

# FIVE FORKS BRETHREN IN CHRIST CHURCH

www.ffbic.org

**SERMON:** *A Time to Reflect*  
**SERIES:** *Stand Alone – Processing 2020*  
**SCRIPTURES:** *Philippians 4:11-13; Genesis 28; Hebrews 12:2-4*  
**SPEAKER:** *Shaun Kipe*  
**DATE:** *2020 – 7 – 26*

---

*\*Credit to John Ortberg (God is Closer than you Think.); Dallas Willard; John Mark Comer (Ruthless Elimination of Hurry);*

Well good morning, it so great to worship with you.

We just finished up a sermon series last week on a few key verses in Exodus 34. Talking about who God is, what he's like. And next week Pastor Bill starts a series called "Make it or Break It (**SERIES GRAPHIC**). Looking at the life of one of Israel's most well-known kings...David.

But we kind of have this one week, today...in between series. A few weeks ago when I first started thinking about what this Sunday could look like, I thought you know sometimes it's just good to hit the pause button and reflect.

We're a little over half-way through 2020 and what year it has been already. Just think through some of what we've experienced.

Worldwide pandemic.

Economic devastation.

Political turmoil.

Racial tension.

Media & Social Media wars.

Wild Fires in Australia & reports of Murder hornets...which almost seem insignificant in comparison.

I've been amused by some of these humorous meme's about 2020?

### **MEME's**

And it ain't over yet, is it? School didn't even start back up and guess what, this year is an election year. That ought to simmer things down a little.

I chuckled to myself, when I thought about us, here at Five Forks, when I looked back on where we started the year. We did a series on the importance of community life...eating together, working together, worshipping together...and then spent the next 6 months in isolation from one another!

But, as I started to think back over the year, I began to realize there are various ways we might respond to what we've experienced. Of course some are humorous. But if we really get serious in thinking about this year. It would be easy to end up **angry** or even **depressed** because of the circumstances we find ourselves in.

Some high school and college seniors missed graduation celebrations.

Teachers and students missed farewells at the end of the school year.

Families missed vacations.

Some couples have had to significantly alter their wedding arrangements.

Some have lost lives and in isolation from their loved ones.

It would be easy to begin thinking 2020 has been taken from us. Not Fair. Woe is me. Curl up in the corner and hide. Wait til it's all over and the come out again. Or throw a temper tantrum.

Is there a better way?

If you have a Bible turn with me to Philippians 4.

The Apostle Paul wrote some really challenging words for times such as this...[Philippians 4:11-13](#)

**<sup>11</sup> ...I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. <sup>12</sup> I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. <sup>13</sup> I can do all this through him who gives me strength.**

Do you understand what Paul is saying? **For followers of Jesus, circumstances do not dictate our lives or attitudes or experiences.**

In fact, it's almost humorous or ironic to think about...but when Paul wrote those words he was most likely, confined to his home (quarantined) under house arrest.

I'm not saying we need to enjoy the current circumstance that we are experiencing. But I do believe that if we are willing to...**embrace and reflect and learn from our circumstances this can be a significant year for us as church and for us as individuals.**

And that's really the heart behind our message today. We want to push the pause button and talk about, think about what we have learned, what we can learn even in the midst of this challenging season.

So I want to highlight three lessons that I have been learning. I hope you can resonate with them. And then I encourage you, this week, to take some time. Find a quiet place, without distractions. No people. No Television. No work. No screens/devices. No cell phones. Think back on your year so far.

- **What you've experienced? (Good and bad.)**
- **How you've felt? (Pour out those emotions to God).**
- **What you're learning?**

First, I have been reminded that...

**a. The Church is more than a building.**

This has been a cliché for many years. Something corny to say, or place on a bumper sticker or a plaque on a wall. But I personally have been challenged to wrestle with how firmly I believe it.

It's easy to say God is present everywhere, in every moment, in church and away from church. But when the rubber meets the road, it turns out that, if we're not careful...the church, our relationship with Jesus becomes that one hour, in that one building, once a week because that's where Church happens, that's where worship happens and that's where God is.

