



Pastor's Page

"Spread the Word"

I woke up on Wednesday morning with a soar throat, blocked nose, nasty headache and aching limbs! (It's my age!) I mused on the fact that I very seldom get colds so this was unusual. I staggered out of bed and found my way to the bathroom (with the help of my Sat Nav) to consider some appropriate medication. As I was exploring the content of my bathroom cabinet I received a text message from a friend in Devon informing me that her school was being closed for the next 8 days due to the fact that one of the pupils there had Swine flu! Now this lady with her husband and daughter had called in to see me the previous Sunday spending about an hour at my home drinking tea and eating my biscuits! I'd probably even let them breathe on me! This was shattering news, and coupled with my unmistakable symptoms it confirmed my worse fears; "I'd got Swine Flu!!"

Now just in case you're of a nervous disposition can I assure you that I haven't got swine flu nor have I ever had it (so you can put your facemask away!) But there were moments last Wednesday when I thought I had. This is not surprising considering the massive news coverage that the story has been given this week and the sensationalist nature of some of the reporting. Talk of a pandemic affecting 40-50% of the world's population is bound to cause anxiety. But just to keep things in perspective; seasonal flu each year kills 250,000 - 500,000 around the world and at the moment Swine flu has killed 13 people! Whilst I don't want to play down the enormity of the tragedy for those who have lost loved ones in Mexico and the USA I believe that there has been an overreaction to the issue. The anxiety levels can be seen in the pictures of people at Airports and elsewhere wearing face masks which have been declared to be pretty much ineffective against flu viruses! Such is the level of concern. And as I considered all this (over a hot Lemsip) I came to the conclusion that there is a pandemic spreading across the world and it's a pandemic of fear! People are generally anxious and the Swine flu threat is just the latest focus for this anxiety. National statistics show that in the year 2000 more than 11 million adults in the UK were suffering with an anxiety disorder and it may well be higher now. But why are so many people anxious?

When I was in Sunday school we used to sing a song that went;

"Said the robin to the sparrow; I should really like to know
Why these anxious human beings, rush around and worry so
Said the sparrow to the robin; Friend I think that it must be,
That they have no heavenly Father, such as cares for you and me"

Jesus urged us not to worry about life because our heavenly Father cares for us. And that's why the Apostle Peter could write; Cast all your anxieties on him because he cares for you." (1 Peter 5:7) Whilst we need to be wise and thoughtful God doesn't want our lives to be blighted by anxiety. As Corrie Ten Boon said "Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrows, it empties today of its strength"

So let's pray for those weighed down with worry that they may know that there is a heavenly Father who cares for them. And let's spread the word too.

3rd May 2009