

*"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind."*  
-Romans 12:2a

*"Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."*  
-Ephesians 4:8

Hello, church family. In the current state of our world, it is easy to become overwhelmed with thoughts of panic and disorder. Schools are closed, more businesses are closing by the day, and government recommended quarantines have people afraid to leave their homes for fear they may become infected by an enemy we cannot see. The coronavirus (COVID-19) may be new to most of us, but fear is not. Fear is a familiar enemy we know all too well and every generation seems to have at least one occasion that grips the world and forces it to its knees.

In 1948, British writer and theologian, C.S. Lewis, addressed a very real fear that many people had around the world: the possibility of nuclear war. People were scared to death that one day, an airplane would fly over their home, drop a bomb, and end the world as they knew it. C.S. Lewis had not resigned to feeling that way. He knew life was finite and had to end one way or another, so why worry about what he could not control? Here is a quote from his article *"On Living in an Atomic Age"* where he detailed his reasoning for not living in fear of nuclear war:

In one way we think a great deal too much of the atomic bomb. "How are we to live in an atomic age?" I am tempted to reply: "Why, as you would have lived in the sixteenth century when the plague visited London almost every year, or as you would have lived in a Viking age when raiders from Scandinavia might land and cut your throat any night; or indeed, as you are already living in an age of cancer, an age of syphilis, an age of paralysis, an age of air raids, an age of railway accidents, an age of motor accidents."

In other words, do not let us begin by exaggerating the novelty of our situation. Believe me, dear sir or madam, you and all whom you love were already sentenced to death before the atomic bomb was invented: and quite a high percentage of us were going to die in unpleasant ways. We had, indeed, one very great advantage over our ancestors—anesthetics; but we have that still. It is perfectly ridiculous to go about whimpering and drawing long faces because the scientists have added one more chance of painful and premature death to a world which already bristled with such chances and in which death itself was not a chance at all, but a certainty.

This is the first point to be made: and the first action to be taken is to pull ourselves together. If we are all going to be destroyed by an atomic bomb, let that bomb when it comes find us doing sensible and human things—praying, working, teaching, reading, listening to music, bathing the children, playing tennis, chatting to our friends over a pint and a game of darts—not huddled

together like frightened sheep and thinking about bombs. They may break our bodies, but they need not dominate our minds.

In the same way Lewis described not "whimpering" because there was one more possible way to die, let us not whimper or cower as we face our new enemy, COVID-19. This enemy may have changed the way we live and interact temporarily, but we do not have to be "huddled together like frightened sheep" waiting for the worst to happen. We can continue our lives as best we can by taking Lewis' advice and doing "sensible and human things." The moment we cease doing these things is the moment we have lost and our fear has won. Do not allow your fear to win. As Lewis alluded to in his passage, we may lose the fight when it comes to our bodies, but we can win when it comes to our minds.

Seth Gandee