

Ten Things to Tell Our Congregation about the Present Financial Crisis

It might make more sense to say, "Be mindful" of this and "Be mindful" of that. Yet, sometimes, being MINDful is precisely the problem. We lose sleep because our minds are full. We've already got too much stuff in our heads.

What we need is some stuff in our souls! Here are some attitudes we can all embrace as are "soulful," not "mindful," of that which we may have forgotten.

1. BE SOULFUL ... of the Reality: it IS tough out there, and there's no point in denying this. People are suffering, people are losing chunks of the retirement packages, they're losing their homes.
2. BE SOULFUL ... of Others: None of us are alone in this crisis. It would be a huge benefit to find someone in crisis and do something for them, even though you yourself are in pain. Sometimes when we focus on the pain of others, our own pain lessens.
3. BE SOULFUL ... of your Joy: How does adversity affect our joy and peace? If the deep, unfathomable pools of peace are rendered shallow, if the wide ocean of joy is dried up because of adversity, there's something essentially amiss in our spiritual lives. Are you capable of having peace and joy while in the center of the storm?
4. BE SOULFUL ... of other Crises: Think of friends and neighbors who may be experiencing a different kind of crises, or going through something similar to your own, but even more intense. My wife and I have a friend whose dearly loved husband is dying of cancer-at far too young an age.
5. BE SOULFUL ... of your Blessings: Are your basic needs being met? Food, shelter, love, friendship. If you have those things, and have nothing else, can you not be at peace and experience happiness?
6. BE SOULFUL ... of the Kingdom: How might this crisis help push your vision of what God's will is for you? Think of examples of people who, when they had reached rock bottom, saw and found a way out-a different way, one that they would have never otherwise imagined.
7. BE SOULFUL ... of Opportunities: Adversity has a way of revealing other paths, other doors, other possibilities to the person who has the vision to see them. They're Phoenix Opportunities-like the flower that springs to life when the forest fire bursts the husk of the seed. What shells is this fire about to crack open? What might be the result?
8. BE SOULFUL ... of the Benefits: Adversity, as distasteful as it is, has distinct benefits. See James 1 and other texts. Fire purifies and strengthens. Relationships can grow stronger when crises are fought together.
9. BE SOULFUL ... of Community: In times of crisis, community, friendships and relationships are huge. Nurture these.
10. BE SOULFUL ... of what Jesus said: See Matthew 6. Our Lord and Savior said, "Lay not up for yourself treasures on earth, where moth and rust." and so on. He talked about God the Father knowing when a sparrow drops (see link below for a YouTube clip of Ethel Waters singing "His Eye is On the Sparrow?"). Jesus advised us to seek first the kingdom, and not to spend too much time fussing about tomorrow. Leave your congregation with the words of Jesus filling their souls.

Remember that we're invited not to pray for grace and strength we need tomorrow, but for the grace we need for today. Tomorrow's manna will come in the morning.