

Digital Church: Rebooting Christianity

(Jeremiah 29:4-10)

- Introduction:
1. Between the years of 1933-1945, President Franklin D. Roosevelt spoke to the American people in a very familiar and informal way through a series of evening radio broadcasts that become known as “Fireside Chats.”
 2. That is the tenor of how I want to deliver this morning’s lesson.
 - a. I want to speak to you in a very familiar, informal way, as friend-to-friend.
 - b. However, that does not mean that this morning’s lesson is not a very important matter.
 3. During the height of the pandemic, I heard people argue that “going digital” would be a death blow to Christianity as we knew it.
 - a. Some were saying we can forget about assembling for worship services and Bible classes like we used to; that day is over.
 - b. In-person-church-attendance would become about as successful as a shopping mall in a day of Amazon.
 4. And when we first went online with our services, I knew then that we would have our work cut out for us at some future time.
 5. Well, the time is now. Many are not coming back to in-person assemblies following the pandemic, arguing that if online worship was acceptable during the pandemic, then it’s acceptable after the pandemic – if not, why not?
 6. In this lesson, I want to answer this question and encourage some of us to consider our responsibilities to the church, our families, and our God.

I. Crisis Conduct

- A. (Jeremiah 29:4-10)
- B. Judah was going to be exiled to Babylon for 70 years.
- C. Consider what this meant for their worship to God.
 1. Jerusalem was destroyed, including the temple.
 2. No more Feast Days (Pentecost, Passover, Tabernacles).
 3. No more access to the temple.
 4. No more sacrifices.
 5. No more Day of Atonement.
- D. Although they could no longer do these things, they made other arrangements in their effort to stay in touch with God.
 1. They built synagogues.
 2. These were not a replacement for the temple but were an effort to keep people connected to God and his word.

II. Post-Crisis Conduct

- A. (Haggai 1:1-15).
- B. The people returned to Jerusalem after their 70 years of captivity, and apparently they didn't see the need to worship like they did prior to the captivity.
- C. Eighteen years had passed, and they had not restored their worship.
- D. God told them to rebuild the temple and that they do not have his blessings because they had failed to rebuild the temple.

III. Observations

- A. God understood and had patience with their "crisis conduct," but he did not give permission for them to continue in their "crisis conduct" after the crisis was over (Haggai 1:9).
- B. Failing to return to "normal" brought God's judgment upon the people.
- C. Is online worship for God or self?
 - 1. If you're still worshipping at home, is it because of a present crisis, or is it about what you find convenient and preferable?
 - 2. Are you doing what you're doing for God or for you?
- D. As thankful as I am for the technology we have, it cannot...
 - 1. Replace face-to-face fellowship and encouragement.
 - 2. Repel the heavy weight of isolation and loneliness.
 - 3. Replicate the touch of a hand.

- Conclusion:
- 1. We need to examine ourselves.
 - 2. The church here has always demonstrated faithfulness in attendance.
 - a. This is not a statistic about which we can boast.
 - b. It is a commitment that leads to blessings that cannot be realized any other way.
 - 3. I am thankful for the technology we have today and the way we can utilize it for good, but I am also aware of the dangers it presents.
 - 4. Weigh this sermon carefully, and act in accordance with what is right in your present circumstances.