

View

“Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” — John 12:21

June 14, 2020

To My Brethren at Folsom

BY KENNY MARRS

A good friend of mine who preaches on the East coast, wrote and told me a story that happened to him a few days ago. A mutual friend baptized a woman . . . “who was just released from the hospital with the covid-19. Then he and others went into ‘unsafe’ homes to teach and help people.”

When the story was related to the local congregation, one of the members said: “What a foolish thing to do.”

My friend wrote, “I was speechless . . . for a minute, then I had some things to say to that person.” I didn’t ask him what he said to that person but I can imagine.

Would that happen here at Folsom? If

David or Scott or any of the members here (male or female) seized the opportunity to teach the gospel to a person who was infected with a virus – whatever the virus - would you say that was “foolish?” Some might say they need to quarantine themselves for 7-14 days before they can come back and assemble with the saints. Given current circumstances that would be a reasonable request, but what if the teaching were “critical” for that person, that is, that lost soul was very close to obeying the gospel and needed a bit more teaching and encouraging to become a Christian and that may take a few more classes . . . what then? The preacher/teacher/member could be gone from the assembly for

several weeks, maybe months, maybe contract the virus, maybe a part of that small percentage that would be hospitalized, maybe a part of that even smaller fractional percentage that would die. Would that be “foolish?”

The point here is that times like these (whatever your opinion is about them) are an unsettling reminder that the Christian life and the gospel message is not to be “put on hold” while things are inconvenient. Think carefully on

this for a moment, can you imagine in your mind any possible earthly circumstance that would make the teaching of the gospel “foolish?” Now wait. . . before you answer that question, remember you may very well have to repeat that answer

and reasoning to the Lord Himself one day.

Could you face the Lord at Judgment and tell Him that teaching the story of His crucifixion and resurrection – the very means of eternal salvation for all men – was a foolish thing to do at certain times in your life?

An older evangelist once traveled to an area that had a high rate of deadly diseases; someone said to him: Do you think that is being responsible? His response was: Can you think of a better way to die?

Dear sweet brethren, we are being tested.

Can You Imagine? A World Without Jesus

BY DAVID POSEY

A few weeks ago, we watched the movie, “I Can Only Imagine.” It was an excellent movie, by any standard (i.e., not only by “Christian” movie standards, which have not proved to be that high at times). The acting was very good and the story was compelling. It’s worth watching.

I thought about how often I say, “I can only imagine,” and it’s pretty rare. More often I say — usually to myself — “I *can’t* imagine.” I say that when someone suffers an unbearable loss that I have never experienced. I say it when mulling over the past, life’s twists and turns that brought me to this point.

For example, I can’t imagine what it would be like if I hadn’t met Christie. Life would be totally different. What kind of person would I be without Christie? What would life be without our kids, our grandkids. I don’t want to imagine that, and it’s not relevant, but I still think about it.

But there are other things I can’t imagine. I can’t imagine life

without Jesus. I take that back; I can. In fact, I don’t have to imagine. As I look at the hatred, the violence, and the total disregard for others’ personal health and safety — and others who support it — it’s obvious that there are many people in our society engaged in the grand experiment of living their lives without any trace of the teachings and example of Jesus. I know Jesus was talking about the destruction of Jerusalem in Matthew 24:12, but the words fit: “And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold.”

This is not new. “The more things change the more they remain the same” is a true statement. My mom’s quoting of Jesus rings in my ears: “there will be wars and rumors of wars...” The Cold War, the Cuban Missile Crisis, the assassination of JFK, Civil Rights marches, the Watts Riots in LA, the bombing of churches in Birmingham, Vietnam with protester burning flags and overturning cars in the streets, the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr and Robert F. Kennedy, Watergate, the attempted assassination of Reagan, Rodney King... and that just takes us up to 30-35 years ago. Shall I go on?

What we see is a world without Jesus. G. K. Chesterton said, “Christianity has not been tried and

found wanting; it has never been tried.” I know what he means but I’m not sure I agree with him completely. Chesterton seems to envision an entire society that is truly “Christian” but there is nothing in the Bible that suggests that Jesus’ aim was to “convert society.” Christianity is a collective thing only insofar as we connect with each other and enjoy fellowship in the church. Otherwise, it is an individual enterprise. II Corinthians 5:10 doesn’t say that the local church will appear before the judgment seat of God, but that we — every individual — will appear, and give an account.

There is no evidence that Jesus viewed his purpose in social engineering terms. He didn’t come to reform “society” or “culture” at large. He came to save people, one person at a time. Still,

Jesus was intensely concerned with social justice, and stood up for the most vulnerable. He clearly challenged his disciples to do the same. He didn’t call his disciples the earth, but the “salt of the earth.” He doesn’t say his followers were *the world*,

but the “light of the world” (Matthew 5:13ff). They were to live within — not separate from — society (“the world”) but they were not to be *of* the world.

The world that we see on the news rarely reflects the love of Christ. Jesus wouldn’t crush the windpipe of a man of any race. Jesus wouldn’t loot stores or beat up people because of their race. Jesus wouldn’t exploit a situation for political purposes (has anyone ever lived who was as *ap*olitical as Jesus?)

Jesus invites us to a different kingdom than the world is selling us. His appeal is to individuals to follow him, not just to be saved in the end (as important as that is) but to serve his fellow man, in the name and to the glory of God. “Bear one another’s burdens and so fulfill the love of Christ” said Paul in Galatians 6:2. We must all work out how and what burdens we will bear, and whom we will bear them for. But as long as we are doing that, we are unlikely to be overly concerned with trying to get our own way, an apparent concern of so many in our world today.

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