

Happy Birthday, Jesus

Forgive me, Lord, for not getting you anything. This has been a year of mass forgetfulness. We've forgotten how much we enjoyed being free to walk out of the house without being accosted by our next door neighbors chiding us for not wearing a mask in the great out-of-doors or when we're jogging down a nearly-empty footpath with Fido at our side. We've forgotten what it's like to enter a store without a 'mask-bouncer' waiting for us at the door instead of a 'greeter' to welcome us. And once we get past the bouncer and make our way through the aisles we've forgotten what it was like not to be told "Only one to a customer" by a sign above a few rolls of toilet paper on a near-empty shelf.

Then there's our public gathering spots like City Hall Plaza, government house or the local school gymnasium or even our churches where we used to congregate with other like-minded folks. We've forgotten what it was like to stand elbow-to-elbow with them or sit close to them in church (now we sit six feet apart in a pew separated by a sign that says, "Keep your social distance. Covid is on the prowl"). Folks older than myself have told me about all the posters that were put up in factories and public places in the mid-forties that warned the public about talking about the details of their war jobs lest the enemy overhear them. "A slip of the lip will sink a ship" the posters proclaimed.

And when the war was over, the posters came down - because the emergency was over and the long American nightmare had passed. Now we're viewing 'public service announcements' exhorting us to *protect our families and friends and society at large* by taking an experimental vaccine even though many of us have strong immune systems. Not once, not twice but at least three times with the possibility of more vaccinations on the way! Never mind we could get the dreaded Covid, Delta or Omicron anyway even when vaccinated against it. And we've forgotten that we used to be good parents that exercised caution about which medicines we gave our young children. We've also forgotten the faith we once had in their teachers, confident that they wouldn't fill the little ones' heads full of claptrap about White supremacy, gender fluidity or asked them to choose their own gender and pronouns at the tender age of five.

No, Jesus, we've had a lot on our minds. Why? Because we've been forced to stay home, fired from our jobs for daring to resist bureaucrats who've insisted we get 'jabbed' in the arm and required to carry the equivalent of a national ID card around to allow us entry into a public space or even a private one like a restaurant to get lunch. "No vaccination? Sorry, no shirt, no shoes, no vax, no service." We've also forgotten how our own voices sound when we've tried to sing Your praises in church. Muffled hymns just don't seem to cut it, Lord, but this doesn't seem to bother our pastors who've been co-opted to do the state's bidding, demanding that we bear masks instead of bearing praise to You as Your birthday nears.

I do hope You'll forgive me for not getting You anything. It's been rough trying to keep THE faith, let alone ANY faith in anything these days - like our President, for example. We've forgotten how it was to have a leader who remembered who he was, where he was and why he was there. I hope and pray to find the strength to go on despite forgetting so much and to try to remember why we allowed ourselves to become a flock of submissive sheep instead of a pride of lions that believed in ourselves, but most importantly in You and in Your everlasting goodness and love. Maybe next year will be better.

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