Take that one hour away on Sunday morning, and it's almost like we don't know how to behave. Many people think Church isn't happening right now, because it's difficult or challenging to go to the building.

It's like, we think, we aren't able to meet with God, and be with God and grow with God. And I wonder, if behind all of that, it's because for so many, for so long church WAS the building. We got into the habit of leaving God behind at the church every week. We were never really in the habit of taking Him home with us, in our daily lives, anyway.

The Israelites had a hard time with this concept as well. They got stuck putting God and God's presence in a building (the Temple) or a specific location (Israel).

Many of you are familiar with the story of **Jacob and Esau**, two brothers. In the story, Jacob cheats Esau out of his birthright, which makes Esau extremely mad. Esau threatens to kill him. So Jacob runs away from home. He runs into the desert wilderness.

Now listen to what happens, its' just really fascinating... **When he reached a certain place, he stopped for the night...** (When he reached...where? Text says, just a certain place.)

That's the Hebrew way of saying, "the middle of nowhere...Nowhere in particular...a place of no importance". It's like he pulled over on the side of the road, a place with nothing special about it.

Kind of like when people, who aren't from around here ask me where I'm from and I say, "I'm from the thriving metropolis of Mont Alto." They've never heard of it before. And I have to qualify it with things likes, "It's near Gettysburg and Chambersburg."

Jacob, pulled over in the middle of nowhere, a place of no significance.

But that night something fascinating happened...He had dream. He saw a ladder with angels ascending and descending. And there at the top of the ladder was God, saying, **"I am the Lord...<sup>15</sup> I am with you and will watch over you wherever you go...I will not leave you..."**

Here and there and everywhere and even in the middle of nowhere..."I'll be there."

Sometimes, we just need reminded of that don't we? When you walk out of this room. This building. When the livestream ends. You are not leaving God behind. You are not leaving worship behind. You are not even leaving church behind. The earliest followers of Jesus needed reminded of that...

**Acts 7:48-50 - <sup>48</sup> “...the Most High does not live in houses made by human hands. As the prophet says: <sup>49</sup> “Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. What kind of house will you build for me? says the Lord. Or where will my resting place be? <sup>50</sup> Has not my hand made all these things?”**

Keep reading, this is just really fascinating and so applicable to us.

### **16 When Jacob awoke from his sleep,**

Sometimes, in life and in our routines, and in faith and in our churches, we need to wake up from our sleep. We get all nice and cozy and comfortable with how things are. We develop certain ways of thinking. And sometimes we need to wake up. And sometimes to help us wake up it takes a worldwide pandemic that throws us off course.

And in the midst of our wandering we have this opportunity to re-discover an incredible reality. In this case, that God isn't just at 9244 Five Forks Road. And worship isn't just an hour on a Sunday morning. And Church isn't just that building we go to.

So Jacob woke up from his sleep and...**thought, “Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it.”**

See if we get stuck living, as if God was left at the church building we can go about our lives, completely unaware of His presence everywhere else. Aware of His presence at church. But what about at home, with my wife and kids? What about at work and with my boss and with my co-workers? And what about at the soccer field? And in my car? And what about in the grocery store?

And notice how this little episode ends for Jacob.

**17 He said, “How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God; this is the gate of heaven.”**

This, middle of nowhere place, is the house of God...this is Church.

Folks if you were solely relying on this one hour each Sunday morning, sitting in this beautiful air-conditioned auditorium on soft, comfy chairs, is what you thought Church was, where God showed up each week for a visit, you were sadly mistaken and you were missing out already.

Don't get me wrong this one hour every week is a crucial part of the journey of faith. We need it. We need each other. We did a whole sermon series on the importance of our community life and worshipping together. But we have an opportunity right now, more than ever before to be reminded that the church is not this building.

