



HEALTH DAY

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Sunday, June 27, 2010

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Lection - 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

(v. 19) Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God, and that you are not your own? (v. 20) For you were bought with a price; therefore glorify God in your body.

I. Etymology Notes

Health from the Old English *hælp*, meaning “wholeness, a being whole, sound or well,” from PIE *jauki-* “whole, uninjured, of good omen” related source Old English *hal*, “hale, whole” or Old English *halig* or *helge* meaning holy, sacred. Old English *hælan* “to heal,” “to make whole, sound and well.” Healthy first appeared in 1552. Health is also related to “holy” from the old

English, “halig,” from the Latin “sanctus.” The pre-Christian meaning is thought to have been “that must be preserved whole or intact, that cannot be transgressed or violated.”

Related to the Jewish word of greeting “shalom” meaning completeness, soundness, welfare, from the stem of “shalam,” “was intact, was complete, was in good health.” Circa 1200, we find the term “mend” meaning “to free from sin or fault, improve morally,” from the Old French “amender” meaning to fix something torn or broken, which is from the mid 14th century; “to regain health” dates from circa 1500.¹

Howdy—1840, Southern United States dialect, meaning “how do you do,” inquiring about someone’s health.

One often finds in greeting one another that friends inquire about the status of the health: “Hello, how are you doing?” Or, “How are you getting along?” No matter what the appearance, how we greet each other expresses a concern and at the same time an acknowledgement of unknowingness [*sic*] about the condition of the person being greeted.

II. Comments on Today’s Scripture

Our scripture reminds us that our body, our physical being, is not all there is to us—for we are not just flesh, but we are also spirit and we are of God. If the temporary body is inhabited by God then, as we care for our body, we are caring for a sacred temple. The body then becomes not so much something to worship, but an aspect of our being that should express through our actions that we know our bodies as sacred space. To this extent, we are called to keep a higher awareness that we are more than our physical selves.

The etymology dictionary notes, through the various linguistic roots of the term “health,” there is an indication of wholeness, sanctity. In traditional Black prayers, one often hears the prayer offering “thanks for health and strength;” it is a statement of gratitude for being able to witness another day. And many a Sunday in Southwest Georgia, our church rocked with the congregational gospel song that rang out joy for the gift of health and strength...

It’s Another Day’s Journey

It’s another day’s journey and I’m glad

Response: I’m glad about it

I’m glad ... Oh I’m glad

Response: I’m glad about it I’m glad about it

It’s another day’s journey and I’m glad

Response: I’m glad about it,

All: I’m so glad to be here

Other lines:

I got my health and strength and I’m glad...

I beat ol’ Satan running and I’m glad...

This congregational song links the healthy body with the success of outrunning that which is evil and not worthy of the body “temple.” It clearly indicates that there is a need to be conscious about that which is not good in the world and to be conscious of our need to keep oneself in the right path and on the right journey.

III. Charles Albert Tindley’s Songs that Speak to the Moment

Methodist Minister and turn of the twentieth century gospel hymnodist, Reverend Charles Albert Tindley, through his hymns often kept the issue of the state of the physical body before his congregation. Most of his members were recent migrants to Philadelphia and were engaged in an intense daily struggle to hack out a new life for themselves and their families in a hostile urban environment that often seemed to have no space for the future they sought. Reverend Tindley reminded those of us blessed to have his hymns as spiritual and cultural nourishment of the passing nature of the physical. His lyrics place our focus on that force within that was always with us and would never fail.²

Tindley’s most famous gospel hymn, “Stand by Me,” is composed as a prayer call. The first lines identifying the challenges we face, with each line ending with the plea, “Stand By Me.” The last line of each stanza identifies the deity without actually using the term “God.” This is a teaching hymn, poetically using the day-to-day language of members in his pews to speak of the presence of “God” in their lives at every turn. Each verse concludes with a text that never ends leaving no question as to whom we can turn with any situation or condition.

Stand By Me

When the storms of live are raging, stand by me (2x)
When the world is tossing me like a ship upon the sea
Thou who rulest wind and water, stand by me

...In the midst of persecution, stand by me (2x)
When my foes in battle array, undertake to stop my way
Thou who saved Paul and Silas, Stand my me

Then, in the last verse, Rev. Tindley directly addresses the health trajectory of our physical body, the temple that is the concern of this lesson.

