

Reflections on a Virus-Restricted Sunday

This is a rare Sunday. Only during a few blizzard-blasted, snow-drift Sundays can I recall a Lord's day when the saints didn't gather to praise God in our little church building. But the present virus restrictions cause us—obedient citizens that we are—to obey that governor and tell all our flock to stay home today.

So we did. No Bible study or worship in our place of worship today. As the governor requested, it's empty. Quiet. Dark. Locked. And, like most of us who usually are there on Sunday morning, it seems odd (depressing?) (unsettling?) not to be in our regular pews.

Being stuck at home, though, didn't keep most of us from hearing Scriptures read and a good sermon delivered. I enjoyed Howie Batson's excellent TV sermon on the Lord's command, "Fear not," and the psalmist's assurance that our changeless God is our refuge and strength and he's always with us. (If I had not wanted to listen to a Baptist, I had access to at least a dozen C of C services on YouTube or live streaming, but Howie's solidly biblical admonitions suited me and cogently addressed the present virus mess.) All of us today need to hear Jesus telling us, "Fear not."

But, like most of us in the C of C, few Sundays during my adult life have passed without communion. And I missed it. You probably did too. Although, when I think about it, this communion-less Lord's day was no different for me than the one I spent in a hospital bed a couple of years ago. Nor was it any more of a spiritual disaster for any us than the blizzard Sundays I mentioned earlier. We missed the bread and the cup on those days, but life went on and none of us feared for our souls because we missed them. Today is no different.

In our heritage, though, some of us were taught to fear for our souls if we failed to commune regularly. Weekly visits to the holy Table are as necessary as baptism, we were taught. So, because of that early training, today's locked church doors probably left at least some of our people afraid and desperately wondering what to do. In fact, I heard that some were rummaging around yesterday trying to get communion bread and grape juice. That's fine, if it blesses them. But this might be a good time for us to look more closely at our Bibles and verify that nowhere in God's word does it tell us how often to commune.

Weekly communion was passed down to us by our spiritual ancestors, and it blesses most of us. But the frequency of communion is never addressed in the New Testament. Instead, Jesus says, "As often as you do this, do it in memory of me." Quite likely the apostles and earliest believers remembered him at every meal as they broke bread and shared wine. But no biblical rule exists telling us never to miss a Sunday. Still, I missed communing with our people today. And that's a huge part of communion. Communing. Doing it with others we love, others who share our love of Jesus. I miss doing that today, and I pray that the virus restrictions soon will be lifted so that we can sing and meditate and commune together. Until then, know that God is still in control of our world, and Jesus loves us still, whether we're in his house or in our own today.