

The day is over, you are driving home. You turn on the radio. You hear a little blurb about a village in India where some villagers have died, suddenly, strangely, of a flu that has never been seen before. Three or four people are dead. And they're sending some doctors over there to investigate it. You don't think much about it.

But on Sunday, coming home from church, you hear another radio spot. Only they say it's not three villagers, it's 30,000 villagers in the back hills of a particular area of India. And it's on TV that night. CNN runs a little blurb; people are heading there from the Center for Disease Control in Atlanta because this disease strain has never been seen before. By Monday morning, it's the lead story. It's not just India; it's Pakistan, Iran, and before you know it, you're hearing this story everywhere and they have coined it now as 'the mystery flu.'

The President has made some comment inviting everyone to join him in thoughts and prayers that all will go well over there. But everyone is wondering, "How are we going to contain it?" That's when the President of France makes an announcement that shocks Europe. He is closing their borders. No flights from India, Pakistan, or any of the countries where this thing has been seen. And that's why that night you are watching CNN before going to bed. Your jaw hits your chest when a weeping woman is translated from a French news program into English: "There's a man lying in a hospital in Paris dying of the mystery flu." It has come to Europe. Panic strikes. As best they can tell, once you get it, you have it for a week and you don't know. Then you have four days of unbelievable symptoms. And then you die.

Britain closes its borders, but it's too late. South Hampton, Liverpool, North Hampton, and it's Tuesday morning when the President of the United States makes the following announcement: "Due to a national security risk, all flights to and from Europe and Asia have been canceled. If your loved ones are overseas, I'm sorry. They cannot come back until we find a cure for this disease." People are selling little masks for your face. People are talking about what if it comes to this country, and TV preachers are saying "It's the punishment of God on those evil societies."

It's Wednesday night and you have gone to Church for a special service to pray for the healing of this nightmare. After Mass, someone in the parking lot says "Turn on your radio, turn on your radio." And while you listen the announcement is made. "Two women are lying in a Long Island hospital dying from the mystery flu." Within hours it seems, this thing just sweeps across the country.

People are working around the clock trying to find an antidote. Nothing is working. California. Oregon. Florida. Massachusetts. It's as though it's just sweeping in from the borders.

And then, all of a sudden the news comes out. The code has been broken. A cure can be found. A vaccine can be made! It's going to take the blood of somebody who hasn't been infected, and so sure enough, all through the Midwest, through all those channels of emergency broadcasting, everyone is asked to do one simple thing: "Go to your nearest hospital and have your blood type taken. That's all we ask of you. And when you hear the sirens go off in your neighborhood, please make your way quickly, quietly, and safely to the hospitals."

Sure enough, when you and your family get down there late on that Friday night, there is a long line, and they've got nurses and doctors coming out and pricking fingers and taking blood and putting labels on it. Your wife and kids are out there, and they take your blood type and they say, "Wait here in the parking lot and if we don't call your name, you can be dismissed and go home."

You stand around scared with your neighbors, wondering what in the world is going on, and that this is the end of the world. Suddenly a young man comes running out of the hospital screaming. He's yelling a name and waving a clipboard. What? He yells it again! And your son tugs on your jacket and says, "Daddy, that's me."

Before you know it, they have grabbed your boy. "Wait a minute, hold it!" And they say, "It's ok, his blood is clean. His blood is pure. We want to make sure he doesn't have the disease. We think he's got the right type."

Five tense minutes later, out come the doctors and nurses, crying and hugging one another – some are even laughing. It's the first you have seen anybody laugh in a week, and an old doctor walks up to you and says, "Thank you, sir. Your son's blood type is perfect. It's clean, it is pure, and we can make the vaccine."

As the word begins to spread all across that parking lot full of folks, people are screaming and praying and laughing and crying. But then the gray-haired doctor pulls you and your wife aside and says, "May we see for a moment? We didn't realize that the donor would be a minor and we need.....we need you to sign a consent form." You begin to sign and then you see that the number of pints of blood to be taken is empty. "H-h-h-h-how many pints?"

And that is when the old doctor's smile fades and he says, "We had no idea it would be a little child. We weren't prepared. We need all your child's blood. All of it."

"But....but...."

"You don't understand. We are talking about the whole world here. Please sign. We – we need all of it – we need all of his blood!"

"But can't you give him a transfusion?"

"If we had clean blood we would. Can you sign? Would you sign?"

In numb silence you do. Then they say, "Would you like a moment with him before we begin?"

Can you walk back? Can you walk back into that room where he sits on a table saying, "Daddy? Mommy? What's going on?" Can you take his hands and say, "Son, your mother and I love you, and we would never ever let anything happen to you that didn't just have to be. Do you understand that?" And when that old doctor comes back in and says, "I'm sorry, we've – we've got to get started. People all over the world are dying."

Can you leave? Can you walk out while your only son is saying, "Dad? Mom? Dad? Why – why have you forsaken me?"

And then next week, when they have the funeral to honor your son, and some folks sleep through it, and some folks don't even come because they go golfing or to the beach. Some people come and spend the time texting and doing email. Some show up late and some leave early. And most of them drop just a dollar or 2 into the fund for a memorial to the boy who saved the world; some give nothing at all. Would you want to jump and say, "MY SON DIED! DON'T YOU CARE?" Is that what God wants to say to us this Passion Sunday? "MY SON DIED. DON'T YOU CARE?"

"For God so loved the world that He gave us His only begotten Son." Amen.

--story taken from an e-mail from Johnnie Winters, July 1999, author unknown.

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