



Sunday Mornings

June 9, 2021

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Little by little we are emerging. With vaccination rates increasing, we are slowly gaining confidence in our ability to safely gather together for worship. Sometimes we're choosing to worship outside as weather cooperates, or on a reservation basis, or making masks optional. As I always say to my dog when she clambers into the backseat and I'm ready to shut the car door, "Watch your tail." It's mostly a reminder for me, but to the extent she understands English, it's a call for us to exercise care together. It's worked so far.

We have a chance to stop this virus in its tracks, but it will still take all of us to exercise care. If you are eligible to receive the vaccine, I'd encouraged you to do so. As long as the virus finds a way to circulate, we run the risk that it will mutate again, with the likelihood that we'll all get set back to the desperation of 2020. Emerge safely, my friends.

As we do so, I am reminded of a comment from Russ Lockhart, a faculty member at the Vancouver School of Theology and frequent author and speaker on the post-COVID church. He claims that we've asked too much from Sunday worship services. We place our energy and focus on having excellent Sunday worship, which washes over us for an hour or so, and then we start planning for the next service in a week. He laments that we don't create enough time for reflection and praxis, that is, putting into practice what we are hearing and sensing during worship.

I raise this because I wonder whether the return to gathered worship on Sundays will be enough. Will it cure what ails us? It might spur some temporary enthusiasm as we reunite with people we've missed; it will resurrect our nostalgia for coffee hour and potlucks. I wonder, however, how long will that last?

We have come through a pandemic that sucked us dry and stole people we love. It ruined businesses and interrupted cherished events. Returning to gathered worship will be delightful, but have we asked too much of our Sunday services? Along the theme of "life's too short," some of our members may choose other options for Sunday morning – if an hour of worship is all that comes with church engagement. If being part of the church is only about our Sunday worship, some may decide there are more engaging, important, or self-sustaining activities for that time.

Imagine instead that Sunday morning is just the start of our week's discipleship. What if the music or sermon or prayers drove us into deep reflection and deeper biblical inquiry? What if we then practiced what was preached, experimenting with or refining how we live into our Christian calling? If life is indeed too short, then we'd best not miss the opportunity for Christian discipleship from Monday to Saturday, because that's the good stuff. The time of reflection and practice brings meaning to everyday activities and, in turn, makes us hunger for the gathering of the faithful on Sunday morning to worship God. I pray our emergence will focus not just on excellent worship, but on the fullness of our spiritual walk every day of the week.