



FIRST RATHFRILAND PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

"A light on the hill."

Senior Citizens' Fellowship

There is a word that has been doing the rounds over the past 2 months and only twice have I ever heard it used before, the first time was a number of years ago when barley was very scarce and prices rose to over £200 per ton nearly twice what it was normally; the other was much more serious in 2001 during the foot and mouth epidemic when over 6 million farm animals of cattle sheep and pigs were slaughtered and burned in huge pyres in an attempt to contain the disease costing the exchequer over £4 billion in compensation. But this time when it was used was much more serious as it concerned human beings and the word is **unprecedented** which in simple terms means [we have never seen the like of this before].

It speaks of the coronavirus which has spread so quickly across the world with massive loss of life. It reputedly started in Wuhan in China a city of some 9 million people when apparently a Chinese man ate a bat which he mistakenly thought would make him more potent not knowing that it was infected. These Chinese's have some strange diets, dogs' cats' rats and snakes are sold alive in "wet" markets for human consumption.

With the world being such a small place as a result of travel when people because of their work or holidaying, the globe is trans versed daily with huge numbers of people, so it is little wonder that the virus spread to so many countries so quickly.

I can well remember our Minister of Health saying it was not will the virus reach N Ireland but when. He also said that the death toll could reach 9000 if certain precautions were not put in place it could be much higher, something which greatly alarmed me; his first prediction came to pass very quickly but so far thankfully his second did not. If a person has the virus and they come in contact with other people, the number of people they could spread the virus to in a week is enormous. This is how they do this contact tracing.

My wife was coming home from Dublin on the train after visiting our daughter down there and the woman who first brought the virus to the Province was travelled home from Dublin

on the train on the same day after a holiday in one of the hot spots of the disease in Europe. It would be difficult to count the number of people she could have contacted and transmitted the virus to. So, if my wife had been in close contact with her on the train she could quite easily have caught the virus and spread it to our family, who do very little foreign travel.

This reminds me of sin which started in the Garden of Eden with a couple of people and quickly spread worldwide resulting in God destroying all the people in the world except for Noah his wife his 3 sons and their wives the only righteousness ones left on it at that time. It didn't take a great promotional pitch to get sin across the world just as it didn't take the corona virus long to spread across the world. Who would have thought that this country would have been literally shut down so quickly businesses sports holidays and churches? Just think of all the footballs in the stores in the different football clubs in Europe getting such a rest, is unimaginable, but one football which is not getting a rest is the political football as some politicians engage in bitter finger pointing the blame on other parties in unimaginable anger.

But for me the worst were the politicians who spoke publically, telling people to stay at home and then blatantly did the opposite themselves as one leading politician in Scotland and one in N Ireland did. Jesus in Matthew 23 has a name for such people and I think you know what it is, in the first 30 verses of this chapter he denounces them in no uncertain manner and launches a most scathing attack on them like on no other.

I usually listen to the daily update on the corona virus from our politicians and recently one said that the pandemic was costing the Government £8 billion each week, now a recent figure says it has risen to £2.4 billion per day. This is an astronomical amount of money which will undoubtedly have to be recouped in extra taxes in the future. We will all have to pay eventually.

The same can be said of sin in our lives it will have to be paid for one day and if it is not dealt with now it will end with devastating results. The Bible says we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ to give an account of the things done in the body according to what we have done whether they be good or evil, The Bible is here speaking of Christians who will be judged not for their sins but for their service, but a much more severe judgement awaits those who reject Gods offer of salvation as mentioned in Revelation 20 v 11 when they appear before The Great White Throne judgement.

Sin is not a pandemic [which is a new disease and something for which there is no known cure] but thankfully there is a cure for sin, the blood of Jesus Christ which the Bible says will cleanse us from all sin and guarantee us a place in Heaven. 2 Chronicles 7 v 14 is a well-known verse but if you read the two preceding verses which I think have a relevance for us today where God is giving us a broader picture of what He wants us to do in verse 14 it says in verse 12 and the Lord appeared to Solomon by night and said unto him I have heard thy prayer and verse 13 if I shut up Heaven that there be no rain as what Australia experienced recently when they were crying out for rain with the great fires raging across it or if I command the locusts to devour the land as we saw the swarms of locusts in Africa on the T.V. recently or if I send pestilence among my people which I believe what this pandemic is and then verse 14 if my people who are called by my name shall humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways then will I hear from Heaven and will

forgive their sin and will heal their land. So that is my prayer for you for myself and anyone else listening today and may God grant it for His name sake. Amen.

Article by Jim McConnell