There are a lot of churches that have used the language of **“re-opening”** as restrictions are lifted. The problem is, re-opening makes it sound like the church was closed because you couldn't go to the building. When in reality, the church was never closed. Because the church isn't just that building, it's the people of God meeting yes, but also...learning, encouraging, serving, growing, memorizing every day. Worship isn't just what you were doing at 8am or 9:30am on Sunday morning. It was the life you were living. And God wasn't camped out at the church waiting for you to come back each week.

I love the language that another church chose to use...instead of re-opening, they spoke of **re-gathering**. Kind of gives the impression, we were never closed. We just weren't able to meet together in the same physical location for a while but church, worship and growing with God all of that was still happening. And now we're really looking forward to that aspect of our church family re-gathering in ways that are safe and possible.

Some people have been concerned about the government shutting down churches and houses of worship. We don't have to worry about that. The government can't shut the church down. Because the church is not just a place or time slot. It's a life we live, no matter the circumstances. We gotta know that, believe that, live that...no matter the circumstances. Isn't that just a great reminder for us Five Forks! So take this opportunity to not think of the church being closed but to just practice church in different ways. "This is none other than the house of God..."

Second, I've also been learning that...

**b. Slowing down is necessary.**

In a world of more, more, more...of wealth, efficiency, fast-pace, non-stop busyness. Work, School, athletics, church activities, groceries, cleaning the house. I hadn't realized how much I was living the life of frantic busyness. Because it's our culture and it happens to all of us without realizing it. And the scary part is that for most of us that **busyness becomes LIFE!**

Dallas Willard was once asked what the greatest threat to Christianity in North America is: Is it secularization? Is it Atheism? Intellectualism? Liberalism or Fundamentalism? Greed/Wealth/Power?

Do you know what his answer was? **Hurry.** Hurry, he said is the greatest threat to North American Christianity. "**Hurry involves excessive haste or a state of urgency. The simple essence of hurry is...too much to do.**"

We fill our lives frantically running from place to place in fear of missing out and so we try to do everything. In fact, it's like an addiction.

This why there are so many people getting upset that this pandemic has stolen away our lives because we are addicted the busyness, the noise, the fast pace. I'm realizing I was.

I have been learning that less actually is more. And that I've been carrying around a lot of excess in my life and this year is helping me to eliminate some of that.

I've learning that Jesus did know what he was talking about when he said things like... **“Go sell all you have and just come follow me.”** Make your life about that. **“Come to me all you who are weary and burdened...and I will give you rest.”**

This is an invitation from Jesus to a life free from hurry.

The pandemic may perhaps be one of the greatest invitations you'll ever receive, in our world. The invitation to take a deep breath, slow down, to put your cell phone away, your agenda aside, to slow your heart rate, to let God take care of the world...to eliminate the excess from life.

This is healing for your soul and your life.

Willard says, **“We (North American Christians) must ruthlessly eliminate hurry from our lives.”**

It must be done with intentionality and purpose, stubbornness...ruthlessness. So let me just suggest some really practical things you could try over the next several weeks in an effort to simplify and slow down.

**Log off of social media** for a while.

I was actually reading this...based on a study from 2016, the average iPhone user “touches” his/her phone 2,617 times a day. The study counted a touch as every tap,

type, swipe and click on a cell phone in a day. And an average of 145 mins of cell phone screen time a day.

That's called addiction. Gotta see, gotta know, what am I missing? Set it aside. Just see what that will do for your soul. Did you know most cell phones track your usage? End of the day, for the next week just check your usage at the end of the day and then think back to what that time was spent doing.

**Go for a walk**, each morning, get up early go for a walk and pour your heart to Jesus. Notice birds and flowers, trees, grass. See if that doesn't begin to impact you, your life, your attitude, your perspective on this pandemic, people on the other side...your worries. Just slow down and rest in the arms of Jesus every morning.

**Play a game/Eat a meal together. (PICTURE OF KIPE FAMILY)** Myself and Jenny and our kids we've been doing far more of that. Families, that time in the evening that used to be filled with your kids extra-curricular activities and sports schedules...you have a great opportunity.

