

January 16, 2022

The View

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

Welcome Visitors

Our goal at the Folsom church of Christ is to do everything according to God’s word, including respecting its silence. We are not a denomination, not part of anything larger than this local church; we have no earthly “headquarters.” The six elders oversee this church and, ultimately, we answer only to Christ. The comments you hear today are primarily for the benefit of our own members, as we examine Scripture and seek to be built up in our faith in Christ. If you don’t understand something, please do not hesitate to ask the preacher or one of the elders. We welcome and appreciate your comments and questions on any issue and especially if you see or hear anything that you feel does not correspond to God’s word. We are here to serve; please help us do that.

**Please fill out a visitor’s card and put it in the collection plate located near the entrance.
We do not solicit donations from visitors. See page 4 for more information.**

Schedule

The Lord’s Day

9:30 AM Bible Classes

Auditorium: A Study of Paul’s Second & Third Journeys

Room 15/16: Raising Faithful Kids

Room 12: Young Adults Class

10:30 AM: Assembly

Preaching Today: David Posey

Jesus on... Loving God

Livestream at 10:30 <https://tinyurl.com/5f2cbm3y>

Bible Class @ 2:00 PM in room 12 on Judges

Bible Class @ 5 PM — A Study of Prayer in the Psalms (Auditorium)

Young Peoples’ Class, 5 PM @ David & Christie Posey’s home

Middle school class: monthly (contact Dan Stegall at 818-209-9810)

There are several on-going Bible classes in the homes of members. Check with David Posey or one of the other elders if you would like to join one of those classes.

Wednesday 7 PM @ Building

Bible classes for all ages

Auditorium: A Study of Paul’s Second & Third Journeys

Room 15/16: Raising Faithful Kids

Room 12: Young Adults Class

“There’s a lion in the street!”

God has implanted a healthy fear of dying into every one of us. A normal person does what he or she can to forestall death for as long as possible. But is an excessive fear of death compatible with Christianity?

Proverbs 22:13 and 26:13 mention the man who never goes out of his house because “there’s a lion in the street!” His fear stops him from living his life. In the context, those are the words of a “sluggard” and I’m not suggesting that those who are concerned about the dangers present in any society, including disease, are sluggards; *not at all*. But fear response is the same. The person portrayed in those proverbs is paralyzed by fear of what’s “out there” (for the sluggard, it’s just an excuse).

Yet God, in his word, tells us *not* to fear. There’s a meme that claims the Bible says, “do not be afraid” 365 times and says, “that’s a daily reminder.” It’s closer to 150 times, which is still a lot. Clearly, God wants his people to function in the world without being unduly afraid of anything, including death. Our experience with Covid in the past 22 months has tested us in this in a highly personal way. What has this experience revealed about our perspective on death? What have we learned about ourselves? I hope that we’ve learned to live well, to live without fear, in spite of circumstances (Philippians 4:11).

In regard to Covid, think about it this way: Let’s assume that when Covid lockdowns began in March 2020, there were ten Christians, new members of the church, out of the almost 400 people in our directory at the time. Due to the inability to attend Bible studies or to study, pray and sing with other Christians on a regular basis, these ten members began to grow progressively weaker. They tried Zoom, but that fell short; it was too “sterile,” too remote (*literally*). Eventually, due to lack of this vital, *personal*, connection with the church, they lost their faith and quit following Jesus.

Let’s further assume, for sake of argument, that if they they had been able to stay personally connected to their church family, attend services and interact and study and worship with other Christians — in other words, fulfill the purpose of Hebrews 10:24 (“*consider how to stir up one another to love and good works*”) — they would have remained faithful from then on. But lack of actual, personal fellowship did irreparable harm to their faith and they fell away never to return.

Now, fast forward 50 years into the future. These individuals, once fledgling disciples who needed special, personal attention but were unable to get that attention due to lockdowns or fear of contracting Covid, die at an old age outside of Christ. At judgment, they learn that they can’t blame anyone but themselves; attempt to appeal to that early experience of “going to church,” but that doesn’t suffice and they hear those chilling words, “*I never knew you, depart from me you workers of lawlessness*” (Matthew 7:21-23).

