

Daily Devotional, March 16, 2021 Is God in Charge of Your Plans?

Now listen, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money." Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. Instead, you ought to say, "If it is the Lord's will, we will live and do this or that." James 4:13–16 (NIV)

The other day I got to thinking about some of the things that I have really missed during this pandemic. One of those things I quickly realized was the ability to plan an event a short time down the road and then to have that to look forward to. What I mean by that is things like planning a trip out west for vacation the way we normally would and making the proper reservations ahead of time. Also, mapping out destinations and routes with sights to experience along the way. My son was planning his wedding that was to have taken place in China, where he has been teaching. Laura and I had begun planning a way to be there for it. But then travel restrictions and quarantines got in the way of our plans, and a new break out of Covid in China put an end to the initial wedding planning for my son, as well.

Last summer we were able to enjoy a trip to Southern Illinois for a week but were restricted from even crossing the borders into adjoining states due to the Covid restrictions. Therefore, though there some wonderful sights to see in Illinois, it felt as if there was much control taken from us in not being able to experience some sightseeing opportunities nearby, that is of course, unless we didn't mind quarantining for two weeks!

I am only a spontaneous person to a certain point. I like to plan ahead. I enjoy planning a vacation almost as much as actually going. Like most of you, I had made a lot of plans for this past year. I was excited about new opportunities on the other side of the world, a special vacation, and now those unfortunately will never happen. So that is both frustrating and sad. In addition, it is very difficult to make new plans due to the uncertainty of the months ahead. While things are looking better, we can only be cautiously optimistic.

However, this time is teaching me to savor the small things in each day — to live in the present instead of in my plans for the future. So often I am preoccupied with what is going to happen next week or even in the months to come. But the book of James reminds us that too often our planning is rooted in our own self-absorption and the illusion that we are in total control of our lives. Just a short time ago we were making all kinds of plans without as much as a thought of God. The words from James and these days of disruption remind us that we should instead enjoy the gift of this day, living in the present moment and seeking first the will of God for all our future plans.

So, how might you enjoy the gift of this day without focusing on your concern for the future? And, when this pandemic comes to an end, how can we seek God's will first for any of our future plans?

Prayer: Lord, help me to look forward to today. Even as we lament the difficulty of this present time of uncertainty, I ask that You might give us the grace to cherish this day. Help us to see how You are using this time to shape us not only for today, but also for the future. Lord, I pray that Your will be done, and I ask that all of our hopes be rooted in Your plan for our lives. In Jesus' name, Amen.