

MSNBC Calls for Prayer on Live TV (This Is Not an April Fools' Headline)

I know it sounds like an April Fools' headline. But it is not. On March 30, MSNBC host Craig Melvin asked Rev. T. D. Jakes to pray for America in the midst of the coronavirus scare. Melvin even bowed his head as Jakes prayed. This is a sign of the times. Americans are turning to God.

And note this: Jakes prayed in Christ's name. On live, national TV. On MSNBC. Did I say this was not April Fools'?

Melvin said, "For folks who aren't able to get to church yesterday, I've never actually done this on the air. Can you lead us in prayer for 30 seconds?"

These are unprecedented times, and even TV hosts are doing unprecedented things.

Jakes responded immediately with this prayer: "Our Father and our God, we bow our heads to you in humility, understanding that we are not competent in and of ourselves to handle this kind of global calamity. We look to You, Lord, to be the source, the strength, the help, the light that we need. Strengthen our first responders, strengthen even our broadcast people, strengthen all of us whose lives have been devastated and disrupted and give us the peace that passes all understanding. In Christ's name we pray, Amen."

Yes, this happened live on MSNBC.

In keeping with this, the Drudge Report carried the headline, "Americans Turning to Prayer," linked to a Pew Research article that shared the results of Pew's latest survey.

The survey indicated that "the coronavirus outbreak is having

profound impacts on the personal lives of Americans in a variety of ways. Nearly 9 in 10 U.S. adults say their life has changed at least a little as a result of the COVID-19 outbreak, including 44% who say their life has changed in a major way.”

Not only so, but the virus “also has impacted Americans’ religious behaviors. More than half of all U.S. adults (55%) say they have prayed for an end to the spread of coronavirus. Large majorities of Americans who pray daily (86%) and of U.S. Christians (73%) have taken to prayer during the outbreak—but so have some who say they seldom or never pray and people who say they do not belong to any religion (15% and 24%, respectively).”

Indeed, “Religious ‘nones’—especially self-described atheists and agnostics—are less likely than those who identify with a religion to say they have prayed for an end to the outbreak, though 36% of those who describe their religion as ‘nothing in particular’ say they have prayed about the virus.”

People who rarely pray or who never pray are praying. Some fear for their lives. Others question the very meaning of life. Still others recognize the need for divine intervention. And still others are feeling lonely and isolated. Pandemics and plagues tend to have that effect.

Suddenly we realize how small we are and how fragile life is. Suddenly we think more deeply about why we are here, what we are doing and where are we going.

Losing loved ones can also have a profound effect on us. Is that it? Is it all over? Will never see each other again? Is there life after death? Is there any purpose or destiny or meaning to be found in our years here on the earth?

That’s why, at a time like this, it is no surprise to see *The Wall Street Journal*—not *Christianity Today* or *Charisma*—running an op-ed with the headline, “A Coronavirus Great Awakening?”

Indeed, the article by Robert Nicholson reminds us that, "Sometimes the most important ingredient for spiritual renewal is a cataclysmic event."

He asks, "Could a plague of biblical proportions be America's best hope for religious revival?"

His answer, "As the 75th anniversary of the end of World War II approaches, there is reason to think so."

Of course, skeptics and mockers would argue that, during times of crisis, people make up fairy tales and pray to the gods and idols they have made. And to some extent, I agree. Not every prayer is a real cry for help, and not every prayer is truly directed to God.

On the other hand, for many others, the reality is the exact opposite of what the skeptics and mockers envision. People *turn away* from the fairy tales they have made up and from the idols they have created. They realize that the things of this world cannot satisfy the deepest longest of their heart or answer the pressing questions of the age. They realize there must be more. They realize they need help. And they pray.

Let us all pray as well, to the one true God, the one who made us and who sustains us. To the one who can stop this virus in its tracks. To the one who will be with us in both life and death.

"Father, hear the prayers of millions of Americans and send us the revival we so desperately need!"