



A Spiritual Encouragement Message
March 27, 2020

The first live streaming Lord's Day service for the Johnson Avenue Church of Christ was seen by over 400 people. That number joined in at some point during the broadcast. In many ways it was a successful first venture into the virtual world. If you were unable to view it, the following is a very brief overview: After leading us in the partaking of the Lord's Supper, Derrick continued in our present series of lessons on faith. This particular sermon examined the events of faith surrounding the birth of Moses and was a reminder of how the nation of Israel waited for the promise of the Lord to be fulfilled.

I would like to make just two observations about this experience that might be helpful to all of us.

This first observation is that while acceptable, this necessary arrangement is not an adequate substitute for the actual assembling of the saints. We note that fellowship in the physical sense cannot be duplicated by virtual services. The wisdom of God devised our assemblies in such a way as to glorify His Name, while also enabling brethren to enjoy one another's presence. We all know that Hebrews 10:25 indicates that one purpose of the assembly is to "encourage one another to love and good works". That cannot be done satisfactorily without personal interaction between those who attend. While we have been forced by the present conditions to have these live streaming sermons, it is obvious that we are missing the fellowship God intended.

One remedy for that situation is for all of us to have as much contact as we can with our church family through texting or phone conversations during the week. Whether it be those brethren we are close to or brethren we do not know very well, spend time during the week to keep in contact with those of the Johnson Avenue Church of Christ. Find out how they are doing and be sure they have what they need. Our ability to be close to each other has never been more important.



The second observation has to do with how we respond to the intended purpose of the broadcast of worship. One of the dangers of these virtual services is that we could become careless in our demeanor. While it is obvious that we are viewing them from home and because of that there is more relaxed atmosphere, lets all be careful to remember that while viewing those services, we are involved in the worship of God. I would like to encourage all of us to take our hour of virtual worship seriously. Distractions to worship are inevitable even in the public assembly, and they surely are if we do not in some way recognize that what we're doing in these online services is worship, not some unimportant, unmeaningful activity. Our virtual worship is not just another video someone put up on the television screen or computer monitor.

May I suggest then that as we worship together in the virtual world, we attempt to prepare our minds just as we do for the sacred privilege of assembling in worship each Lords Day. Let's lay aside the need to be busy at home and those other things which would detract us from concentrating on the Lord and what he has done for us. If the mode of dress is important to you, then perhaps dress as you would if the worship was at the church building. If prayer is a great part of your preparation for the assembly, then do the same before you worship in the virtual world. The point for all of us to realize is that while the circumstances of worship are different, the attitude of worship must remain the same. Only with that realization will we derive the most benefit of that worship.

Randall Jarrell