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Changing Times

You are not only responsible for what you say, but also for what you do not say.

-Martin Luther

Last issue I asked the question, "Will Covid-19 Change Us?" I know that question was somewhat rhetorical. The better question is "**How Much** Will Covid-19 Change Us?" Currently, I'm not sure. But I think one thing is very evident: The stress of the interim changes that the coronavirus has forced on our society has affected us all economically, emotionally, intellectually, and psychologically.

Suicides are increasing. Home abuse cases are rising. Murders in cities are surging. The continuing stress over the multiphasic impacts of Covid-19 is relentless. It's precisely at times like this that other issues can become the focus point for all that pent up anxiety, anger, disappointment, and frustration in a world that has so many restrictions.

So, looking at ourselves individually or considering our nation, what *really* defines us?

Recently, I saw a message to a congregation that spoke about what defines the church. It's nondenominational and poignant in its simplicity in response to the Covid-19 world:

"What is the difference between *going* to church and *being* a church?"

"Going to church will have new inconveniences. Being a church has never been convenient.

"Going to church will require some sacrifices. Being a church has always been about self-sacrifice.

"Going to church has changed a lot. Being a church has not changed at all."

We can also apply similar sentiments to our nation. There have been many new inconveniences rendered in our lives for the past 4 months, yet we had inconveniences before – perhaps of different types, but they were there. We deal with them.

We've had to make sacrifices, too. Taking a look at our history, in what time period can you say our citizens didn't make sacrifices? When didn't we struggle, even as we ultimately thrived as a nation? What parent doesn't make sacrifices for their children?

Change is a constant in our society. But Covid-19 has thrown a monkey wrench into the smooth operation of our lives, especially coming out of the strongest economy in our nation's history. The next hail storm or the next election can bring huge changes into our lives irrespective of Covid-19. So, sometimes reluctantly, we adapt.

Yet being a nation has not changed. Our main strength lies in the very fact that we can struggle, disagree, and think differently and still be one nation. As blood ties relatives together even in times of strife, our nation and our constitution tie us together, too.

In the midst of all this Covid-19 commotion, we see – at the same time – some of the best of us and some of the worst of us. Stories abound of the generous nature of many of our citizens in all segments of our society. Our healthcare workers nationwide deserve such credit for working through this pandemic. Good will is present in so many ways during the Covid-19 shutdown.

But there are also too many examples of the worst of us. Unfortunately, the media tends to focus most of their attention on the disastrous nature of Covid-19, political controversy, civic unrest, and the destruction caused by riots across the country. These stories are also part of who

we are and define us. It's up to "we the people" to decide which parts of our behavior are the most important.

So, we struggle, we have inconveniences, we make sacrifices, and we *do* constantly change. But the words of Martin Luther are important to remember because what we *don't* say – and often what we *don't* do – define our character just as clearly as what we say and do. Would that our nation's leaders would think a little bit longer before they speak and that what is finally said would be worthy of our great nation and all its people.

While we are in the midst of the Covid-19 struggle, perhaps we should focus on being a part of the "best" of our society. The struggles we face will change us, but ***being*** a nation is always about what we say or don't say, and what we do or don't do. Thank God we are free to do so.

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