When I’m growing old and feeble, stand by me (2x)
When my life becomes a burden, and I’m nearing chilly Jordan,
O Thou Lily of the Valley, stand by me.³

In another hymn, “Leave it There,” Reverend Tindley teaches that we are not alone; that we need not carry the weight of the world on our backs or be brought to an unhealthy state of unrest. There is a place, there is a source to which we can go and leave our burdens and maintain our peace and sanity that we need to keep moving forward.

Leave It There

Refrain:

Leave it there, leave it there
Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there
If you trust and never doubt, he will surely bring you out
Take your burden to the Lord, and leave it there.

There are two verses that deal with the fragility of the physical body—illness and aging and for Tindley, they are not the same thing. In the second verse he counsels...

When your body suffers pain, and your health you can't regain
And your soul is almost sinking in despair
Jesus knows the pain you feel, he can save and he can heal
Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there...

When your youthful days are gone, and old age is stealing on
And your body bends beneath the weight of care
He will never leave you then he'll go with you to the end
Take your burden to the Lord and leave it there.⁴

IV. Regularly Attending Church Improves Your Health

How many of us know that whenever the doors of the church open, certain members can be found in their regular seats in their pews? These Christians have found their church worship practices essential to their survival and to the way they feel physically and spiritually. They go to the doctor and equally go down in prayer when they are emotionally or physically burdened. There are many stories of the relationship between a strong prayer life and positive changes in health. A friend told me the story of his grandmother who had been diagnosed with terminal cancer. She came home and turned to prayer. Daily she asked God to tell her what to give her body for sustenance and daily she ate what came to her as she got up from prayer. The tumor got smaller, finally disappeared and she lived another twenty years.

In their 2003 article, "African American Church Participation and Health Care Practices," authors Kaytura Felix Aaron, David Levine, and Helen R. Burstin, all MDs⁵ report on a series of studies conducted to establish the relationship between African Americans' church attendance and improvement in health care. In one case, using a cross-sectional analysis from 2196 residents in a low-income African American neighborhood, they found that 37% of community members attending church at least monthly were more likely to take advantage of health care practices available to them. This ranged from blood pressure tests, to pap smears, dental visits, to participating in a regular source of care. Community and faith-based organizations present additional opportunities to improve the health of low-income and minority populations. The doctors also found that public health practitioners used the church to provide information and increased access to African Americans for health improvement efforts.

Religious involvement, in addition to providing greater access to health intervention, exerts positive and diverse health benefits for African Americans. They also studied the corollary between organizational involvement in the life of congregations including church attendance, and prayer meetings and subjective religious involvement where participants described

themselves as religious. They found that religious participation reduces mortality risks and improves health status and the quality of life for African Americans.

V. New Challenges to The Physical Body/Temple

(a) There continues to be a world epidemic spread of AIDS through the transfer of the HIV virus through the exchange of bodily fluids. And although there has been progress, there is no cure; and there is a struggle to provide drugs to those suffering in poorer nations. While the death count goes down for those who have access to treatment and medicines, the death count continues to rise in poorer countries among them, many African nations.

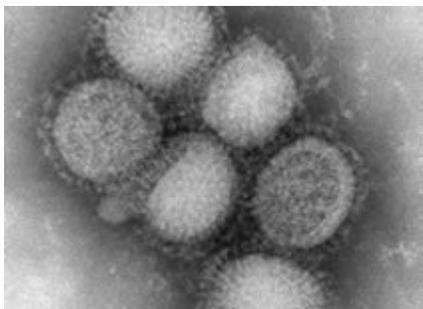
As humans we are sexual beings. HIV/AIDS has become a marker, suggesting that we have to individually be more conscious and intentional in our sexual practices. We actually have to change the way we mate. There needs to be talk about this joining that can be transcendent and dangerous. We must not simply issue platitudes but take the time to teach ourselves and our partners about how to really show love and respect for this amazing body temple with which we are blessed. In his study, "The Black Church in the Post Civil Rights Era," Anthony B. Pinn⁶ (scholar and Lectionary team member), devotes a chapter to the variety of responses by black churches to AIDS and drug use. Responses range from direct intervention, education, to direct community activism. Pinn is also critical of the way many black churches continue to preach against gays and lesbians and, at the same time, benefit from their active presence and participation on many levels.

(b) In 2009, H1N1,⁷ also known as the swine flu, began sweeping and continues to sweep the planet. Vaccine production and distribution did not meet projected delivery targets. Those in leadership, unfolding the response to this danger, are making up the rules as they go, trying to give structure and some assurance without being able to predict the progression of the disease or the vaccine supply.

