

Don't Forsake Meeting Together

READING
Hebrews 10
Acts 2
Romans 12
Philippians 1

Church which doesn't forsake meeting together the way we have been

I was amazed with the global church's willing compliance with the directive to stop meeting together because of COVID-19.

If it had been for any other justification, I like to think we would have resisted. Passionately.

Just as the underground church has done in China and other repressive countries for decades.

They have risked their lives. Risked imprisonment. And met in secret rather than not meet at all.

But now the world is panicking because of an influenza. Admittedly one which seems particularly harsh on the elderly or otherwise infirm. But which, for more than 95% of those who get it, seems very minor.

To me it seems like we have bought into the fear. Instead of relying on our faith. And honestly, does it matter if you die?

If you have eternal life, guaranteed by the death of Yeshua...

Of course those left behind might miss us. But that will be temporary.

Paulus said in Philippians 1 that dying is actually a blessing for the individual themselves, but he was willing to remain behind if he could bless others by doing so.

But we have complied with governments, so afraid of death that they're willing to destroy their economy.

And now we don't "go to church", but instead we watch a video service on Sunday morning, or afterwards "on demand" if we couldn't make it during the "live" performance.

Not meaning to offend anyone. But that's not church.

Church is a body of believers working together to bring the message of the gospel to the world.

Reaching out in love, with a message of hope.

It's meant to be personal.

It's meant to be demonstrated.

It's meant to be engaging, and to involve us.

Church was never just a Sunday meeting.

But now it seems to have become just that.

And even worse, now the extent of our interaction is a chat panel on the side of a pre-recorded video stream.

My particular church has a fantastic online stream.

But it is limited by what it is. As they all are.

As a church we need to be interacting with each other.

Actually, even before COVID-19 the church in general wasn't doing great in terms of interacting with each other.

We weren't doing great at living church together.

Our lives should be interacting all week to the point that a chart of those interactions would look like an incredible tangled, intertwined web.

Instead, for most churches, it looks like a pom-pom, where hundreds of threads interact only at one single point. Sunday morning.

Most Christians are aware of the exhortation in Hebrews not to forsake meeting together.

This isn't just talking about Sunday morning. It never was.

As the members of the church we must meet together often.

We must find ways, even during COVID-19, to intertwine our lives with each other.

We have to find ways to encourage, support, mentor, learn and care for each other.

Even when the government says we're not allowed to physically be in the same place at the same time.

Maybe chat apps like Zoom and What's App can help.

Maybe actual phone calls, (remember those?), will keep us connected?

Let's not limit ourselves to text messages and chats.

Let's get face to face video calls, maybe as we have a coffee, together but apart.

Let's pray for each other by video call.

This is not the time for the church to hibernate. Only waking up for a video feed on Sunday.

The world needs us now, possibly more than it has for a long time.

We need to be creative to maintain our connections.

We need to maintain our relationships as a church.

And we need to keep functioning as a church.

Whether we get together on Sunday in some building is pretty much irrelevant.

Whether we live our lives together all week is what matters.

And if we do a good job now, then maybe after COVID-19 we will continue to maintain our relationships, face to face, but by other means if necessary.

Maybe after this, we will be a stronger church.

One which doesn't forsake meeting together the way we have been.