

# The Calm Before the Storm

## Big Thoughts in a COVID-19 World

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This column is generally written one week (or at least a few days) before you see it in print, which means that I am writing it before, and you will read it after, the 2020 election. This means that you, the reader, may know something that I do not. (OK, I could say that about a lot of things). What a strange thing it is to write to an unknown future.

Strange because you may know the winners of this year's elections, or you may not. The weeks and months leading up to this year's election have been contentious, with COVID precautions driving many to vote early or by mail. Simple enough one might think, but called to question by some even before they are cast. To say it has been a year like no other is putting it mildly. And yet, these days could be the calm before the storm – another strange thought, because the last several months hardly seem calm at all.

As I write, national news headlines include reports of huge COVID-19 outbreaks across the country and the world, hospitals filling to capacity and beyond; tropical storms still raging; and new wildfires breaking out across the western states. There are even creatures called “Murder Hornets” invading our space – named for their threat to honeybees, and not in Illinois, but their presence adding to the overall temperature of the news.

The political haranguing continues as campaigns go into overdrive, another Supreme Court Justice rushed into place, unrest fomented by those who should be leading us through these troubled times. Hard to believe things could get worse, but with projections of mail-in ballots being rejected for a variety of reasons, huge numbers of votes that won't be counted before we go to bed on election night, we may be entering times more troubled than before.

It's all unknown. So much unknown. We don't like the unknown. We don't know how to prepare for the unknown. And yet, we do know one thing: God loves us. According to the Inclusive Bible, 1 John 3:1 tells us “See what love Abba God has lavished on us, in letting us be called God's children!” Yet even in that love, there remains an unknown, as read in verse 2, “My dear friends, now we are God's children, but it has not been revealed what we are to become in the future.”

The writer, who was writing to a church facing uncertain times, encouraged his audience, saying that even though things looked rough, and the future uncertain, God's love assures us that things will work out in the end. The real question, however, is why wait for the end? Why not live in the harmony of God's love now? What a beautiful thought!

Unfortunately, that doesn't seem to be the popular option these days, no, we'd rather choose sides and foment division. Politics as divisive as ever, or perhaps as never before. Americans, without a common cause to unite behind, instead divided. Christianity itself divided into factions and denominations, denominations facing further divisions. Funny that 1<sup>st</sup> John was written to a church facing division over beliefs.

As we find ourselves in a time that could be the calm before the storm, I pray that we instead find ourselves in position to simply be calm. To heal. To pull together as a nation and move forward in a way that truly seeks justice for all – God's justice, ensuring all God's Children have what they need.

First John reminds us that we are God's children, not because of anything we've done or have not done, but because God loved us first. Families do not always get along, but healthy families do their best to ensure the common good of the family – lets work to be healthy once again. In the meantime, I offer these words from Psalm 65:7. “*You [God] quieted the raging oceans with their pounding waves and silenced the shouting of the nations.*” Rather than trying to find calm before a storm, perhaps we should seek the peace of God. We can do better America. Stay well, think big.

Amen.

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