVE IS THAT MY FAITH CAN SUSTAIN ME AGAINST THE SCARIENSS, THE UGLINESS OF THIS FOREIGN INVADER VIRUS. I BELIEVE THAT WE CAN OFFER HOPE AND SUPPORT TO ONE ANOTHER.

**WE BELIEVE THAT THIS IS NOT THE END.** THIS IN NOT THE END OF THE WORLD. WE AREN'T LIVING A HOLLYWOOD SCRIPT BUT WE MUST CLING TO THE HOPE AND PROMISE OF A POWER OUTSIDE OURSELF WHICH CAN RESTORE US.

THE MESSAGE OF THE CHURCH MUST ALWAYS BE A MESSAGE OF HOPE. A MESSAGE OF COMFORT. A MESSAGE OF TRUST.

### **COMING DOWN TO EARTH**

WE CAN BE THANKFUL TO GOD FOR SENDING JESUS TO SAVE US FROM SIN AND DEATH. HIS RESCUE MISSION FREES US FROM SIN AND ITS WORLD-DESTROYING WORK. BUT WE **CANNOT LIVE EVERY DAY IN A SCIENCE-FICTION FILM,** WITH JESUS ATTACKING ALIENS IN AN ACTION-PACKED, NONSTOP ADVENTURE. WE NEED TO BRING PAUL'S INSIGHTS DOWN TO EARTH, IN LINE WITH THE MESSAGE OF THE EIGHTH CHAPTER OF ROMANS.

HOW DO WE MOVE FROM LIBERATION TO HEALING.

## LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

“I THINK THAT COMES FROM THE SPIRIT.” THE OPENING WORDS FROM THE EIGHTH CHAPTER OF ROMANS, “TO SET THE MIND ON THE FLESH IS DEATH, BUT TO SET THE MIND ON THE SPIRIT IS LIFE AND PEACE.”

“WE ARE IN THE SPIRIT, SINCE THE SPIRIT OF GOD DWELLS IN YOU.”

“SO JESUS RESCUES US FROM SIN,” “AND THEN THE SPIRIT LIVES IN US. THE SPIRIT HEALS THE WOUNDS.”

**PAUL GOES ON TO SAY THAT** ‘THE SPIRIT IS LIFE’ AND GOD GIVES LIFE ‘THROUGH HIS SPIRIT THAT DWELLS IN YOU.’

I KNOW THE SPIRIT OF GOD HAS CALMED ME AND GUIDED ME AT TROUBLING TIMES IN MY LIFE. I ALSO BELIEVE THAT THE SPIRIT PULLS US TOGETHER, ALL OF US, AND MAKES US THE BODY OF CHRIST IN THE WORLD.

I HOPE THAT SOUNDS LIKE A HEALING POWER TO YOU. **CHRIST RESCUES US AND THE SPIRIT UNITES US.** THE SPIRIT IS ACTIVE IN THE COMMUNITY, THE CHURCH, THE BODY OF CHRIST.

WE ARE NOT ALONE. WE MAY BE LIVING IN ISOLATION, BUT WE DON’T HAVE TO BE A **LONE VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS.**

WE DOESN’T HAVE TO BE ALONE IN OUR GRIEF AND ANGER AND FRUSTRATION, BECAUSE THE SPIRIT IS WITH US.

**THINK OF IT THIS WAY.** WE AREN’T DOING THE EXHAUSTING WORK OF ROWING A BOAT ALONE. WE CAN NOW JUMP INTO A SAILBOAT AND ALLOW THE WIND OF THE SPIRIT TO PUSH US FORWARD.

## INDEPENDENCE AND PEACE

THE APOSTLE PAUL KNOWS THAT SIN IS A FORCE THAT MUST BE ACKNOWLEDGED, ADDRESSED AND EVENTUALLY OVERCOME. FORTUNATELY, JESUS RESCUES US FROM SIN AND DEATH THROUGH HIS GIFTS OF FORGIVENESS AND NEW LIFE. BUT **INDEPENDENCE SHOULD NEVER BE THE END OF THE STORY**, BECAUSE THERE IS MORE TO LIFE THAN BEING FREED FROM AN ALIEN INVADER.

WHEN WE SET OUR MINDS ON THE SPIRIT, WE DISCOVER FULLNESS OF LIFE AND PEACE. WHEN WE ALLOW THE SPIRIT TO UNITE US, WE COME TOGETHER AS THE BODY OF CHRIST. WE DON'T HAVE TO BE ALONE IN OUR GRIEF AND ANGER AND FRUSTRATION, BECAUSE THE GOD WHO RAISED JESUS FROM THE DEAD **WILL GIVE LIFE TO US, THROUGH HIS SPIRIT** THAT DWELLS IN US.

YES, HOLLYWOOD HAS GIVEN US GREAT ADVENTURE FILMS, THRILLING STORIES OF LIBERATION. BUT WE CAN ALL BE PART OF ANOTHER STORY: ONE IN WHICH WE SET OUR MINDS ON THE SPIRIT OF GOD AND RECEIVE THE GIFTS OF HEALING AND PEACE.