

Daily View

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

August 21, 2020

We are not on an island...

Sorry, I'm really not trying to be negative at all. It's just that I've come to the place where I really dislike the term *"social distancing."* The term itself is anti-biblical and, while I understand the necessity of it right now, if social distancing becomes the norm, then the church, as we know it, will cease to exist.

The term "social" refers to a community, a group, and to *collective* action. It assumes companionship and that we are best suited to living in communities. Jesus knows that. That's why he said, *"...on this rock I will build my church (assembly) and the gates of hell will not prevail against it"* (Matthew 16:18).

A "socially-distanced church" is a contradiction in terms, an oxymoron. Jesus' teaching doesn't allow for it. The church is not made up of the "socially distant people."

We are the *"greet one another with a holy kiss"* people (Romans 16:16).

We are the *"love your neighbor as yourself"* people (Matthew 22:39). We are the *"bear one another's*

burdens" people (Galatians 6:2). Being distant, socially, is the antithesis of all of those characteristics of the church.

The fear is that some will prefer to be "socially distant" and this is what keeps the elders up at night. Elders are not just "older men" or "leaders." They are shepherds and the Holy Spirit used the analogy for a reason. To be a shepherd requires a flock. A shepherd exercises oversight — he keeps an eye on the flock. They are also examples, which means the flock keeps an eye on them (I Peter 5:1-3). A shepherd's eternal life depends on this (v. 4).

Our present circumstances largely frustrate the efforts to shepherd the flock through teaching. The class program at Folsom is the best I've ever seen, the result of the hard work of many of our members. At the moment, we are relying almost totally on parents to see to the spiritual education of their children. That fits the Deuteronomy 6:6-9 model — and we believe every parent takes that

seriously — but it doesn't allow for the interaction and synergy that classes with other children generate. And, the kids are being deprived of benefiting from the highly talented teachers we have here at Folsom.

Attending classes and assemblies at least twice a week is important. I know, because my experience in the church has changed me, *radically*, and I am confident that it has

been for the better. Up through my teens, I was a loner and proud of it. I was on an island, and happy as can be on my island. I could sit in my room, all by myself, and read and listen to music, perfectly content. I wasn't as bitter as Paul Simon's song describes it, but the lyrics of "I Am A Rock" resonated with me:

"I am alone/Gazing from my window/To the streets below/ On a freshly fallen, silent shroud of snow/ I am a rock, I am an island..."

OK, I didn't actually gaze down to streets below; I lived in a one story house in the suburbs of Orange County, so there was never any snow. But I *was* a rock, an island...

I have my books/And my poetry to protect me/I am shielded in my armor/Hiding in my room/Safe

within my womb/I touch no one and no one touches me...

If my parents had put priority on every other social event besides church attendance, I would have been more than fine with that, but, I would have suffered for it. Most of the socially good times I ever experienced had connection to a church. No other social experience has had the lasting benefit of attending assemblies and interacting with people — the more the better — who love God.

When Jesus said "I will build my church" he was saying, "I will build a group of people who, regardless of socio-economic status or background, all have one thing in common: they love Me and my Father, and each other." That's what makes each assembly (*ecclesia*) of the King (*Christos*) so important and vital.

I can't wait to get back to it, the way we were before. When we do, I know I'll appreciate it even more.



"Church buildings" have been a part of my life, all my life. Thought there is nothing special about a building itself, it's important because it provides a place for the church to meet at "the appointed times." Ironically, the building above *is* on an island; it's the meeting place of the Leeward church of Christ on Oahu. Christie and I attended here when first married in 1969. We've been back there many times since; it looks just like it did in 1969 [Photo: 2019].