

Don't Waste Your Isolation – Part 13

Corona'd.

Surely that's a term already, is it not? Remember, I'm a social media-challenged individual so it's probably already made the Urban Dictionary or a candidate for Merriam Webster or Oxford's much-too-early Word of the Year (and no, I didn't check, as it's not really my point), but I've not heard it yet. If something has been canceled because of our current COVID-19 crisis then it's been "Corona'd!"

That's what happened to the party we planned on having in the early spring for the folks who live on our cul-de-sac. We've talked about it for over a year, but have not pulled the trigger on it, and now our plans have been Corona'd.

So instead of a cul-de-sac party, I spent the last 2 days baking bread, a *bunch* of bread, so we could give a gift of bread to our neighbors in an effort to love them as ourselves (Matthew 22-37-40 et. al.). You see it, don't you? I love baking bread (among other things) so I'm loving them by sharing the bread I bake. So tonight, we went to 6 houses and delivered fresh-baked sourdough bread along with a Scripture passage telling our neighbors why we loved them.

Now before I go on, please don't think I'm bragging about this. We've lived in this home for almost 2 years and I've not often intentionally engaged our neighbors in spiritual matters. I've spoken to them, seen and spoken to them on walks, enjoyed their children and given them Christmas gifts and Halloween (well, my wife instigated this and I enjoyed joining her), and I know most of them by name. But I've not loved them as myself. I've not pressed into eternal matters. Though my desires have been righteous my actions have been passive. So, in the same way a thief should not be praised for setting aside his craft, I should not be praised for finally doing something to open the door to spiritually engage our neighbors. I should have done what is right and good and commanded long ago.

But back to my point: today we (I take full responsibility for my past lack of engagement, but share the joy of our ministry with my dearest as we delivered the bread together) took a step in the right direction. We reached out with the power of Scripture and the love of Christ.

What have you been doing to love your neighbors? How have you engaged those in your neighborhood, those with whom you work, those in your spheres of influence? How have you set aside your own needs, your own desires, and crossed the boundary of separation (safely, of course) to enter their world with the love of Christ?

The command to love our neighbors as ourselves is found in both the Old Testament and

the New. We encountered this in our study of Leviticus, it's mentioned in the Synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), Paul teaches it multiple times (in both positive and the negative ways), and James commands it. An action mentioned so many times in Scripture means we must, absolutely must, give it our attention. I have to think it's mentioned so many times because God knows we will be prone to neglect it. Love for those outside our tribe is a mark of our membership in the family of God and it pleases Christ!

Remember, we were once outsiders, separated from Christ, and without hope (Ephesians 3:11ff.). It is a supreme act of love to engage our neighbors with love, love we only have because Christ first loved us (1 John 4:10). And what could possibly be easier?!?! You know how to love yourself, yes? The Bible presupposes that you do! And the love of Christ in us, the love that crossed over every barrier of our own heart, that overcame our rebellion, is pulsing to be expelled through loving your neighbors.

Please don't hear this as a rebuke. It is not my intent to rebuke but to encourage. Hear my words as an encouragement to partake of the blessings of loving others. Hear them as an encouragement to learn from my own lethargy. Hear them as an encouragement for you to be the hands and feet of our Savior's love demonstrated to those He has yet to redeem.

Be creative! Use your gifts and the gifts of your family members. Sacrificially give of yourself to others. Consider what you know about your neighbors, what you know about their needs, and get busy. It will glorify God and bless you.

"The one who loves another has fulfilled the law . . . Love does no wrong to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" (Romans 13:8, 10).

Why would you, or I, let such an opportunity be Corona'd?

Pastor Rob