

"ENCOURAGEMENT"

What *encourages your soul* during uncertain times? The uncertainty of living in the day of the coronavirus has people around the world searching for meaningful, real, and genuine encouragement. To what are they running for encouragement? To what are *you* running for encouragement?

I get the impression that during these days anything less than the real thing won't do. During normal times, maybe we can run to lesser things for encouragement. As long as the big things are taken care of (finances, health, relationships, basic necessities) then often we can negotiate ourselves into settling for less. If the store doesn't have 3-ply, extra-soft toilet paper... we'll settle for less. If our favorite restaurant is all booked, that's okay, we'll just go to another place. If church doesn't live up to our expectations, a football game will often come on the TV later in the afternoon. We find encouragement in so many places and manufacture it in so many ways. Who can doubt us? We all *need* encouragement.

But in *these* times, especially in *these* times, manufactured encouragement simply won't do. It is in *these* times (times of trouble and uncertainty) that we all look for the real thing, for that which lasts, and to our great hope, the Bible only talks about encouragement in the sense of the real thing. The New Testament word for encouragement refers to the "act of emboldening another in belief or course of action."

"act of emboldening another" - Isn't boldness and courage what we need in times of fear? Encouragement is just that. Helping others be bold and *courageous*. But not just in a general sense. Real encouragement has to be anchored to something, or more truly Someone.

"in belief or course of action" - It is belief in Jesus Christ and our action of following Him that needs emboldening during uncertain times. We can't live life alone. We can't do the Christian life alone. Church is not optional, because encouragement is not optional. We *need* to be encouraged, even those strongest in faith among us. We need constant acts of "emboldening another in belief" because uncertainty and discouragement abounds in times like these.

Simply put, the Church exists in large part to provide people not just a place, but more so a *people*, to be encouragers towards the One who gives us ultimate hope.

Monday, March 16, 2020

by: Pastor Steven

So, how do we "do church" in times like this, when we can't meet together in large groups? That's something we'll certainly be discussing more in future writings, but for today let me *encourage* you to simply be an *encourager* to your neighbors around you and to *be encouraged* by Scripture personally.

I'll leave you with two dynamite "encouragement" passages in the New Testament. I encourage you to read **Philippians 2:1-11 (esp. v. 1)** and then **Hebrews 6:13-20 (esp. v. 18)** and notice how both passages anchor all encouragement and ultimate hope in the person of Jesus Christ and in the "Good News" of the Gospel.

He is the Real Thing.

*"Let us draw near with a true heart... let us hold fast to the confession of our hope... let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but **encouraging** one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." **Hebrews 10:22-25***

Your brother in Christ and with you on the journey,

Pastor Steven

QUESTIONS:

1. What fears can you name that are preventing you from being encouraged in these days?
2. What can we as the church in Hampton Falls be doing to encourage you this week?
3. How can you be an encouragement to others around you during this time?
4. When you read from Hebrews 6:19 that the hope of the Gospel is the "sure and steadfast anchor of the soul", what does that do in you?

