

Daily View

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

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Preaching & Shepherding In the Age of Covid

I love my wife (married 51 years ago today). Me thinks she's perfect but when she reads this, she will protest — probably loudly. But I've been blessed beyond words to be her husband. She's faithful to Jesus first and then to me and that helps me be faithful to Jesus first and then to her. What does this have to do with the title above? Nothing. I just needed to say that.

Shepherding

By “shepherding” I mean carrying out our duty as elders. We are “pastors” (“shepherds”) of the “flock” (the church) at Folsom. There are about 400 precious souls “on board” our “fellow-ship” and we care about each one; each of the six of us take our role very seriously. We are aware of the width and depth of the task at hand and we are keenly aware of Hebrews 13:17a, “...for they are *keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account.*”

As I've said before, it's more difficult right now. I don't say this to curry sympathy. In fact, challenges like this are good for all of us. Until now, nothing has ever prevented us from meeting all together in one place and the large majority of our membership has always attended the assemblies on Sunday and Wednesday. Knowing that we could see almost all of the “flock” twice a week made our job much easier. It helps identify those who are not in attendance so we can check up on them.

Now, that is still doable but more difficult. 250 members attended in person last week, in three services. There were 36 connections to our livestream at 10:30. Even if the 36 livestream connections represent, on average, two people, that would mean our total attendance was 322, a number nearly approaching our average attendance in the building in normal times.

I don't mean to suggest that we are only counting numbers; we still much prefer to lay eyes on everyone at one time in one place. Not being able to do that makes us uncomfortable, to say the least. It does indicate, though, that the church is staying connected and that is encouraging. But please let us know if we

can do anything to help you, either physically or spiritually, especially if you are unable to attend one of our services in person. Please help us do our job.

Preaching

The pandemic has caused a wrinkle in preaching as well. I've noticed that since the disease struck, most of the sermons preached — by me and others I've heard — have referenced Covid in some way. This isn't surprising, since we're all dealing with the impact from it and we want our preaching to be relevant. But allow me to say this as plainly as I know how: *I'm tired of putting Covid at the center of everything.* After this passes, if I never hear the word “Covid” or “Coronavirus” again, it'll be too soon.

So, while I'm not saying I'll never mention it, I'm doing my best to move on. While the physical circumstances are less than ideal (e.g., it's difficult to use PowerPoint and preaching the same lesson three times is a bit odd) the need for God's word in all areas of our lives — not just the Covid-impacted areas — has not changed.

I've been thinking about this for some time but have not been sure on what book or topic to pin down.* But then Zac and Rochelle Brown reminded us that we would be starting a new quarter tomorrow, and the topic for the kids is the *Fruit of the Spirit*. It occurred to me that would be an excellent topic for these times, so my aim is to preach from the same topic. That'll provide some continuity. Thanks to Zac and Rochelle their hard work in putting lessons together, in printed and video formats.

Our need to grow and become “fruitful” has not changed. so, we'll focus on that for change.

*Some have asked me if I'm going to continue the series I started on Romans. The answer is *not yet*. Preaching a series on Romans requires continuity from week-to-week. I won't restart that series until I am sure our services won't be disrupted again and who knows when that time will come?

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