

**Thursday, May 14, 2020**  
**Devotional Thoughts from Pastor Jim Murr...**

**"I have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace.  
In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world."  
(John 16: 33)**

It feels like so many things have changed due to the coronavirus outbreak. I personally should not complain! For me, the biggest change has to do with taking extra precautions at the grocery store or the gas station. I have always washed my hands a lot, thanks to my mild case of OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder). The other change for me is in my own head. It has to do with a little bit of worry and a slightly elevated level of anxiety. And of course, church life has changed in a BIG way!

My heart goes out to all the people whose lives have been drastically changed due to this pandemic. So many have lost their jobs. Some businesses will not recover. People are experiencing grief over the loss of loved ones that they may not have even been able to say goodbye to. The work of health care professionals has become much more grueling and stressful. Police work has become more dangerous in a different way ... as if it wasn't dangerous enough already. So, a lot of things have changed because of this pandemic. But may I say – albeit in a spirit of gentleness and compassion for those whose lives have become so much more difficult and uncertain lately – that really nothing has changed in the grand scheme of things.

People have been going through financial difficulties for thousands of years. Disease has been ravaging people's lives "forever." "Tomorrow" has always been a "question mark" from our human perspective. Thousands (maybe it's more accurate to say "millions") of people die every day in the world even without the help of a pandemic. In other words, nothing is really different in terms of WHAT is happening. What may be different is that these things are happening on a larger scale right now, and at a more accelerated pace. But many, many people have been living with hardship for much, if not all, of their lives. It's just different when hardship comes knocking on so many doors at once.

Is this what Jesus meant when he said, "In the world you will have tribulation"? In other words, when trouble comes into my life, why am I so surprised. Is that what Jesus means? Have I personally been so blessed for so long that I now become irritated and feel put upon when I need to wear a face covering just to go to the grocery store, or that I need to wash my hands 40 times a day instead of 20 times a day? And all I need to do to wash my hands is turn on the faucet. I don't need to walk a half a mile to the nearest stream.

Shouldn't I (I am talking about Jim Murr right now) be thankful that I can WALK into the grocery store and not need to be rolled in in a wheelchair? Shouldn't I be thankful that I have one or two credit cards plus a debit card to choose from when I go to pay for my groceries? (I guess I'm just venting right now about how spoiled I've become.)

But Jesus doesn't tell me that life in this world will be difficult just to give me fair warning. He tells me so that he can follow up that statement with his next statement: "But take heart; I have overcome the world." "Take heart!" In other words, "Don't give up!" The world may not be something I can rely on for all of my joy, but that's okay, because the world is subject to Jesus' authority and power. Hardship and difficulty are not in charge. Jesus is.

Sooner or later, everything and everyone answers to Jesus ... even a microscopic virus. Maybe that's what Jesus means when he says, "I have overcome the world."

God's peace!  
Pastor Jim