

Wasting a Crisis

Somewhere recently I saw a stat on the percentage of our communication that is non-verbal. I don't recall the exact number they cited, but all of us have recognized this truth all of our lives. When our mothers said something to us, for example, even from the time we were toddlers, all of us quickly looked at our mama's face to see if she was just ribbing us or if she really meant it. From her words alone, often we couldn't tell.

I had that experience this week while wading through the swamp of coronavirus news. In one online news source I ran across a report that quoted a remark Rahm Emanuel, former Chicago mayor and, briefly, Obama's White House chief of staff, made about the current virus epidemic.

"Never allow a crisis to go to waste," were his words. Actually, it turns out, Emanuel was quoting himself. While he was in Congress representing Illinois, he offered that same memorable piece of advice as he commented on the famous 2008 finance crash. Now he was applying the same wisdom to our virus upheaval.

Not being familiar with Emanuel, however, and not being able to hear his tone of voice or see his facial expression during either time when he spoke those words, I can't tell if he's offering serious, sage counsel to all of us or if he's harpooning a political foe with a sarcastic dig. I lean toward the first explanation, because he went on to say, "Start planning now for the future."

Whether Emanuel meant to be wise or catty, his words are loaded with good sense. Right now, when our world is topsy-turvy and we're having to re-think almost everything we've taken for granted all our lives, these troubled days may be the perfect time for us to fix some things that haven't worked well forever. This may be the perfect time to revamp some ineffective practice in your office or your church or your family. Do it. "Don't waste the crisis."

Talking about how we Christians deal with our unbelieving neighbors, the Apostle Paul got ahead of Rahm Emanuel almost two millennia when he wrote in Colossians 4:5, "Make the most of every opportunity."