

Today I have a trivia question. If you think you know the answer just jump in. Here it is.

To what tragic event in history can we attribute all of the following positive changes:

The end of feudalism and birth of the middle class

More functional houses

The growth of the perfume industry

The concept of hospitals as places to get well

The answer is: The Black Plague. Before and during the time of the plague hospitals were run by charities and provided no treatment. They were a place the sick were quarantined only. After the Black Plague, the practice of medicine was re-examined and the role of hospitals transformed.

The perfume industry came about because people thought poisonous vapors caused the plague. So perfumes got rid of the poisonous vapors. More functional houses originated for two reasons – the first, unfortunately, was because too many artisans had died and folks couldn't find the help they needed to do the ornate and fancy things they'd been used to. The other was to allow private spaces in the home where people could isolate themselves.

¹Feudalism, of course, was a class system where most of the people, serfs, were owned by their feudal lords and worked the land for them. So many peasants died during the plague that the land lay fallow and the lords couldn't earn money from it. The remaining peasants saw their opportunity and began to successfully press the lord to pay them wages. Even though legislators tried to return to the status quo some years later, they were unsuccessful. The middle class – farmers, tradespeople, salesmen – was born.

One gets a sense that creation groaned during the Black Death, as folks experienced this deep suffering. And out of that groaning, was the birth of a new society – one with a better sense of how to treat the sick, one with a better division of the world's goods and labor, one that valued functionalism, one that smelled better.

This happens because God always brings something good out of tragedy and out of difficult circumstances.

We have another difficult circumstance –the coronavirus. Fortunately, we haven't had nearly the death toll of the Black Plague, but the coronavirus feels like a plague. Many people are contracting the disease and its infectiousness is causing us to have to close down many things that are important to our society. It's causing people to lose their jobs. It's flooded us with a sense of dis-ease.

¹ This information came from Ten Good Things We Owe to the Black Death found at <https://listverse.com/2015/01/28/10-good-things-we-owe-to-the-black-death/>

God will bring something good out of this circumstance, too. All of creation is groaning with us as we struggle and mourn during this pandemic. And all that groaning will give birth to something new.

I could imagine what that new world will look like, but I suspect that whatever I imagined wouldn't entirely be right anyway. God knows what the new world will look like. God knows how we will get there.

I do know that we will get there. I know that something new and great will come out of this pandemic. I know that because I know that God has already brought the best out of the world's worst situation.

Because one day, 2,000 years ago, humans hung God on a tree – trying to kill Him and trying to silence the good He was trying to do in the world. And three days later, He rose again. That tragedy turned into rejoicing. From that day, we all know that death isn't an end for us, nor is sin a permanent blot for us. Our sins are forgiven because of the tragic death of God in human form. We live eternally with God because of the resurrection of God in human form.

Because of what God did in three days, creation itself has been set free from its bondage to decay and has obtained the freedom of the glory of the children of God. In hope we are saved. We hope for what we do not see both in the afterlife and here on earth as we groan over the virus. We

wait in hope with patience. We wait in joyful anticipation that God will create something anew.