

Daily View

"But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today'" Hebrews 3:13

July 24, 2020



Connecticut, 2009

Is Church "High risk, low reward"?

Christie and I will be out of town for a week or so. I plan to keep writing these, but there may be a day here and there when I can't get to it. I know that will break your heart, and I apologize in advance [*insert several laugh out loud emojis here*].

Having been born to Christian parents, raised on the pew and surrounded by saints all of my life, being unable to do that troubles my heart. It makes me realize that I've taken it for granted. I miss many things. For instance, without putting too fine a point on it, the singing at the Folsom church, when we are all in attendance, is incredible.* Even people who visit from denominations that use instrumental music say how wonderful it is and more than a few have actually commented positively on the lack of instruments.

I miss preaching to all the people at once, faces uncovered so I can see the response and adjust accordingly. I miss the 20-40 minute visits after services and seeing people at the door as they walk out and meeting new people. I miss taking the Lord's Supper with the whole church at the same time.

The governor has told us we can't meet indoors, at least in Sacramento County (where the church building is, *barely*, located. We meet a mile from the El Dorado County border; a county that has no restrictions).

I'm not questioning the governor's motives but he is on record for saying that churches are "high risk, low reward." Are churches "low reward"? No doubt, some of them are. But consider this: In his recent book, *The Character Gap: How Good Are We?*, Wake Forest philosophy professor Christian Miller

cites studies that correlate regular church attendance with around 50% lower levels of domestic violence, 350% higher levels of donations to charity, and 200% higher levels of volunteering. He also notes that religious people are far more likely to donate blood, help the homeless, and express empathy for those less fortunate.

Hmmm... low reward? For whom? Did you notice that the benefits of church attendance in the studies Miller cites are for *others*; in other words, church attenders are more likely to "love [their] neighbors as themselves." They are more likely to help others than those think it's a "low reward" activity.

It seems fair to extrapolate from this that if *everyone* attended church regularly, many of society's ills would be cured. In fact, to the degree that attending church corresponds to putting Christ's teachings into practice, if everyone attended, *all* of society's ills would be solved.

Helping others is part of our focus, but not all. Our aim is to honor Christ as Lord, live holy lives, speak the truth in love (Ephesians 3:15) and walk in the light (1 John 1:7). Colossians 1:9-11 sums it up pretty well:

And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him: bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; being strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy...

I can't wait until we can get together, in person. and encourage each other to serve Christ.

*I'm not suggesting that our great singing makes us any more acceptable to God than a church of ten people who are singing. But really good singing is a great blessing if the heart is in the right place.