

Daily View

“But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called ‘today’” Hebrews 3:13

December 21, 2020

Status Quo

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” Hebrews 13:8

“Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.” James 1:17

In January of this year, Christie and I were in Hawaii. We go there a lot. We stayed in the same hotel in the same area that we usually stay; we ate at the same restaurants, walked the same route into town, and bought pastries and coffee at the same coffee shop that we usually do. While it's adventuresome to do some things differently now and then, there's also comfort in the *status quo*.

“*Status Quo*,” is Latin for “the state in which,” meaning “the existing state of affairs.” As Hebrews 13:8 (above) suggests, Jesus is the ultimate example of reliability, our champion, the author of our faith. For Christians, he is our sanctified *Status Quo*.

Sometimes, the *status quo* is thought of as boring. I suppose there are some who feel that way. But most of us love and rely on the *status quo*. I love the “existing state” of my marriage and the stability that my work for the church provides. I've come to appreciate a day that is “uneventful.” I don't need big adventures to make my life more “exciting.”

Our trip to Hawaii in January was quiet, restful and fun. That's the “status quo” we look forward to. Little did we know in January that the *status quo* would not line up with the *quo* for long. Covid changed that. You know the rest of the story, a story that is still being written.

The story is multifaceted. It's primarily a health crisis — a pandemic, a deadly disease for which, as yet, there is no cure. That's bad enough, but then you add the political, legal, economic and *psychological* impact of the lockdowns and, for most of us, any hint of the *status quo* seems like a distant memory.

In the 1950s and early 60s, when we were living under the threat of nuclear war with the USSR, the Cold War was the “*existing state of affairs*.” Even little kids knew what “fallout” meant. “Fallout,” was the “dust” from a nuclear bomb blast that would create something they called a “nuclear winter” (look it up; it's not good). A conversation might go like this: “*if the bomb doesn't get you, the fallout will.*” We lived under that cloud until the 1980s. It was terrifying, especially in the late 50s, early 60s. There had to be some psychological fallout from that.

There is “fallout” from this pandemic that is, arguably, as bad as the disease itself. The mental health price due to lockdowns, business disruption and fewer opportunities for social

interaction is incredibly high. I read recently that Japan had more deaths by suicide in *one month* than from Covid since it began. This experience has completely upended the lives of millions of people, starting with, but not limited to, those who have suffered from the disease itself. The stress on health workers and others is underreported, but huge. Most of us crave the *status quo*.

Churches suffered. By “churches,” I don't mean a separate “entity” with a life of its own. I mean what the Bible means: a group of real people (*ekklesia*, assembly) who meet regularly (*assemble*) in a local place.

The Supreme Court, in its recent ruling in favor of churches, has acknowledged that prohibiting or severely restricting in-person worship attendance constitutes “irreparable harm” to religious adherents. Within the past month, a majority of justices in the highest court in the land have stated unequivocally that the *status quo* of regular attendance at services is good for us. But we knew that already. Hebrews 10:24-25 says it loudly and clearly:

And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Even in our cold, uncomfortable tent meetings, we feel this. I was cold for the entire service yesterday. I was afraid someone would see me shivering and that wouldn't be cool. But afterwards, I got to visit with a few of my brothers and sisters in Christ and that always warms me up.

If there is any value at all in the disruption of the *status quo* of regular attendance, it is that we now appreciate, more than ever, the privilege of worshipping together — all of us, all at the same time. At least, I do. Our assemblies are one of those “good and perfect” gifts from God that not only provides an opportunity to commune together, learn together and give collective glory to him, but also builds our hope and contributes to our mental health. Even the Supreme Court recognizes the “irreparable harm” that can occur when the *status quo* of coming together is taken away from us.