

2-1-21 FUMC Weekly Devotional ... 2020 Words of the Year (Part 2)

What would YOU choose as your word to describe 2020? Last week, January 26th, my devotional was on the Oxford Dictionary's WORD OF THE YEAR for 2020 and how, because 2020 was such a CRAZY year, they picked more than one word! Obviously, the words: coronavirus, Covid-19, and social distancing made the list, but so did Black Lives Matter, cancel culture, wokeness, impeachment, remote working & learning, Zoom, staycation, among others.

Last week, I looked at 2 words that were NOT familiar to me, "hygiene theater" and "doomscrolling" ... another work I had not heard was "Blursday", a day of the week that is indistinguishable from any other when one must remain at home all week. This week, I want to look at words that we all KNOW but words that, until last year, have been used in NEW ways.

For example, in 2020 EPIDEMIC morphed into a new word: *Infodemic* which is defined as *a proliferation of diverse, often unsubstantiated information relating to a crisis, controversy, or event, which disseminates rapidly and uncontrollably through news, online, and social media, and is regarded as intensifying public speculation or anxiety.*

Wait a minute, this sounds like FAKE NEWS which I heard used a LOT last year by EVERY news sources, but INFODEMIC is the word that made the list. Of course, we're all PAINFULLY aware that the 24-hour news cycle and social media has changed the way we get news these days, (or maybe I should say how we get OPINIONS) but even Jesus had to stop an infodemic when he heard some people were drawing conclusions based on misinformation --

In Luke 13:1-5 we read ... *At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices. He asked them, "Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did. Or those eighteen who were killed when the tower of Siloam fell on them -- do you think that they were worse offenders than all the others living in Jerusalem? No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish just as they did."*

Although we don't know the circumstances of these random tragic events, the audience apparently **believed** that these 2 bad things happened to Galileans because Galileans were BAD people! Jesus wants to **stop** the infodemic and rumors by suggesting that NO, the victims were not wrong, their **beliefs** were WRONG!

Jesus DOES imply several things in His very FEW words ...

- we must not equate tragedy with divine punishment, bad things DO happen to good people because life is fragile,
- we should not mistake our good fortune as evidence of God's special blessing and
- EVERYONE who sins, race, gender, and religion, WILL experience consequences regardless of WHO they are.

We don't know if Jesus coined any new words during His time on earth, but He DID give **new** definitions to established words and phrases! When the Wired Word wrote an article about how Jesus' wonderful Sermon on the Mount in Matthew chapters 5-7, redefined what it means to "love your neighbor" people's heads spun around when He explained that ALSO meant ... "love your enemy"!

When Jesus says: "You have heard ... But I say to you" We better pay attention because it's a signal that He's giving us a new understanding and a new challenge. Here are a FEW of Jesus' redefinitions:

- "You shall not murder" now includes "don't be angry with your brother or sister."

- "You shall not commit adultery" now also means "you shall not lust."
- "You shall not swear falsely, but carry out the vows you have made to the Lord" now also meaning "Do not swear at all ... Let your word be 'Yes, Yes' or 'No, No!'; anything more than this comes from the evil one."
- "An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" now also means "But if anyone strikes you on the right cheek, turn the other also."

I don't think Jesus' primary intent with these redefinitions was to make living *righteously* more difficult – I believe that by broadening applications of the Ten Commandments He helps us follow Him more closely in our daily lives!

So – here we are in a NEW YEAR and while we look back at the challenges of 2020 that led to unprecedented MULTIPLE words for a very unprecedented year, today is a NEW day and this is a NEW year ... what do you hope will be the word (or words) of the year for 2021? How is that word (or are those words) related to the GOD'S view of the future? Maybe it's time to start visioning for something NEW?