

## Daily Devotional, July 8, 2020 Not Crowding Out Christ

***“Whoever tries to keep their life will lose it, and whoever loses their life will preserve it.” Luke 17:33 (NIV)***

As I have mentioned before, one of the interests that Laura and I share is gardening. It is in our DNA to enjoy watching plants grow. Normally, I start some of my plants from seedlings that I purchase from local nurseries, the rest, such as cucumbers, string beans, and squash I grow from seeds. This year was different. My latest impulse was to plant everything by seed. As always, It was fun and rather exciting to watch them sprout from the soil and to see them grow each day. I made some mistakes in judging the temperature though, and the excessive spring rains washed some seeds away. Or in one case, when I planted the tomato seeds, I thought they had mostly washed away and that there were a large number of weeds beginning to pop up in that bed.

As it turns out, I planted too many seeds in my little 4 foot by 8 foot bed. I kept watching them grow, convinced that although they appeared to have a similar appearance to tomato leaves, most were in fact weeds. I couldn't have been more wrong. Laura was convinced that our composting added more seeds to what had already been planted. Maybe. All I know is, the bed started to get more and more crowded and I knew that I needed to start figuring out which were weeds and begin pulling them out. But there were so many! I couldn't decide where to begin., especially when they mostly looked alike. Thinning the seedlings is important. If the seedlings aren't thinned it will cause the plants to have stunted growth or could cause the plants to become diseased and die. As much as it pained me, I started the process of taking out the smaller plants that were forming to give the bigger ones a chance of surviving.

As I read through Jesus' words in Luke, it reminds me of the process my plants are going through. Our lives can get so crowded with the things of this world that it causes our growth to be stunted. Even good things can cause our lives to be too crowded for us to grow. When we cling to all of the pleasures that we enjoy of this life, we lose out on what God has stored up for us in our futures. However, we are in a season right now where many of these pleasures and distractions are forcefully being removed from our lives by a virus that seems to take and take and leaves us feeling lost and hollow. We look at things that we once enjoyed and wonder if it will be there in the future when all of this is over.

Life will be going on as usual on the day that Christ returns. There will be no warning. People will be going about their everyday tasks. They will be just as surprised at Christ's return as the people in Noah's time were by the flood. We don't know when Christ will return but we do know that He is coming. It could be today, tomorrow, maybe next week. Whatever day He comes, we must be ready, and live as if Jesus might return today!

The best way to hold all of the pleasures and things that we enjoy in this life is with an open hand— not clinging to them. As believers, the future we have is so much greater than anything that we can have in this life. My prayer is that as we are all going through the process of having our lives uncluttered and prepared, we focus in on Jesus and that we will see tremendous spiritual growth during this time.

***Prayer: Lord, our God, help us to prepare for the coming of Christ your Son. Although we do not know the exact time, May he find us waiting, eager in joyful prayer to be taken away to your Kingdom. We trust in your promise and confidently ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ, your Son, Amen.***