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| |  | | --- | | March 30, 2020  **The Markets**  The United States set some records last week.  First, we became the epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic. *Popular Science* explained:  “An increase of 15,000 known cases in just one day pushed the United States past Italy and China, making it the new epicenter of the pandemic…Experts suspect the actual number of U.S. cases is much higher than currently reported…the United States has tested a far lower percentage of its large population than other hard-hit countries.”  On Friday, March 27, the *Centers for Disease Control (CDC)* reported there were 103,321 confirmed cases and 1,668 deaths in the United States.  Second, as businesses across the country closed, leaving many workers without income, first-time claims for unemployment benefits hit an all-time high of 3.3 million. The previous record of 695,000 was set in 1982, during one of the deepest recessions the United States had experienced to date.  Third, Congress passed the biggest aid package in history. The $2.2 trillion *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) was signed into law last week. The CARES Act* authorizes financial support for workers and businesses, including:  **Relief checks.** If you earn less than $75,000, and file taxes singly, you can expect a one-time payment of $1,200. If you’re married, you and your spouse will each receive a check. Children will receive $500 each. Social Security benefit recipients will receive checks, too.  **Higher unemployment benefits.** *CARES* raised unemployment benefits by $600 a week for four months.  **Tax credits for businesses that keep paying employees.** Businesses of all sizes are eligible for a tax credit intended to keep workers on the payroll. The credit is up “to 50 percent of payroll on the first $10,000 of compensation, including health benefits, for each employee,” reported NPR.  U.S. stock markets rallied on the news. Some speculated the shortest bear market in history had ended, but Randall Forsyth of *Barron’s* cautioned, “To anybody who has been around for a market cycle or more, that pop was the very essence of a bear-market rally, and such rallies are the most violent.”  Major U.S. indices moved higher during the week.  **PRACTICAL ADVICE FOR HANDLING PACKAGES AND GROCERIES.** *The Washington Post* published an article written by Joseph G. Allen, an assistant professor of exposure and assessment science at Harvard’s School of Public Health. Allen explained precautions to take to prevent disease transfer from packages and groceries. (Yes, coronavirus can live on a surface, but the risk of disease transmission is low.)  Here are some of Allen’s suggestions for handling delivery packages:  **•** Leave packages outside or bring them inside and leave them by the door for several hours. **•** Wipe down package exteriors with disinfectant. **•** Unwrap packages and leave the packaging in the recycling can. **•** Wash your hands after touching a package.  Allen also offered suggestions for grocery shopping:  **•** Stay six feet from other shoppers. **•** Don’t touch your face while shopping. **•** Put your groceries away. **•** Wipe anything you are using immediately with disinfectant. (Clean all grocery packages before you put them away, if it makes you more comfortable.) **•** Wash your hands after putting groceries away. **•** Wash fruits and vegetables before using.  So, how many hours is enough hours to wait? Allen explained the findings of an article in the New England Journal of Medicine. “…the virus’s half-life on stainless steel and plastic was 5.6 hours and 6.8 hours, respectively. (Half-life is how long it takes the viral concentration to decrease by half, then half of that half, and so on until it’s gone.)”  **FINDING HUMOR IN A TIME OF STRESS.** In *Time’s* article, ‘Laughter Helps the Brain Relax. How Humor Can Combat Coronavirus Anxiety,’ William Kole offered some insights to the importance of humor:  “Neil Diamond posts a fireside rendition of ‘Sweet Caroline’ with its familiar lyrics tweaked to say, ‘Hands … washing hands.’ A news anchor asks when social distancing will end because ‘my husband keeps trying to get into the house.’ And, a sign outside a neighborhood church reads: ‘Had not planned on giving up quite this much for Lent.’ Are we allowed to chuckle yet? We’d better, psychologists and humorists say. Laughter can be the best medicine, they argue, so long as it’s within the bounds of good taste.”  When you’re feeling overwhelmed, it can help to spend some time with the work of your favorite comedian, satirist, or cartoonist.  **Weekly Focus – Think About It**  “Apparently there is nothing that cannot happen today.” *--Mark Twain, Humorist*  \* These views are those of Carson Coaching, and not the presenting Representative, the Representative’s Broker/Dealer, or Registered Investment Advisor, and should not be construed as investment advice. \* This newsletter was prepared by Carson Coaching. Carson Coaching is not affiliated with the named firm. \* Government bonds and Treasury Bills are guaranteed by the U.S. government as to the timely payment of principal and interest and, if held to maturity, offer a fixed rate of return and fixed principal value. 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The Index is composed of futures contracts on 19 physical commodities and was launched on July 14, 1998. \* The DJ Equity All REIT Total Return Index measures the total return performance of the equity subcategory of the Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT) industry as calculated by Dow Jones. \* The Dow Jones Industrial Average (DJIA), commonly known as “The Dow,” is an index representing 30 stock of companies maintained and reviewed by the editors of The Wall Street Journal. \* The NASDAQ Composite is an unmanaged index of securities traded on the NASDAQ system. \* International investing involves special risks such as currency fluctuation and political instability and may not be suitable for all investors. These risks are often heightened for investments in emerging markets. \* Yahoo! 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