

Do Your Goddamn Duty During the Goddamn Pandemic, Dammit

“In the name of God, do your duty.” – Atticus Finch, *To Kill a Mockingbird*

In case you missed it, we are now living through a pandemic. COVID-2019 (AKA “coronavirus”) is a highly infectious virus known to infected more than 128,000 people (but due to lack of testing, probably many more) and killed 4,720 people in dozens of countries.

The virus spreads through contact as well as through the air. The contagion estimate (R0) is that a person with this virus is likely to infect 1.5-3 more people. The real twist? Symptoms don’t appear for days, or may not show up at all. So you may be carrying coronavirus and not even know it.

Why does this matter?

Because you have a job to do in this pandemic.

You may not be old. You may not have a weak immune system. You may think that you are healthy enough to recover from coronavirus. And so you may not be interested in taking precautions to avoid becoming infected – doing things like cancelling travel, cancelling events, and avoiding public spaces. You may decide to go on your merry way and pretend like this isn’t happening.

If you want to risk your own sickness, that’s fine. The problem is that you won’t just be impacting yourself. If you get infected and continue to go to public places, you are causing the pandemic to get worse. You are infecting others who will put additional burden on a healthcare system which is (at this rate) going to be overwhelmed. And you are infecting people who may die from this virus.

Imagine being the jerk who brings the flu to your office for no reason – and living with the possibility that you spread it to multiple colleagues, including some who died from it. You wouldn’t feel so good about that. You would realize that you were responsible.

Now put that same responsibility into the context of a pandemic. Your actions matter even more. Even if you don’t mind getting sick, by practicing “social distancing” you can prevent further unnecessary spread of this disease, reduce the burden on the medical system, and ensure that more people continue to live and work through this. That’s good for you and good for everybody you care about.

So for God’s sake stop going to big events, stop going to restaurants and movie theatres and the like, start washing your hands and wearing gloves, cover your damn mouth if you

cough or sneeze, and prepare yourself so that you won't need to burden hospitals with your sickness when the time comes.

Do that, and you will have done your duty in a major crisis. And that's about one of the best things you can hope to do.