

## STORES CLOSED, SALES UP

Last weekend as I drove home from my church office, I came to a street corner where traffic unexpectedly was almost blocked. As I inched down the road past the mess, I could see that the jam was not because of road construction or a rush-hour accident. The right lane was blocked by a lengthy line of cars waiting at the drive-by window of a normally fairly quiet liquor store. Evidently folks stuck at home during the virus scare thought they needed a potion to assuage their fears. And, of course, if you're working at home, the boss won't know if you've been hitting the bottle and you're a bit tipsy.

It turns out that booze is not the only product flying off the shelves during this pandemic. Bible sales are up, we're told. Way up. Is that because lots of us are so frightened by COVID-19 that we need to plug back into faith and seek the help of God? I hope so.

It doesn't surprise me in the least that gasoline sales have plummeted. Right here in town I usually need a tank a week. It appears now that the present tank will last me a month or more. But I was surprised to see that one high-demand item during these stay-at-home days is pajamas. Especially pajama bottoms, the online stores report. Does that tell us anything about how many folks who work at home never bother to get dressed? "Having a pajama day" may take on a whole new meaning if we stay virus-shuttered much longer.

Grocery store owners say it has been a real challenge to stock adequate supplies of many basic food items. Part of the problem can be explained by virus disruptions in the supply chain, all the way from chicken and pork farms and dairies to the Interstate trucks that haul the groceries to us. I had not foreseen this. Nor had I factored in the obvious reality that thousands of people working and schooling and sheltering at home now have to buy food they used to get at IHOP or Olive Garden.

Thanks to the virus, a lot of our buying habits changed overnight. Given the constant bombardment of televised instructions about hand washing, surely none of us thought it odd that hand-cleaner shelves so often are empty now. That makes sense. But has anybody come up yet with a sensible explanation of the panic run on TP?

Evidently scare tales are more likely to be swallowed by people who are already scared. Could that be one reason Jesus warns us not to worry? If we take care of today, Jesus tells us in the Sermon on the Mount, tomorrow will take care of itself. And that's true, even if virus is loose in the land.