

Whose Fault Is This?

Frank Napoleon

Staying home, going out but wearing a mask, or embracing a return to individual liberty captures the most recent spectrum of controversial issues swirling around our shared crisis. I am quick to admit that the debate brings out all my base selfishness. My first thoughts are “how will this impact me” and secondly, “how do I minimize that impact?”

I know I should rise to the level of doing what is best for my town, my state, my country, and my planet, but those lofty perspectives are drowned out the first time I can't buy toilet paper - then it's every man for himself. However, ‘survival of the fittest’ is not the world in which my myopic, asthmatic body would best thrive. And being completely honest, paying taxes for police and soldiers to keep bad people away from me and my loved ones is far more effective than me trying to do it on my own.

I guess I should stop being surprised how someone can view an object or issue as “up”, while I view that same issue as “down”. (By the way, the dress is clearly "white and gold" and the voice is obviously saying "yanni".) As I get older, I definitely find my opinions become more entrenched and my empathy and tolerance for differences diminish. That, I say from a position I cannot possibly defend, is the nature of slowly joining the curmudgeon club. I start to think whatever got me this far must have been right, right? I know I should engage with those who think differently, but I admit I too easily grow weary and retreat, sparing myself the head banging.

I think that is why I'm not better at being a boisterous advocate to influence what is surely the most important decision anyone can make – choosing which god they worship. Heck, if I can't even convince people that the best flavor of ice cream is double chocolate brownie fudge, how am I going to convince people Jesus is Lord? After so many years of believing, I find I can't fathom why any thinking person would not conclude that Jesus was the Son of God. I'm doubly confounded when some won't even acknowledge He was a historical person?! I tend to lose my patience and want to give up. Then I remember, even first-hand

witnesses to Jesus' miracles rejected Him. It humbles me to be reminded of my relatively small role in this process.

The current differential suffering being endured as a result of this virus can fuel social conflict. When I see others suffering, I tend to mentally insulate myself from the possibility it could happen to me by seeking to justify why my circumstances are different. I find I'm guilty of the same errant perspective the disciples had upon seeing the man blind from birth. They asked Jesus "who sinned, this man or his parents"? Likewise when I see people suffering, I find my compassionate reaction can quickly be displaced as find myself asking who is at fault. "Why doesn't he have six months savings?" "Why doesn't he have a job that he can work from home?" "Why doesn't he have health insurance?" In essence I'm asking "Was this his fault or his parents?"

The answer, like Jesus gave in John 9:3, is "neither". This event, and all things we see as bad, happen so that "the works of God can be displayed". They occur so that those who have, can rally to the cause and show the love of Christ to those who don't have.

This whole ordeal has only made me more keenly aware of my dependence on, and thankfulness for, others. Since my only outings have been to the supermarket and take out restaurants, I'm especially thankful for truckers, grocers, farmers, restaurateurs, and ranchers.

I may not be effective at directly convincing the world that mine is the god to worship, but when I see everything I have as a gift, a blessing, and not something that I've personally earned, I can start by being more generous. I can respond to these circumstances and use "my" health, "my" intellect, "my" work ethic, "my" brilliant choice in selecting my parents (Get it? None of these are mine to claim!), as the gifts that they are, and share them in service to ease the burden of others. By these works shall I be known and by my works will I give my testimony that Jesus Christ is (my) Lord.

This current trial we're undergoing not someone's fault, nor is it some form of karmic punishment for sin. I can choose to see the suffering through the lens of John Bradford who phrased in 1500's "There but for the grace of God go I". I feel

compassion; an awareness of the hurting of others and be moved to do something about it. I can share the relative bounty that I enjoy for the benefit of others as my way of "displaying the works of God", and pray for strength to endure until we enjoy deliverance from these times.

