

## MONDAY MANNA

15 June 2020

### COMBATING FEAR OF THE UNKNOWN, FOCUSING ON THE KNOWN

By Robert J. Tamasy

Years ago, discussing the challenges of making decisions during a war in the Middle East, the variable factors involved were described as “known knowns, known unknowns, and unknown unknowns.” Most of us will never have to handle such wartime responsibilities but given the uncertainties of the marketplace – even when we are not in the middle of a global pandemic, the unknowns can weigh heavily on us.

As we entered 2020, one of the “known knowns” was that the economy in many parts of the world was flourishing. Based on what we had been experiencing, there was great anticipation that prosperous times would continue throughout the marketplace. Among the “known unknowns” was that some major event could arise to cause a sudden shift in the economic climate. Everyone knew that was a possibility, but no one knew for certain what that might be. The greatest “unknown unknown” as we started the new year, of course, was the emergence of COVID-19, an incredibly aggressive virus that would spread from China and bring about a global pandemic.

Our tendency is to let the unknowns – ones we know about, and those we do not – overwhelm us, filling us with fear and worry. However, there is an alternative. We can choose instead to focus on the “knowns,” those things we can trust in and depend upon. The problem is, in turbulent times such as we have experienced recently, there are few knowns we can concentrate on with confidence.

This where faith – the confident assurance and earnest expectation we have in the God of the Bible – can sustain us. Corrie ten Boom, who with her family in The Netherlands helped many Jews escape the Nazis during World War II, wrote about this. She said, “Never be afraid to commit an unknown future to a known God.”

In the Word of God, we find hundreds of promises and precepts, assurances we have from God as followers of Jesus Christ that apply as directly to the marketplace as they do to any area of life. Here are some of them, and I would encourage you to search the Scriptures for many more:

**We can know God has a specific purpose for our lives.** *“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.... You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart’ (Jeremiah 29:11).*

**We can know God uses adversities we face for our benefit.** *“And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose” (Romans 8:28).*

**We can know God is not distant, that He is approachable.** *“For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weaknesses, but we have one who was tempted in every way that we are yet was without sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrews 4:15-16). “In [Christ] and through faith in him we may approach God with freedom and confidence” (Ephesians 3:12).*

**We can know God hears and responds to our prayers.** *“This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us – whatever we ask – we know that we have what we asked on him” (1 John 5:14-15).*

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### **Reflection/Discussion Questions**

What are some of your “known knowns,” things you believe you can count on every day with confidence and assurance as you pursue your vocation and everyday life?

What are some of the “known unknowns” that cause you concern? What about the “unknown unknowns” that could cause you to have sleepless nights?

Why are the unknowns of life so problematic for many of us? How can they cause stress – at times unnecessary – when we focus on things beyond our control?

Do the “known knowns” that we find the Bible bring you peace and comfort in times of adversity? Why or why not? If you do find sources of reassurance in the Scriptures, what are some that seem most important to you?

*NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more, consider the following passages:*

Isaiah 40:31, 41:10

Jeremiah 33:3

John 3:16

2 Corinthians 5:21

Philippians 4:6-9