

A Limited Launch, but Greater Glory

A couple of weeks ago I posted a series of short videos on this subject of **“A Limited Launch, but Greater Glory.”** We are going to talk about it some more today to see and hear what God is saying in this present hour.

It was October 11, 1958 when Nasa launched its first rocket, Pioneer 1. By March, 1959 Pioneer 4 made the first U.S. lunar flyby. And on May 5, 1961 Freedom 7 carried the first American into space. Then, in July 1969, Nasa, in a historical world-first, successfully landed men on the moon. It was a spectacular moment and the world cheered.

But then fast forward to September 2008 when SpaceX sent Falcon 1, the first privately funded rocket into orbit. SpaceX intentionally started with the smallest useful orbital rocket instead of building a more complex and riskier launch vehicle. They have made great strides in reducing the costs of sending and even resending rockets into space, thereby opening many more opportunities for future projects.

It is yet to be seen, but while Nasa has always been viewed as the leader and authority on space travel, SpaceX, with its smaller beginnings and lower budgets may become the new leader in space exploration. It's a reminder to not judge a project by its meager beginnings.

There are many stories of humble beginnings leading to great success. In fact, the founder of SpaceX, Elon Musk, had been the janitor of a lumber mill boiler room. He's now worth 21 billion dollars. Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon, was a cashier at McDonalds. The Apple computer company started in a garage by a college dropout. Small beginnings do not necessarily mean small achievements.

As we are getting ready to reopen the church we can see that it will probably be a small beginning. There have been a lot of details to consider and a number of preparations to be made and as we are setting the plan in motion, one thing we are certain of is this – things won't be just like they used to be. And, it won't be the grand relaunch we were originally thinking of. It will be smaller than we had hoped. And, that may be difficult for some when we reopen – things will be different. So, how will we handle those changes?

☞ Jeremiah 31:6 says, “There will be a day when watchmen cry out on the hills of Ephraim, 'Come, let us go up to Zion, to the Lord our God.'”

☞ That day is here. In fact, **God willing, OBC will be open next Sunday, May 31.** The Governing Board will be meeting this afternoon to make a final decision. So, I think I can say, “Come let us go up to OBC, to the Lord our God next Sunday!” I am glad that we are finally at a point that we can begin gathering together again. However, the government recommended guidelines will greatly affect how we go about having church together. It won't be the same as it was and we don't know just how long those guidelines will be in place. We are getting everything ready to roll this week, so be on the lookout for an email and other notifications about our guidelines for gathering. There will be details about the changes we are implementing, including official

opening time, social distancing, seating arrangements and more. We want you to be informed and ready because **things will be different.**

I recently spoke from the book of Haggai about the rebuilding of the temple. During that time some of the people were lamenting that the new temple didn't look like the old one and it wasn't the same. Some were discouraged, some were frustrated, and some I'm sure were oblivious. Some probably wondered why it was taking so long. Others, no doubt, wanted to take their time and make sure it was done right. But most were simply bummed out that it wasn't like it used to be. I think we can all relate to one or more of those responses and we need to be mindful of how we react to other's points of view. Let's make sure we are respectful and loving through it all. But I want to focus on what I imagine we will all be feeling as we gather together again... "It's not the same as it was."

In Haggai 2, God reminded the people that even though it didn't look and feel the same, he was still with them. He even said that the glory of the new would be greater than that of the old. I think God is saying the same thing to us today. Yes, it will be different when we get together soon and for awhile beyond that. But, **God is still with us and I think he is wanting to do something even greater than we have experienced in the past.**

Zechariah was a prophet around the same time as Haggai and he also dealt with people who mourned the former ways. In his prophecy God asked some hard questions...

Zechariah 7:4-6

4 Then the word of the Lord Almighty came to me: 5 "Ask all the people of the land and the priests, 'When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months for the past seventy years, was it really for me that you fasted? 6 And when you were eating and drinking, were you not just feasting for yourselves?"

Since we can finally get back together soon, we need to ask ourselves similar questions. And as we come to the proper responses we will be prepared to meet under these different circumstances. As you think about missing the days of getting together every week, it's important to identify what you really missed. I hear the Lord asking, "In the past, **why did you go to church?"** "Was it really for me?" "Were you just there for yourselves?"

Those are tough questions and we may have to admit that we mostly miss each other and being together. While fellowship and love for each other are important, those are not the primary reasons we gather together. **The First and Greatest Commandment is to love the Lord with all your heart, soul and mind.** Loving each other is the *Second* Greatest Commandment. (Matthew 22:36-40)

We need to personally evaluate our priorities. When I read the scripture, particularly the Psalms, I see a hunger and thirst for God, himself. I see an overwhelming desire to praise and worship the Lord. Yes, there is joy in joining together, but the great desire is not simply to get together, but to meet with God; to love him wholeheartedly, with singing and praises.

