

Coach House Church BEACONS

DISTANCING - A CHALLENGE

1ST MAY 2020

A few weeks in now and I am very conscious of the distance that we are having to keep from one another. These are strange times and call for a change to the normal way of life.... Well I say that, but I am reminded that for some people this is actually the norm and I suspect they raise an eyebrow at us, wondering what all the fuss is about! Whilst we have been able to maintain fellowship through means such as Zoom meetings and 'sound recordings', the one thing I am really missing is the actual physical meeting together...being one with my church family. I really enjoy company and the physical expressions of fellowship.

In terms of the church role as pastor, I have had the privilege of praying for people who are struggling, sometimes with the mental strains of being restricted or with physical ailments and problems. Either way, the prayer has been restricted by distance and usually occurs over the phone in these current times. I miss being able to physically join with my brothers and sisters, and to express my love and concern in a real tangible way. The physical expression is important; however, the Bible tells me that when Jesus prayed for people, He wasn't always present with them, and yet healing and restoration still took place, wherever He commanded it.

Luke 7 v 1-10

Jesus Heals a Centurion's Servant

After he had finished all his sayings in the hearing of the people, he entered Capernaum. 2 Now a centurion had a servant[a] who was sick and at the point of death, who was highly valued by him. 3 When the centurion[b] heard about Jesus, he sent to him elders of the Jews, asking him to come and heal his

servant. 4 And when they came to Jesus, they pleaded with him earnestly, saying, "He is worthy to have you do this for him, 5 for he loves our nation, and he is the one who built us our synagogue." 6 And Jesus went with them. When he was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to him, "Lord, do not trouble yourself, for I am not worthy to have you come under my roof. 7 Therefore I did not presume to come to you. But say the word, and let my servant be healed. 8 For I too am a man set under authority, with soldiers under me: and I say to one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." 9 When Jesus heard these things, he marveled at him, and turning to the crowd that followed him, said, "I tell you, not even in Israel have I found such faith." 10 And when those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the servant well.

This is a great example of faith being highlighted and bringing about the things hoped for.

The fact that Jesus had turned in order to go to the Centurions house, tells us that Jesus had heard the plea and petition and was in mind to heal the Centurions servant. Jesus was going to the house with the express reason of healing the servant.

The fact that Jesus did not actually stand face to face or even in the same room, made no difference to the outcome.

The Centurion displayed his faith in Jesus and His miracle performing ability.

He absolutely understood that Jesus had the power to perform this healing and miracle and as long as Jesus agreed to the matter, then He only had to speak the word and sickness and disease had to obey! The physical requirement was not necessary to make the spiritual take place!

Hebrews 11 v 1 By Faith We Understand

Now faith is the [a]substance of things hoped for, the [b]evidence of things not seen.

The Centurion was demonstrating this principle. The substance of all things hoped for was the healing of the servant. The fact that the centurion didn't need to see Jesus do anything physical was the evidence of things not seen – it was understood that if Jesus intended it to happen – then it would!

How amazing for the people of the time, when Jesus was able to be with them, walking side by side, talking, teaching and loving them. The restriction they had however, was that when Jesus was not able to be with them, they had to rely on their faith or belief in who Jesus said he was – the Son of God. Many times we see that when Jesus was not present with them the disciples would fall back on their own understanding of situations and start to panic or even abandon Jesus.

There are even cases of the disciples panicking when Jesus was with them, famously when Jesus was asleep in a boat with them and a storm came upon them. They panicked because they thought that Jesus was unaware of their circumstances.

I wonder how many times we believe that Jesus is not aware of what we are going through?

We actually have the advantage of the Holy Spirit living within us, helping us, directing us, assuring us of the connection we have with God through Jesus.

In some respects this makes us a very fortunate group of people. We are totally connected to a Holy God, through the gift of salvation we claim through Jesus, which is guaranteed within us by the Spirit within us.

But it calls for faith – the same faith the centurion had – the understanding and assurance that anything Jesus commands will happen.

This means that any promises that Jesus makes WILL come to pass..... and when you read the Bible you will discover that those promises are many!

And so I am encouraged. Church, even when we are having to distance, doesn't stop or function any less. If anything it can be a means by which we get closer to each other spiritually and the amazing depth of our relationships revealed.

John 20 v 29

Jesus said to (Thomas) "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

The substance of this passage is that Jesus was stating that believing in Him whilst he was still in the disciples presence was a blessing, but how much more for those who believe without seeing him physically. In other words Jesus was telling the disciples that his time on earth in a physical human body was nearing its end, and whilst it was good to believe whilst they had him with them, there would be many who would believe , have faith, after he had returned to the Father in heaven.

There was a very real reason for Jesus to be physically present for a time. The bible tells us it is so that we can be confident that there is nothing that we endure that Jesus did not. Shame, guilt, punishment and death, Temptation and pain and rejection – all tasted by Jesus. Being born out of marriage, having a family tree full of rogues and questionable values. Having nothing and being tried as guilty when innocent. All amongst the attributes that means that Jesus understands us fully.

Jesus is not with us physically, but He is with us. We look forward to the day when we will be physically with Jesus forever but in the meantime we continue to have faith and believe.

We look forward to the time when we can physically be together once again with our families, our loved ones, our church, but in the meantime we are thankful for the connections we have with each other by the Spirit within us.

Lets pray:

Father thank you that you do not leave us alone.

You give us the Spirit to keep us connected to You.

In our weakness and frailty, in our sicknesses and loneliness, You keep us and strengthen us.

You do not abandon us, but use all circumstances to bring us closer to You, to shape us in the character of Jesus.

Help us to maintain and deepen our understanding of You, to use the time we have wisely and to listen to your voice.

Help us to respond with faith as we hear you.

In Jesus name, Amen.



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