**OUR FAITH HAS LEFT THE BUILDING**

It finally happened. It took a pandemic to force us out of our comfort zones, but we are most definitely out. Welcome to a new normal that is anything but normal. Each of us are making our way through the rapids of uncharted waters, as the fluidity of our world changes hourly. All of which says, if the Gospel is relevant and the church is bigger than a building, now is the time to show it.

I am amazed by the amount of positive things that are happening. For example, gone are social media posts about politics and photos about lunch and, instead, more references to the power and comfort of the Word. By the way, if you need to listen to a lesson in your home, dozens are available. Apparently, Satan doesn’t own all of technology.

**Back to the Future**

In the fall and winter of 1918, the “Spanish Flu” killed 700,000 Americans. Schools, businesses, and theaters closed. Departments of health urged churches to stop meeting. Most did. As quoted in *The Christian Chronicle*, preacher M.C. Kurfees of Louisville, Kentucky, sent a letter to the members of the Campbell Street church in his city. Kurfees said,

“It behooves us to cheerfully submit to this order and to exert all our energies in an earnest and sympathetic effort to cooperate with the benevolent purpose of our government to check the deplorable disease. “

Sound familiar? There were a few dissenting voices citing “we must obey God rather than men.” However, those voices (like a few today) fail to understand one essential truth: this is not a persecution issue. No one is telling us to stop sharing our faith. The powers that be are not trying to keep us from God, but trying to keep us alive. This is not an Acts 4 situation (“*they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus*”), but a Romans 13 situation (“*be in subjection to the governing powers*”).

When Jesus gave the great commands (Matt.22), He noted the second (“*love your neighbor as yourself*”) was like the first (“*love the Lord with all your heart*”). In fact, in some ways they are intertwined. One of the ways we show our love for our God is in the way we treat those around us. It is hard for a church to have a community reputation for loving people if they ignore health guidelines that place that very community at risk. None of this is fear-driven, but love driven.

**The Religious Right**

Jesus had more trouble with the religious "right" than with anyone. For example, on multiple occasions, they accused Him of disrespecting and violating Holy law by healing on the Sabbath. He was quick to remind His detractors: "*God desires mercy, not sacrifice*.” He asked, “*Which of you, having a son or an ox that has fallen into a well on a Sabbath day, will not immediately pull him out*?” The answer was obvious. However, to do so would constitute work, and work violated the seventh day rest-law. Doesn't matter. Intertwined with loving the Lord is loving your neighbor. Thus, with the two commandments, it is not either/or, but both. Thus, in times of neighbor crisis, we have tremendous opportunities to live like Jesus. To let lights shine – show our neighbors that we live for Him and that we live like Him.

**The Present Distress**

A similar situation occurs in 1 Corinthians 7 when the apostle suggested that sacred marriage be postponed due to “*the present distress*.” God is not against marriage— especially since He’s the One who gave it. God is not against saints assembling with others on the First Day—especially since He set that in motion. In both cases, the present distress takes precedent.

Sometimes there are events and challenges beyond our control that leave us with one reasonable choice: do the best you can. This is exactly what Paul instructs us to do: “*For if the readiness is present, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have*” (2 Cor.8:12). Translation: do the best you can.

**If the Lord Wills**

James nailed our predicament. “*Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit*” (4:13). The issue isn’t about planning or profit; the issue is forgetting the contingency clause: “*if the Lord wills*” (v.15). In other words, make plans, but leave room for **His** plans.

Think about your life only a few days ago. Anything different? In all of this, we learn a major truth: ***We. Are. Not. In. Control***.

As the world turns and news breaks, believers rest in peace knowing that God is still on the Throne and that He holds all of us in His hands. May our Lord take care of us and use this pandemic as a way to gain our attention. One thing for sure, our faith has left the building.

Article written by Wilson Adams in a great digital publication I recommend called:
*Pressing On Magazine* and can be subscribed to at: **pressingonmagazine.com**

Thanks Wilson, to that I say, “Amen!”

Until tomorrow… I love you

Rick