

In Pursuit of Unity: Post Pandemic Worship

(Jeremiah 29:4-10)

- Introduction:
1. The last two years have been unlike any I have witnessed in my 38 years of preaching.
 2. 2020 blindsided us as we talked about 20/20 vision.
 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.
 6. There are several matters that need to be discussed to attain unity as well as maintain it.

I. It's Time for Most People to Come Back

- A. There are some who are saying, “If it was right to worship online during then, why is it wrong now?”
- B. That's a good and fair question.
- C. Let's allow the Bible to answer that question.
- D. Crisis Conduct (Jeremiah 29:4-10).
 1. Judah was going to be exiled to Babylon for 70 years.
 2. Consider what this meant for their worship to God.
 - a. Jerusalem was destroyed, including the temple.
 - b. No more Feast Days (Pentecost, Passover, Tabernacles).
 - c. No more access to the temple.
 - d. No more sacrifices.
 - e. No more Day of Atonement.
 3. Although they could no longer do these things, they made other arrangements in their effort to stay in touch with God.
 - a. They built synagogues.
 - b. These were not a replacement for the temple but were an effort to keep people connected to God and his word.
- E. Post Crisis Conduct (Haggai 1:1-15)
 1. The people returned to Jerusalem after their 70 years of captivity, and apparently the didn't see the need to worship like they did prior to the captivity.

2. Eighteen years had passed, and they had not restored their worship. God told them to rebuild the temple and that they do not have his blessings because they had failed to rebuild the temple.

II. Working Through Some Challenges to Unity

- A. Stop withdrawing from one another over matters of option.
 1. I know people and churches that withdrew from individuals and churches for temporarily going online.
 2. (Acts 8:4) The disciples scattered. That's the opposite of gathered.
 3. (Hebrews 10:25) Forsaking or missing?
 - B. Stop judging one another over a mask!
 1. That little piece of cloth exposed the self-will in many Christians.
 2. Ills. of what a man told me when I was wearing a mask.
 - C. How we worship may change after the pandemic.
 1. The way we worship – how we pass the elements.
 2. How we dress in worship – are there church clothes?
 3. Worship times may change.
 4. Our view of the building may change.
 - D. Stop church-hopping when we don't get our way.
 1. Church-hopping has become our default means of conflict resolution in the church.
 2. We are to be submissive (Hebrew 13:17).
 3. Ills. of elders who told a man to go back and work through his problems.
- Conclusion:
1. As thankful as I am for the technology we have, it cannot...
 - a. Replace face-to-face fellowship and encouragement.
 - b. Repel the heavy weight of isolation and loneliness.
 - c. Replicate the touch of a hand.
 2. One of the greatest things that may have come out of the pandemic is our self-awareness of how much we need the assembly.