

## Tyndale Thought for the Day

30th March 2020

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A crisis like the Covid-19 pandemic prompts debates about how we should behave and from where we should seek help. From science or from God? From medicine or from miracles? From action by “them” in government, or by our own attempts to keep ourselves safe?

Nearly 500 years ago, the leader of the German Reformation Martin Luther (1483–1546) wrote to a friend on whether one should flee from an outbreak of plague (a familiar occurrence in those days) and on how he himself would behave in that calamity. He said:

“I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance inflict and pollute others and so cause their death as a result of my negligence. If God should wish to take me, he will surely find me, and I have done what he has expected of me, and so I am not responsible for either my own death or the death of others. If my neighbour needs me, however, I shall not avoid place or person but will go freely as stated above. See this is such a God-fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy and does not tempt God.”

Prayer and science; common sense and compassion; responsibility for ourselves and for others in society; humility and hope: these are not either/or choices; all are combined in love of God and our neighbour. Luther’s wisdom speaks to us today.

*Keith Clements*