



Spring Hills Members and Attenders,

I woke up this morning with some truly mixed emotions. On the pleasant and hopeful side, I woke up with the knowledge that today would be a very special day. I am officiating not one but two weddings for two very special couples. Also, I have the great privilege of preaching tonight continuing our new sermon series. And, I was excited that my very good friend Karrie Miller was guest leading worship this evening and I am really excited to see those of you who will come to church tonight.

Alongside those hopeful and pleasant things, I woke up with the knowledge that our world and it seems our church is very divided and angry. I became aware late Thursday night that Licking County had crossed into the Red, the level three category on the Governors Public Health Advisory System. Level three mandates face coverings in public places, unless there is a medical exception, and I was surprised to learn that it also mandates face coverings in churches. So, in compliance with the health order, we sent out an email yesterday informing all of you of this change. Many of you, I know, support the idea and are glad to see face coverings mandated in church.

Also, many of you have expressed anger and frustration that face coverings are now required in Church and have suggested that we ignore the order or even publicly oppose it. Please hear my heart on this issue and know that I love each one of you deeply. We are called to respond to our world Biblically, prayerfully, calmly and above all as Jesus would. How does the Bible instruct us to interact with our local government?

Romans 13:1-2 says, *"Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established"*. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.

For those of you who think you are being unfairly persecuted by this mandate, let's examine how the early church responded to persecution. Hebrews 10:34 says *"You suffered along with those in prison and joyfully accepted the confiscation of your property, because you knew that you yourselves had better and lasting possessions."* As I told our Elders last night, If the early Church joyfully accepted the confiscation of their personal property, how should we respond to a very temporary face covering mandate?

The mission of our Church is to Love, Live and Lead like Jesus. That is what I am calling you to in these challenging times. So, what should you expect if you choose to come to church? Masks will be available at the entrance along with a posted reminder of the Governors order. There is an exception for children under the age of 10 and also for those with medical exceptions. There will not be "face covering police" or a large focus on the issue because we are there to worship our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Please, do not let this issue divide us. We are called to so much more. If you are uncomfortable coming to church, for any reason, please join us on the livestream.

In Christ,
Pastor Tom