**CO VID 1 9**

*March 22, 2020*

*San Angelo, Texas*

This morning, we find ourselves in unchartered waters. There is no playbook or script as we attempt to navigate through these troubled times. As we gather to worship this morning, we realize that this Lord’s Day morning is unlike any before – at least in our lifetime.

As our country goes into lockdown mode over the infamous COVID 19 virus, the church must balance its scriptural responsibility with civic responsibility as well. For that reason, the decision was made that in consideration of member safety as well as public safety, we will only assemble this morning and then temporarily suspend afternoon and evening services. Hopefully this storm will pass quickly and things can return to normal.

For a short message this morning, let us consider the words of Jesus to His Apostles in Matthew chapter 10. The Apostles were about to be sent out on their own to proclaim the coming kingdom of God. Jesus was very specific – do not go to the Gentiles and do not go to the Samaritans. Rather, “go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel”. He spoke of opportunities that would be worthy, as well as those that would not be. It was to these unfriendly places that Jesus gave the advice to “shake off the dust from your feet” – in other words, do not spend time in an unfruitful area.

Jesus gave this instruction as the Apostles prepared to leave on their journeys:

**(Matthew 10:16)**

Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves. Therefore be wise as serpents and harmlessas doves.

Notice the two examples:

1) wise as serpents

2) harmless as doves

Now I realize that the situation the Apostles faced is not the same as our current condition, but I see some similarity. The Apostles were instructed to be wise as serpents. That is, be prudent. Be cautious. Be discrete and avoid undue danger, even in the administration of God’s word. Likewise, they were called upon to be harmless as doves. That is, do no harm to others. Do not be overaggressive. Think of others first. They were not expected to live their lives in fear for what might happen to them, but at the same time were not expected to be reckless.

In this unprecedented turn of events, we need to consider these words! It is with great distress that the doors of this house will not be open at scheduled times, but that is prudent, cautious and discrete. It is our solemn desire to worship God as He has commanded, but we would never want to bring harm upon our fellow man. Ah, to be wise as serpents yet harmless as doves.

Let us take this event to teach our young….to teach our friends...and possibly remind ourselves – THIS BUILDING IS NOT THE CHURCH. WE ARE THE CHURCH.

The Church does not cancel. The Church does not go into hiatus. The Church will never cease to exist.

**(Daniel 2:44)**

And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.

This situation may be unique for us, but it is not unique for the Church. After all, the Church survived

* The devastation caused by Saul of Tarsus
* The purge of the Roman Empire
* The Black Death of the Middle Ages
* Spanish Flu Epidemic of 1917
* World Wars

AND IT WILL SURVIVE COVID 19!

It is our responsibility to assemble upon the first day of the week.

 **(Acts 20:7)**

 Now on the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread…

We are not to forsake this solemn invitation.

 **(Hebrews 10:25)**

…not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting one another

If the situation ever arises where man’s law and God’s law contradict, we will find a way to follow God.

 **(Acts 5:29)**

We ought to obey God rather than men.

The Church stands ready to assist those that are in need and fulfill its mission.

I would like to close with a verse from Colossians.

**CO ~~VID~~ 1:9**

 **(Colossains 1:9)**

For this reason we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding;

Pray for one another. Fill your hearts with spiritual knowledge not the panic of Facebook. Have understanding of the will of God. Use wisdom in all decisions. Stay safe and God bless the Church.