

## MONDAY MANNA

28 September 2020

### AND NOW, FOR SOME VERY GOOD NEWS

By Jim Mathis

I don't know about you, but I am always ready for good news, especially in a time like this, when every news report we see or hear is challenging, disconcerting, and even terrifying.

One bit of good news is that, according to reports, the canals in Venice, Italy have been clear for the first time in hundreds of years. They say it is possible to actually see to the bottom. The air quality in major cities has become dramatically cleaner due to diminished driving, and the reduction in greenhouse gases that has resulted could be a big step in slowing conditions that many science experts attribute to climate change. There is even evidence that birds are singing louder than normal.

Of course, the COVID-19 virus continues to rage in many parts of the world, and unemployment figures have been higher than ever experienced in our lifetimes. It is encouraging to hear assurances that these situations are temporary, that we can create a "new normal" for our lives as the time passes.

All of this causes us to realise again that what we think about – what occupies our minds – largely determines who we are, how we react, and what actions we take. In other words, we are what we think. Our bodies are greatly affected by what we eat – but our lives are influenced by what we think. This is why the Bible, in Philippians 4:8, tells us to think about things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, and especially anything that is excellent or praiseworthy.

The obvious question is, how do we know what is true, right, pure, and all the rest? Not that many years ago, most of the news came from sources that challenged and competed with each other for accuracy. News agencies went to extreme lengths to ensure the accuracy of the information they presented. Even then there were mistakes, but they usually came from unreliable sources.

Today, many of us get information from sources with no accountability, or worse, have a particularly devious agenda to promote. It has been observed that 70 percent of the information on social media is false. This is even more alarming when we consider that the other 30 percent that is true includes how much we love our mum, or the good lunch we had. This is where our need for discretion and awareness comes in. If something seems outlandish, differing from general understanding, or has an obvious agenda of promoting a cause or wanting us to buy something, we should be suspicious. Things that are noble or lovely or admirable do not tear down other people. Things that are excellent or worthy of praise are neither negative nor vicious.

Computers function according to what is programmed into them. In a similar way, our thinking depends on how we "program" them – the content we allow to go into them. As Proverbs 12:18 says, *"Reckless words pierce like a sword, but the tongue of the wise brings healing."* Another passage says, *"The tongue that brings healing is a tree of life, but a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit"* (Proverbs 15:4). What we say – and what we hear – has a profound impact on our lives.

Those of us who have been on this planet longer than most have a longer perspective. Because of this, we can trust that things will get better. Remember to dwell on the true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy. It is the only way to survive and come out stronger than before.

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### **Reflection/Discussion Questions**

How have you been handling the seemingly constant onslaught of bad news over the past months? Have you found your moods and attitudes affected by what you have heard?

What do you do to keep from becoming overwhelmed by this barrage of negativity? Do you just turn it off; do you turn to other, more positive sources of information, or do you simply let the “news” dominate your thoughts? Explain your answer.

What do you think of the biblical admonition, “whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things”?

How can we go about doing that – focusing on things that are positive, uplifting and energising, rather than information and ideas that can discourage, dishearten, even depress us?

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

Joshua 1:8

Romans 12:1-2

Galatians 5:22-23

Philippians 4:4-7

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18