

Daily View

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

April 9, 2020



Maui, HI

“Looking in the other direction...”

“I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you...” Job 42:5

A few years ago, we were in Maui and decided to take a sunset dinner cruise. I had my camera ready to grab another beautiful Hawaiian sunset shot but there wasn't much of a sunset in the direction that sunsets are usually seen — offshore to the west. I was rather disappointed, until I turned and saw the scene above. The sun wasn't setting as gorgeously as usual in the west, but the clouds sitting over the mountains to the east were reflecting the sun in a remarkable way. The photo is un-retouched except for some slight exposure modification (and, as usual, a photo doesn't do justice to the real scene).

This reminded me of the importance of looking in a different direction now and then. We get tunnel vision sometimes — I know I do. We get locked into a point of view or a tradition or a routine and we fail to look at other options. The stay-at-home directive has forced us to think outside the box in terms of how we serve God as a church. It challenges our status quo, and that's not a bad thing.

Please don't misunderstand. I'm not for one minute suggesting that what we do at the building is unimportant or even optional and I'm sure all of us are very anxious to get back to “normal.” I certainly am. But since we're in the situation, we might as well take the time to reflect on areas in both our physical and spiritual life that are directed more by tradition and routine than by a thoughtful pursuit of specific goals.

I want to say this carefully. Being part of a strong church family has many advantages but there is also a danger. The danger is that we become too “church-centric.” When that happens we are on a precarious path. We begin to look at the church as our primary source of spiritual development but it's not — prayer and Bible study are the primary sources (too many passages to cite). Parents begin to think the church is responsible for raising their kids in the Lord but it's not — *they* are (Ephesians 6:4). People, at least subconsciously, may think that all worship takes place at the church building but it doesn't — worship can and should be done in any setting (see John 4:20-24). And the biggest danger may be that people who are too church-centric may not be *Christ*-centric, and that's just wrong: the church doesn't save; it is the body of the saved and Jesus is the Savior (Ephesians 5:23; John 14:6).

So, if there is an upside to this isolation order it may be that we are forced to look in a different direction and that can be a healthy thing. Job said, “*I had heard of you by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees you...*” (Job 42:5). We need to be open to new things, to a new direction. Having said that, I'll end with two warnings: (1) as the saying goes, “don't be so open-minded that your brains fall out.” Think biblically. (2) Don't go too far in the other direction and become too individualistic in our thinking and practice. That's another problem for another time.