☞ **Let's prepare ourselves for regathering by personally evaluating our priorities.** Do we miss the old normal and simply want to get back to that? We tend to like our structures and routines and those have been drastically changed for the past couple of months. We want to get back to normal. But it won't be the normal that we were accustomed to.

Do we miss seeing each other face to face and spending time with each other? Probably, we do. And, this point is tricky, because we should love each other and therefore, we miss each other. But, is that the main reason we "have church?" Are we just missing our friends?

Let's make sure God is first and foremost in our desire for reopening the church.

☞ **Psalms 122:1 says, "I rejoiced with those who said to me, "Let us go to the house of the Lord."**

I am rejoicing that we will be going to church again very soon. Hopefully, you are too. Yet again, we need to think about our thinking and why we miss going to church. The writer here uses the phrase, "the house of the Lord." He didn't say "the house of my normal routine." And, he didn't say "the house of my friends." He said "the house of the Lord."

Let's keep that in mind as we plan for church together. We will regather at the "house of the ☞ Lord." **It's all about him.** If we can focus on the Lord, we will be far less likely to be discouraged at the changes in our gatherings. Really, deep down, **it shouldn't matter very much what the circumstances and settings are like as long as we are meeting with God.** Hear what the Psalms say about a heart that is after God...

☞ **Psalms 42:1-2**

As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. 2 My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?

☞ **Psalms 63:1-4**

God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water. 2 I have seen you in the sanctuary and beheld your power and your glory. 3 Because your love is better than life, my lips will glorify you. 4 I will praise you as long as I live, and in your name I will lift up my hands.

☞ **Psalms 84:1-2**

How lovely is your dwelling place, O Lord Almighty! 2 My soul yearns, even faints, for the courts of the Lord; my heart and my flesh cry out for the living God.

☞ **Psalms 84:10**

Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere; I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God than dwell in the tents of the wicked.

In these passages, the writer is expressing his deep desire to meet with God. He even reminisces about the former days when he was with the multitudes going to the Lord's house and with the

festive throng shouting the Lord's praises. That sounds a lot like what many of us are feeling – we are missing getting together and having church.

Again, I want us to see that the main thing being expressed is the desire to meet with God. Notice the terminology: "My soul pants for you." "My soul thirsts for God." "My soul yearns for you." "My body longs for you." "My heart and flesh cry out for the living God." "When can I go and meet with God?" There is **a singular focus** in these expressions – it's all about **meeting with God**.

Let's set our hearts and minds on this singular focus. Here's another portion from the Psalms that expresses this singularity.

☞ **Psalms 27:4**

One thing I ask of the Lord, this is what I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple.

We will be having church together to meet with God. We want to gaze upon his glory. We want to seek him when we gather. Let's echo that 63rd Psalm – "earnestly I seek you."

Yes, we can enjoy each other's company, but let's make the same determination as the Psalmists – "I will glorify; I will praise; I will lift my hands; I will sing your praises." "Better is one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere." Let's make that our heart's cry.

☞ **Zechariah 4:9-10**

⁹ "Zerubbabel is the one who laid the foundation of this Temple, and he will complete it. Then you will know that the Lord of Heaven's Armies has sent me. ¹⁰ **Do not despise these small beginnings**, for the Lord rejoices to see the work begin, to see the plumb line in Zerubbabel's hand."

☞ **Haggai 2:2-9**

"Speak to Zerubbabel son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, to Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people. Ask them, ³ 'Who of you is left who saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? **Does it not seem to you like nothing?**' ⁴ But now **be strong**, O Zerubbabel,' declares the Lord. 'Be strong, O Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest. Be strong, all you people of the land,' declares the Lord, 'and work. For I am with you,' declares the Lord Almighty. ⁵ 'This is what I covenanted with you when you came out of Egypt. And **my Spirit remains among you. Do not fear.**' ⁶ "This is what the Lord Almighty says: 'In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth, the sea and the dry land. ⁷ I will shake all nations, and the desired of all nations will come, and I will fill this house with glory,' says the Lord Almighty. ⁸ 'The silver is mine and the gold is mine,' declares the Lord Almighty. ⁹ **'The glory of this present house will be greater than the glory of the former house,**' says the Lord Almighty. 'And in this place I will grant peace,' declares the Lord Almighty."

When we meet again, hopefully next Sunday, it's going to feel different and probably won't feel like church as we have known it. For many, it will likely feel "less than" what we had imagined. Originally, I had envisioned a packed house with a pumped-up celebration and lots of high-fives and hugs. But it probably won't be like that. It will seem like something altogether different and it may feel small and insignificant compared to what we have been accustomed to and what we have been looking forward to.

But, let's keep our priorities in place – we will be gathering together to meet with God, regardless of what the format and seating may look like. **It's not "less than," it's just different.** So, when we do gather again, let's not despise and lament the small beginnings, but instead, **let's rejoice that we are together again to worship the Lord.** And I believe God's promise is that the glory of this new house will be even **greater** than the **glory** of the former. Now, that's something I can get on board with! Let's make that our heart's cry.

It's all about Jesus (music video)