In the world in which we live there are always dangers: many of us lived through the fear of a plague in 1976 and problems that occurred from a rapidly produced vaccine that caused the death of some who received it. It, too, was called the swine flu. Many believed that the Ford administration acted hastily, while others argue that the administration's action staved off a wider spread of the disease. Today we face a new flu which is also called the swine flu or HINI flu.

What is 2009 H1N1 (swine flu)?⁸

H1N1 (sometimes called "swine flu") is a new influenza virus that can make persons ill and even kill them. This new virus was first detected in people in the United States in April 2009. This virus is spreading from person-to-person worldwide, probably in much the same way that regular seasonal influenza viruses spread. On June 11, 2009, the World Health Organization (WHO) signaled that a pandemic of 2009 H1N1 flu was underway.



Why is 2009 H1N1 virus sometimes called "swine flu"?

This virus was originally referred to as "swine flu" because laboratory testing showed that many of the genes in this new

virus were very similar to influenza viruses that normally occur in pigs (swine) in North America. But further study has shown that this new virus is very different from what normally circulates in North American pigs. It has two genes from flu viruses that normally circulate in pigs in Europe and Asia and bird (avian) genes and human genes. Scientists call this a "quadruple reassortant" virus.

How does the 2009 H1N1 Virus Spread?

The 2009 H1N1 virus is contagious and is spreading from human to human. Spread of the 2009 H1N1 virus is thought to occur in the same way that the seasonal flu spreads. Flu viruses are spread mainly from person to person through coughing or sneezing by people with influenza. Sometimes people may become infected by touching something – such as a surface or object – with flu viruses on it and then touching their mouth or nose.

Don't Get, Don't Spread Video (Click the colored wording to see the video.)



Dr. Joe Bresee describes how to keep from getting the flu, and spreading it to others.

What are the signs and symptoms of this virus in people?

The symptoms of the 2009 H1N1 flu virus in people include fever, cough, sore throat, runny or stuffy nose, body aches, headache, chills and fatigue. Some people may also vomit and get diarrhea. People may be infected with the H1N1 flu virus and have respiratory symptoms without a fever.



Illnesses caused by the 2009 H1N1 virus have ranged from mild to severe. While most people who have caught the virus have recovered without needing medical treatment or hospitalizations, the CDC verified that as of January 2010, at least three hundred people have died in the United States from the virus. CDC laboratory studies have shown that no children and very few adults younger than 60 years old have existing antibodies to the 2009 H1N1 flu virus; however, about one-third of adults older than 60 may have antibodies against this virus.

How long can an infected person spread this virus to others?

People infected with seasonal and the 2009 H1N1 flu virus” may be able to infect others from one day before getting sick to five to seven days after. This can be longer in some people, especially children and people with weakened immune systems.

Influenza Round Table Video (Click the colored wording to see the video.)



Dr. Joe Bresee describes how to keep from getting the flu and spreading it to others by taking these three steps. As another flu season approaches, this is information that's needed.

Take these everyday steps to protect your health during Flu Season:

- Cover your nose and mouth with a tissue when you cough or sneeze. Throw the tissue in the trash after you use it once.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose or mouth. Germs spread this way.
- Try to avoid close contact with sick people.
- If you are sick with flu-like illness, the CDC recommends that you stay home for at least 24 hours after your fever is gone except to get medical care or for other necessities. (Your fever should have become non-existent without the use of a fever-reducing medicine.)
- Keep away from others as much as possible to keep from making others sick.
- Washing your hands often will help protect you from germs. The CDC recommends that when you wash your hands -- with soap and warm water -- that you wash for 15 to 20 seconds. When soap and water are not available, alcohol-based disposable hand wipes or gel sanitizers may be used. You can find them in most supermarkets and drugstores. If using gel, rub your hands until the gel is dry. The gel doesn't need water to work; the alcohol in it kills the germs on your hands.

VI. Transforming and Modernizing America's Health Care System

As I write this offering, the country is locked in several struggles around health. With the Obama presidency came a commitment for a new health policy that would “lower” the floor to increase the availability of services to those who become ill and are without health insurance or the range of coverage to address recommended medical procedures. As we look at the debate against this effort, we are faced with a sense that too many of our congressional representatives believe that health services to the full population is not a workable plan for the development of American society. Among the strongest supporters of efforts to pass health care legislation are African American church leaders and their members.⁹

One of the biggest drains on American pocketbooks is health care. Many families are one illness or accident away from financial ruin. Health insurance costs reduce workers' take-home pay to a degree that is both underappreciated and unnecessarily large. At the same time, health care costs are consuming a growing share of federal and state government budgets. The United States spends over \$2.2 trillion on health care each year—almost \$8,000 per person. That number represents approximately 16 percent of the total economy and is growing rapidly. If we do not act soon, by 2017 almost 20 percent of the economy—more than \$4 trillion—will be spent on health care.¹⁰

At the same time that we strive to contain costs, we cannot stand by as tens of millions of Americans lack health care coverage. An unhealthy workforce leads to an unhealthy economy, and moving to provide all Americans with health insurance is not only a moral imperative, but it is also essential to a more effective and efficient health care system.

