



“And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.” Acts 2:40

The Palmer Road church of Christ, Westland, Mi. (prchurchofchrist.org)

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Jump Start # 2930

Matthew 6:30 "But if God so arrays the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more do so for you, O men of little faith?"

The past eighteen months has been hard. It's been hard on the economy. It's been hard on families. It's been hard on churches. Most of us thought and were hoping that all of this would be behind us now. We hoped that things would return and pick up right where we left them. But that's not the case. The government is pushing more shots. Schools are fighting over masks. Stores and restaurants have closed. Parts are hard to come by and the waiting list to get things done is long. And, all of this has increased the stress level in people.

Studies are now filtering in about the impact isolation, quarantining, and divided opinions have had. The results are not good. Among teens, anxiety is at one of the highest levels ever reported. During the pandemic the teen suicide rate soared. At a time in their lives when a person ought to be joyful, fun and filled with hope, so many teens see only the darkness of despair.

Here are some thoughts:

First, opinions are loud and pushy, especially about vaccines and masks. Teachers and administrators are often not on the same page. Parents and the school systems are not on the same page. We hear conflicting reports, nearly every day from the news media. The friends of your children have their opinions. Brethren have different thoughts about this. Social media highlights everyone's thoughts. Put all of this in a pot and let that simmer long enough and there will be enough anxiety to go around that even the cat will be bothered.

Moms and dads need to recognize this. It may be good to eat the evening meal with the TV off. It might be good to take a break from social media. As parents deal with their own anxieties, fears and worries, they cannot assume that the kids are ok. The kids often reflect what they see in their parents. Find moments for you child just to air out and vent his frustrations and concerns. Listen and listen well.

Second, anxiety and worry tend to drive out faith and they increasingly take over the heart. It's just a short step from anxiety to discouragement and depression. And, left alone, those two can destroy any good in us. This is where suicide starts to seem reasonable. This is where divorce doesn't look so bad.

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This is where no longer worshipping with God's people becomes a choice. It is sad to be so young and to be so depressed. Young people haven't had a full taste of life yet. They haven't gone through job losses, bills, nights in the hospital, death of parents, wars and all the scars we older people have on our hearts.

Discouragement and depression do not disappear on their own. Like a leaky roof, it won't fix itself. There may be a need to talk to a professional. Sometimes medication is needed. But I'm not a big fan of passing out pills like M & M's. Pills may control our moods, but pills do not take away problems. What a person really needs is a bigger dose of faith. They need to stand in the shadows of David and see what he wrote in the Psalms. They need to walk with Paul and see how the world turned against him, yet he never took his eyes off of the Lord.

Our verse today, from the worry section of the sermon on mount, reminds us that God takes care of the fields. The grass is beautiful in the summer. But by the end of the season it is cut and burned. God has taken care of that grass. And, we are so much more important than what is in the field. We are made in the image of God. The Lord has stamped His thumbprint upon our hearts. God will take care of you.

Throughout this section of Matthew 6, the Lord repeatedly says, "Do not worry." God's got this. God will take care of you. God will see you through this. Trust. Believe. Hope.

Third, prayers said among each other, powerful worship, personal study of God's word, engaging in kingdom work, will help a person through their anxiety. He will begin to see God's hand and God's work all around him. Find a senior citizen in the congregation and get your teens over there to spend an afternoon. Have them cook, clean, mow and visit with them. It will be a win-win situation. Discouragement and depression is inward focused. A person is looking at themselves. Looking outward, to others and to the Lord will help conquer worry and fear.

As I write this, my phone dinged with a news update. A drive by shooting, in the daytime, has killed a student at a bus stop. The youth in our county have no compass and direction. Self absorbed parents are out of touch. The people of God must be different. We work with those who are depressed and anxious. But we don't have to be that way. We live next to those who are depressed and anxious. But we don't have to be that way. Some extended family members are depressed and anxious. But we don't have to be that way. We have the Lord, and that makes all the difference. We know who sits upon the throne of Heaven and earth. We'll get through this, just as God's people got through oppressive Egypt, enslavement to Babylon, and being struck down by Rome.

What is there to fear? What can man do to us? Maybe some hope, optimism and sunshine in our homes and our hearts will help our young people and in turn they can help those they know.

Will He not much more do so for you? Will He?

Roger Shouse (Used by permission)