Here’s my question: wouldn’t it have been much better if those ten new Christians died fifty years earlier —

of Covid, or whatever — while they were in the process of actively building their faith in Jesus? The answer is obvious, if we have a proper perspective of what is in store for us. How can we even imagine trading 50 years of physical life to eternal life where, as the song goes, “*when we’ve been there 10,000 years...we’ve no less days to sing God’s praise than when we first began.*”

Covid has tested our personal view of death. How are you doing? Do our actions match what we say and sing about... or not?

For example, the preacher says, “***the day you die will be the best day of your life, by far!***” And we say, “***Amen, brother!!***” And, we all agree with Paul (in theory) that “to depart and be with Christ is *far better*” (Philippians 1:23) and that “***to die is gain***” (1:21). And when Jesus says this to Martha: “***I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in me, though he die, yet shall he live, and everyone who lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?***” (John 11:25-26) — we all say, “Yes, we believe this!” We love believing this.

But do we really believe this? If we really “believe this,” isn’t a *dreadful, obsessive* fear of death incompatible with that belief? After all, since shortly after Christ was raised from the dead, thousands upon thousands of Christians “*loved not their lives even unto death*” (Revelation 12:11). True, they weren’t facing a pandemic; they were facing something *far worse*: being persecuted — *murdered & tortured* — for their faith.

Disclaimers: *Yes*, we should take reasonable precautions to preserve our lives, especially during times like these. My point is *not*, “go out, get in a crowd and see if you can contract this deadly disease so you can see Jesus sooner.” And, *yes*, those who have underlying health conditions should do what they reasonably can to stay well. Moreover, the point is certainly not, “don’t worry about spreading it...” That would be irresponsible and unloving.

I don’t want anyone — friends, family or brethren — to die. A few of our faithful members have “fallen asleep in Jesus” and that leaves a void in our lives and “sorrow upon sorrow,” as Paul said, anticipating the death of Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:22). We should not ignore reasonable health protocols or fail to keep each other as safe as reasonable.

But if we are so uptight and worried that we quit serving the Lord, choosing to hunker down in our own little caves, then can it be said of us, “*they loved their lives even unto death*”? I am asking us to consider the price we may pay for preserving physical life at the expense of failing, for months at a time, to “stir up one another to love and good works.”

I guess the question is whether we think that, within reasonable bounds, that is worth risking our life for. Paul said, “*to die is gain*”

... **Is it?**

[The point of this article is not to comment or critique in any way those who must stay away from services due to serious health conditions or because of the risk of exposing others who are vulnerable. We sincerely hope this pandemic will pass soon so we can see you again. dp]

Quotes & Notes

Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable body must put on the imperishable, and this mortal body must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.”

“O death, where is your victory?

O death, where is your sting?”

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

— *1 Corinthians 15:51-58*

“If you read history you will find that the Christians who did most for the present world were precisely those who thought most of the next. It is since Christians have largely ceased to think of the other world that they have become so ineffective in this.”

C.S. Lewis. *Mere Christianity*, page 134

Who has the greatest influence on your kids' continued faithfulness?

Is it social media? Their peers? Movies and music? The church? Nope. Read on...

“The good news is that, among all possible influences, parents exert far and away the greatest influence on their children's religious outcomes. Stated differently, the bad news is that nearly all human responsibility for the religious trajectories of children's lives falls on their parents' shoulders. The empirical evidence is clear. In almost every case, no other institution or program comes close to shaping youth religiously as their parents do—not religious congregations, youth groups, faith-based schools, missions and service trips, summer camps, Sunday school, youth ministers, or anything else. Those influences can reinforce the influence of parents, but almost never do they surpass or override it. What makes every other influence pale into virtual insignificance is the importance (or not) of the religious beliefs and practices of American parents *in their ordinary lives*—not only on holy days but every day, throughout weeks and years.

“...what is nearly guaranteed is that American parents who are not especially committed, attentive, and intentional in passing on their faith will produce children who are less religious than they are, if they are religious at all...”

“So, what can committed, religious parents do to increase their chances of raising children who [have faith]...? The first answer is simply to *be themselves*: believe and practice their own [faith] genuinely and faithfully. Children are not fooled by performances. They see reality. And when that reality is authentic and life-giving, they just may be attracted to something similar.”

Handing Down the Faith: How Parents Pass Their Religion on to the Next Generation

by Christian Smith and Amy Adamczyk

Full article here: <https://tinyurl.com/2p879j99>