**Read a story book**, read a Bible story together. We make such an effort to get our kids back to athletic practice. Our culture is making such an effort right now, what if followers of Jesus made that same effort, in the evening to sit and talk about how Jesus showed up in your world today.

I've been thinking a lot about this. Little Keagan he's pretty athletic and he can be a very good soccer player if he wants to be. And we love to play together, but I've been reminded over the cancellation of our soccer seasons/camps, that one day soccer will end, no matter how far Keagan makes it. And what Keagan really needs to know about life, is that you can't make soccer your foundation for life.

Jesus tried to warn his followers of this, it's just our culture and the patterns of living we create, we forget... **“Don't store up treasures on earth where moth's and**

**vermin destroy and where thieves break in and steal. But store up treasures in heaven where moth's and vermin do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."**

Some of us, have the opportunity to realize that we've been doing a lot of storing up on earth's treasures. And those earthly treasures are being taken from us. And we don't like it. Because we've given our heart to them. We think they are life. We are kicking and screaming. We have the opportunity right now, to start letting some of those things go. And discovering that Jesus truly is the only treasure we can count on. **"Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well."**

I just bet if you do that, you might find yourself like Paul. **"I have learned the secret of contentment in every situation."**

Or you might just find yourself like Jacob.

**"Surely the LORD is in this place, and I was not aware of it. This is none other than the house of God...How awesome is this place."**

But I'll warn you this will NOT be easy...Willard says,

**"To choose to live an unhurried life in our day is somewhat like taking a vow of poverty (or chastity) in earlier centuries. It is scary. It is an act of faith."**

Finally, I think I've learned that...

**c. If I don't keep our eyes focused on Jesus, I fall into the trap of grumbling and complaining about life.**

Grumbling and complaining is a phrase used throughout the Old Testament, for the nation of Israel, God's people when they didn't get what they wanted. When the journey across the desert was hard. When they didn't have enough to eat or drink, when they didn't like what they did have to eat or drink.

You have heard and seen and many of us have even participated in the grumbling and complaining over the little things, in the past several months. Folks, we the church in North America, do not realize how good we have it. Do you realize that in our world today, and everyday there is a "persecuted church." Go to **Voice of the Martyrs** website and begin reading their stories...real persecuted followers of Jesus, meeting secretly, clandestinely, because they will be ridiculed, imprisoned and sometimes worse for choosing to follow Jesus. And I wonder what they must think of us at times like this. How soft I am (we are)...how soft and shallow our faith must look, the things we grumble and complain about to followers of Jesus suffering real persecution? It's because we have moved our eyes off of Jesus and onto such secondary things in our world.

**Hebrews 12:2-4 –...let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, <sup>2</sup> fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith...so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.**

There's old hymn that has been coming back to me over the course of this pandemic.

When I'm about to get angry, lose my temper. When I'm getting discouraged. When I about to complain or grumble. Really great words.

*"Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in his wonderful face. And the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace."*

I was reading a story about a little boy whose mom had died. He was especially sad and lonely at night. He would come into his father's room and ask if he could sleep with him. Even, then he could not rest, until he knew not only that he was with his father, but that his father's face was turned toward him. And so he would whisper quietly, "Daddy, is your face turned toward me now?" "Yes," his father would say, "You are not alone. I'm with you. My face is turned toward you." When at last the boy was reassured of this, he could rest.

There is something reassuring about knowing the one who is in control has his eyes on me and in return I can look right back at Him.

What will school look like for my kids and my wife this fall?

Will Keagan get to play U8 Soccer?

Will Ady participate in Gym meets?

Will Landon miss a year of piano lessons?

What will happen in our nation, as we move closer to election time?

What will happen if the pandemic meets head on with flu season?

What will happen if it takes longer to find a vaccine?

You've had these thoughts, right? And we need to wrestle with them and think through them responsibly.

But in the end...I am being reminded more than ever before...Shaun "Turn your eyes upon Jesus." And if you do, this need not be a time of anger, grumbling. This will simply be another opportunity to walk each day with Jesus by my side.

**"Surely the LORD is in this place...This is none other than the house of God...How awesome is this place."**