



FIRST PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
Noblesville, IN



Message from Pastor Eric...

Dear FPC family! Since we are not having worship this week, I've put together a message for you to read. I hope it will help soothe some of the worries and anxieties we all are experiencing during these uncertain times of pandemics and roller coaster financial markets. Check out my message (below) and check out Dave Ramsey's reaction to the recent stock market on the YouTube link below!

I hope we are back together for worship next week. The Session and staff will be discussing these matters at our meeting this Wednesday evening. We will continue to communicate information to you all as it becomes available.

“Coronavirus Relief”

Philippians 4: 4-8

March 15, 2020 Pastor Eric Gale

First Presbyterian Church, Noblesville, IN

(I regret that we cannot gather for worship this week because of the precautions FPC is taking due to the Coronavirus outbreak. But here is a little message for your reflection as an alternative to Sunday worship. The following is adapted from a message I shared with FPC in 2008 when the Stock Market crashed and the United States went into an economic recession. Today, with the latest war on oil prices, stock market uncertainty, the Coronavirus Pandemic, cancellation of major sporting events, schools closing, churches cancelling worship services, businesses encouraging people to work from home, we are all feeling the anxiety of uncertain times. But as followers of Jesus Christ who believe in the authority of scripture and the providence of Almighty God, we can turn fear into faith, panic into peace, and proclaim the certainty of Christ in an uncertain world. The following is mostly a conversation with God about the happenings in today's world. Enjoy!)

Honey, I'm going into the family room and catch up on the news. I want to check the markets and see if they are up or down today. It's been a roller coaster ride this week. And what is the latest on this Coronavirus epidemic? It's something new and different every day!

Well, let's see what the headlines today!

- “Coronavirus travel restriction!”
- “House OKs coronavirus relief bill”
- “Trump Declares State of Emergency”
- “Tom Hanks and wife test positive for Coronavirus”
- “Coronavirus recession may already be here, market strategist says”
- “NBA, NHL, MLB, PGA, IndyCar, NASCAR cancel events”

Let's check the Dow Jones for today. They should just call it the Dow(n) Jones average since we all feel down these days.

This Coronavirus has got the world in a panic. We've lost a lot of money on paper. All of our investments are down. I know the economic structure for the U.S. is solid, but what in the world is going on? What are you up to,

God? Even the dog is not very happy ever since he heard the stock price of Alpo was way down.

Thank you for our jobs but then we never know what might happen there either. I guess it could be a lot worse like the family down the street. They are afraid of losing their jobs and they just bought their dream house last year. I wonder how they are going to make it.

Sometimes I wonder how we are going to make it. And what about our kids? What will their future be like? They are sending them home from college with the pandemic scare on campus. Will they give us a credit on their room and board?

Lord, you know we've tried to follow you all our lives. We try to take good care of our health. We do what we can to be responsible with our money. We do our part to keep the environment clean. We give to our church. We give to our colleges. We buy cookies from the Girl Scouts and popcorn from the Boy Scouts. I know we are to place our faith and trust in you. Now we can't even go to church because this virus has closed almost everything, including church. Plus there are no sports on TV! No March Madness this year! What is a guy like me supposed to do with himself in times like this? What's happening to all those things we counted on for all those years?

Yes, I'm getting a little worried, Lord! Oh, I'm sorry! Didn't you say somewhere in the Bible that we weren't supposed to worry about anything? I remember the minister preaching about that one time. Where was that verse? Maybe I need to take a look at that one more time and see what it says. I think it was in a book that starts with a P. Didn't the pastor do a series of messages on that book. And I think the pastor said something about a guy who wrote the book from prison, but yet he talked about joy. How can somebody talk about joy when they are in prison? Maybe he had been in prison so long he didn't know the difference. I think his name was Paul.

Even though being joyful in prison doesn't make much sense, what the pastor said really spoke to my heart that day...Philippians! Yehhh! That's it! It's not a long book...Here it is. WOW! Only four chapters. I should be able to find that passage without too much trouble... Here it is!

Philippians 4:4-8 (NIV)

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things.

Okay, let's take it a little slower! **“Rejoice in the Lord always! I will say it again: Rejoice!”** But Lord, these are pretty tough times for a lot of folks. It's pretty hard to rejoice when you can't meet with your friends at church or go to the basketball game. You can't even shake the hand of your friend or give them a hug for fear getting a life-threatening illness. But for some reason you still call us to “Rejoice.”

“Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.” Isn't gentleness somewhere else in the Bible? Something called the Fruit of the Spirit. Lord, I want to be gentle and I want people to know I am a Christian. I also know your word says you are going to come again and we all need to be ready. But how does my gentleness have anything to do with that? Unless you mean

that the way I conduct myself will have an impact on whether or not others come to know you like I do! WOW!!! That's a lot of responsibility! I know we are supposed to be your witnesses wherever we go, but can't you leave that to the professional Christians like pastors and missionaries? But maybe, just maybe, when people see gentleness in the faith we profess, we can make a difference for someone who doesn't know God.

Okay, let's keep going! **“Do not worry about anything!”** There it is! That's the verse I was looking for. Gee Lord! How can we go through life without worrying about anything? That's a pretty tall order for we humanoids. Seems to me that we like to worry. We seem to worry about everything. We worry about our kids. We worry about our parents. We worry about our friends and family. Our jobs. How much money we have? How much money we don't have?

What other people think of us? We worry about our health and our weight and making impressions on everyone. And now this Coronavirus world

pandemic! How can you not worry? But didn't Jesus say something about worry as well?

Matthew 6:25-34 (NIV)

25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes? 26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they? 27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?"

I guess that helps put a few things in perspective when it comes to all these health crises and economic problems. What else did Paul have to say?

Philippians 4:6 (NIV)

6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Thanksgiving! Hey that's coming up in November. Maybe there are a lot of other people like me who need to be reminded about the sacrifices of people like the pilgrims and our forefathers and foremothers when they came to this land. A lot of them died just trying to get here. They wanted to live in a land where they could worship God in freedom. They sacrificed so we could enjoy what we have today! We've got it pretty easy in comparison.

You know Lord, when I think about it, I do worry a lot more than I should. You have blessed me with a wonderful wife and two great children. They all have Jesus living in their heart. They have chosen the right friends, they do well in school and they bring a lot of joy to my life. I guess I would rather lose value in my portfolio than to lose them. That's a no brainer!

Instead of griping and complaining I really do need to remember all the good things in my life and I should pray more than I worry. It's just hard to do! Worry just seems to come so easy.

Philippians 4:7 (NIV)

7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Now that's something I can use. Some peace would feel great right now. I

guess what you mean is that when I pray you will bring peace to my heart. It's not me, but it's you that brings peace. I have noticed that when I have my morning time of reading the Bible and praying, I do feel better. It sort of takes the edge off and I probably do trust you more when I do that. Maybe that is why Paul could talk about joy from a prison cell, because that peace comes from you and it's just something we can't fully understand.

Philippians 4:8 (NIV)

8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable--if anything is excellent or praiseworthy--think about such things.

You know Lord, when I think about all this Coronavirus news, and I watch it on TV and hear about it on the radio, I get to a point where I'm about to scream. All of it seems like bad news lately. Maybe I just need to turn it off for a while and do something more positive like read a good book or help folks at the soup kitchen. Maybe I need to look at my own heart and mind and take inventory of the kinds of thoughts I have on a daily basis. I need to do something that gets my mind off of these problems for a while and help somebody else. This is the season of Lent and Lent is meant to be a time of reflection. If there are no ballgames to watch right now, maybe you want me to spend a little more time reflecting on Jesus and his life and how his life has changed my life.

Thanks for our little chat, God! I need to trust you more every day and whatever I do or wherever I go remind me that you have my best interest at heart. Despite the markets and world-wide pandemics, you are in control. I still remember the song we used to sing when I was a kid in Sunday School..."He's Got the Whole World in His Hands!" You know what you are doing far better than I do! Thanks, God! AMEN

Prayer

Gracious God, you have given us all things. You have given us minds for thinking, hearts for feeling, a soul for connecting with you. Today, we pray for those suffering the Coronavirus. We pray for their recovery. We pray for those who have lost family or friends to this disease. We pray for doctors, nurses, health organizations, government leaders, who are trying to get this under control as soon as possible, so that life can return to some sense of normalcy.

Thank you that you created us and you know our anxieties and fears more than we do and we can cast those anxieties upon you (1 Peter 5:7). We thank you that our security is in you and our Lord Jesus Christ who has conquered fear, anxiety, illness and death. He has provided a way for us to be with him forever. Our future is safely in your hands! AMEN!

[Dave Ramsey's reaction to the recent stock market](#)

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