



24 June 2020

Midweek Encouragement

Senior Minister Tharman Shanmugaratnam in his speech on Wednesday (Jun 17), said: *“While the COVID-19 pandemic has hit economies hard around the world, it also has the makings of a profound social crisis.”*

He also said, *“Singapore cannot defy the global economic downturn. But we must absolutely defy the loss of social cohesion, the polarisation and the despair that is taking hold in many other countries. Never think these trends cannot take hold in Singapore.”*

I think what he said really captures the essence of our time. And it is in this climate that the church must shine even brighter amid great darkness. From the early church to our present moment, God has brought revival through faithful and effective Christian responses to economic and social disruptions.

One of the things we can do as Christians in this time of economic and social distress is to help people find their true identity in in Christ.

Jobs are central to most people’s deepest sense of who they are. Job loss, or even a serious brush with possible job loss, almost always creates an identity crisis. Now, people are indeed made for work; Genesis 1–2 is clear that our vocation to make the world a better place through work is at the core of who God created all of us to be. But because of the fall, we are constantly building identities in ourselves rather than in God. We invest our identities in our occupations (our jobs) rather than our vocations (our calling to follow God in all we do). When occupations are uncertain, Christians can help people discover vocations through an identity in Christ. It is an identity that isn’t dependent upon the coming and going of any given job.

The second thing we can do is to help people find healing, especially amid social disruptions.

In the modern world, public institutions are becoming more and more specialized. Each type of organization—business, school, government, etc.—exists primarily to serve its particular function. If your problems are not directly related to their functions, they can't really help you completely.

So where will people turn to find a place where the whole human being is cared for? In God's plan, that's primarily the home and the church. As public institutions become ever more specialized, both the home and the church will need to step up even more as centres of caregiving. Broken people need to rely on their families and churches as places of care and healing.

This is a season where we must focus on building up the spiritual depth of our families, our Disciple Groups, and our Church community, to be sanctuaries for care and healing. Let us step up to bring the love and healing that Christ gives to those who need it the most in this time. Let us not succumb to indifference, to complacency, and to the darkness around us (feelings of despair and hopelessness), but to shine our light because the light of Christ has been given to each of us. We hold this treasure and we must steward it well, for the sake of others and for the glory of God.

For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of God's glory displayed in the face of Christ. (2 Corinthians 4:6)

Rev Timothy Yong