The President began the process of reforming health care by:

- *Instituting temporary provisions to make health care coverage more affordable for Americans who have lost their jobs;*
- *Increasing health care coverage for children;*
- *Call for computerization of America's health records in five years;*
- *Developing and disseminating information on effective medical interventions; and*
- *Investing in prevention and wellness programs.*

Over a third of all illness is the result of poor diet, lack of exercise, and smoking. Indeed, obesity alone leads to many expensive, chronic conditions including high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, and even cancer. Furthermore, there are important vaccines that can prevent diseases, and screening tests that can detect cancer and other diseases at an early stage when they are more curable. Yet many Americans are not getting these effective treatments. President Obama has devoted, through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, an unprecedented \$1 billion for prevention and wellness interventions. This could dramatically expand community-based interventions proven to reduce chronic diseases.

Next Steps and the President's Health Principles

To build on the above steps, the budget sets aside a reserve fund of \$630 billion over ten years that will be dedicated towards financing reforms to our health care system. To achieve his health care goals, the President has indicated that he will abide by the following principles:

- *Guarantee Choice.* The Health Care plan should provide Americans a choice of health plans and physicians. People will be allowed to keep their own doctor and their employer-based health plan.
- *Make Health Coverage Affordable.* The plan must reduce waste and fraud, high administrative costs, unnecessary tests and services, and other inefficiencies that drive up costs with no added health benefits.
- *Protect Families' Financial Health.* The plan must reduce the growing premiums and other costs American citizens and businesses pay for health care. People must be protected from bankruptcy due to catastrophic illness.
- *Invest in Prevention and Wellness.* The plan must invest in public health measures proven to reduce cost drivers in our system—such as obesity, sedentary lifestyles, and smoking—as well as guarantee access to proven preventive treatments.
- *Provide Portability of Coverage.* People should not be locked into their job just to secure health coverage, and no American should be denied coverage because of preexisting conditions.
- *Aim for Universality.* The plan must put the United States on a clear path to cover all Americans.

- *Improve Patient Safety and Quality Care.* The plan must ensure the implementation of proven patient safety measures and provide incentives for changes in the delivery system to reduce unnecessary variability in patient care. It must support the widespread use of health information technology with rigorous privacy protections and the development of data on the effectiveness of medical interventions to improve the quality of care delivered.
- *Maintain Long-Term Fiscal Sustainability.* The plan must pay for itself by reducing the level of cost growth, improving productivity, and dedicating additional sources of revenue.
- *Reduce Drug Prices.* The Administration will seek to prevent drug companies from blocking generic drugs from consumers by prohibiting anticompetitive agreements and collusion between brand names.¹¹

No one knows how the battle to revamp health care will play out over the next decade, which is about how long it will take to assess whether or not budget decisions made or not made and policy changes made or not made NOW, have helped or worsened health care in America. What we do know is that if we do nothing or do too little millions of Americans will suffer and many will die because of the broken American health care system.

Notes

1. "Health." Online Etymology Dictionary. Online location: www.etymonline.com accessed 15 January 2010
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3. Tindley, Charles Albert. "Stand By Me." Songs of Zion. Supplemental Worship Resources, 12. Ed. Cleveland, J. Jefferson, and Verolga Nix. Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1981. p. 41.
4. Tindley, Charles Albert. "Leave It There." African American Heritage Hymnal. Chicago, IL: GIA Publications, Inc., 2001. p. 420.
5. Aaron, Kaytura Felix, David Levine, and Helen R. Burstin. "African American Church Participation and Health Care Practices." Journal of General Internal Medicine. 18.11 (Nov. 2003): 908–913. Online location: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC1494942/> accessed 15 January 2010
6. Pinn, Anthony. The Black Church in the Post Civil Rights Era. Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2002.
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8. Ibid.
9. United States. "The President's Proposal for Healthcare Reform." The White House. Online location: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/Issues/health-Care> accessed 15 January 2010
10. United States. "New Era of Responsibility: The 2010 Budget." Office of Management and Budget: The White House. Online location: www.omb.gov accessed 15 January 2010
11. Ibid.