



The following document is a rough copy of Pastor Drost's sermon
notes from March 22nd, 2020

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✚ Just want to start by saying thank you to all those who are on the front line responding to this health pandemic:

- our **medical personnel** (Doctors, nurses, pharmacists, caregivers to seniors and those most vulnerable)
- our **first responders** (Ambulances, fire department, police personnel, 911 operators)

They can't just go home and "self-isolate". They have to be out there regardless.

Also want to say a big thank you to our federal and provincial leaders and public health personnel trying their best to make the right decisions to protect us and our families during this crisis.

✚ As a church, we are making every effort to abide by the guidelines that have been outlined to us and we urge you to do the same!

✚ Right now, I am live streaming from our church, working with a very small team, being careful to follow the guidelines, washing our hands, keeping the two-meter rule **and looking at an empty auditorium.**

To be totally honest, **I find this quite disconcerting!**

To stand in front of a group of people and preach is **an assignment I take VERY SERIOUS!**

But here I am standing in front of an empty auditorium preaching to a group of people that I cannot see! The worship team leading worship to an empty auditorium keeping the 2-meter rule!

This morning I miss the sound of children in our church...

...the smell of popcorn and slushies

...the sound of people greeting and chatting in the foyer

...the high fives, the elbow bumps, the smiles, the "how's it going"

...the sound of your voices singing with the worship team

...the look on your faces as I share God's word

We call it "**social distancing**" "**self-isolation**" (phrases not many of us heard much before all of this happened) and it affects us all.

My son and his family were scheduled to come this weekend... granddaughter starting to walk!

Others affects: Family in hospital, care homes, funerals, weddings...

We are social creatures... Self-distancing, being quarantined, remind us of leprosy colonies.

Social distancing starts feeling like "social isolation" and living isolated for longer periods of time can have a serious impact on our physical health, mental stability and our emotional wellbeing.

We punish people by putting them in isolation, in prison. If they still don't behave, they are put in "solitary confinement" which is an extreme example of isolation!

People with social problems, like anger issues, addictions, abusive behaviors, tend to end up losing their social circles, their family and friends start to avoid them, people stay away from them in the work place and a spiral of mental health issues start to cycle them into loneliness, isolation and a dark place emotionally.

We humans desperately need social interaction to be healthy!

One of the first things the Bible says about humans is...

The LORD God said, "It is not good for man to be alone". Genesis 2:18a

Then it tells about Adam and Eve sinning against God and then “self-distancing” from God...

Then Adam and his wife heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to Adam and said, “Where are you?”
Genesis 3:8–9

Our wrong actions, our negative attitudes, our rebellion, our sins are what separate us from God and from others! God still is wanting us to come out of hiding... we hide behind our pride, our selfishness, our greed, our business... And **God is saying, “Where are you?”**

The prophet Isaiah said...

“Your sins have separated you from your God.” Isaiah 59:2a

God doesn’t distance Himself from us, we distance ourselves from God!

Our sins cause us to separate ourselves from God!

It’s called SPIRITUAL DISTANCING! It usually happens gradually!

- This COVID-19 virus came very fast! Who would have thought two weeks ago that we would be closing the border to the US. But SPIRITUAL DISTANCING sneaks up on us more gradual. We often grow distant from God gradually!

Our sins also separate us from each other.

- Marriages break up (People who once loved each other dearly now can’t be in the same room!)
- A deep friendship ends with a foolish argument (Someone is too proud, too stubborn to admit they are wrong)
- A son breaks his mom’s heart because of his addiction
- A dad and a daughter part ways because of his greed and selfishness

Our sins (our pride, our lies, our greed, our self-centredness, our lust) **separated us from others and from God!**

Our We have been doing a sermon series here at Smythe Street Church called **the Power of Confession**

So, what does this have to do with “SPIRITUAL DISTANCING”? What do our words have to do with “emotional isolation”? How can my relationship with God and others be repaired with a confession of my mouth?

The Bible says that...

“Death and life are in the power of the tongue.” Proverbs 18:21a (NKJV)

Our words can destroy relationships and our words can heal relationships!

Our words can kill an important friendship and our words can heal a broken relationship!

Our words can restore our relationship with God.

If you CONFESS with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, **you will be saved**. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. Romans 10:9-10 (NIV)

- When our heart lines up with our words, what we CONFESS, it brings healing, salvation and LIFE!
- **It is with your mouth that you CONFESS and are saved!**



✚ Let me read to you what King David said in Psalms 32

“Blessed is the one whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the one whose sin the Lord does not count against them and in whose spirit is no deceit.

Blessed = happy! Fortunate! To reconcile with God brings happiness!

When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. **(to hide your sin is unhealthy)** For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer. **(It drains you!)** Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.” And you forgave the guilt of my sin.” Psalm 32:1–5 (NIV)

Confession frees us, restores us, heals us, brings us life!

There is Power in Confession!

- If you attend any 12-step recovery program (Alcoholics Anonymous) you will discover that the first step to recovery, the first step to freedom is step 1... “I admitted I am powerless over alcohol—that my life has become unmanageable”. **That’s a confession!**
- A few years ago I got upset in a staff meeting and I left visibly angry and feeling quite justified to myself. After I calmed down, I realised I was totally in the wrong and I had to make it right. I gathered the staff together and apologised. My confession healed me and healed the “emotional distancing” that I had created.

James tells us...

“Confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.” James 5:16a

When I confess, I bring it to the open! Some of the most powerful words that will heal broken relationships, struggling marriages, past hurts are: “I’m sorry, I was wrong, Please forgive me” Heart → Mouth

If you’re away from God, He’s calling “Where are you?” The most powerful prayer you can pray is: “Lord Jesus, please forgive me!” This season of “social distancing” of “self-isolation” is a perfect opportunity for us to seek healing in our relationships, to reach out to God, to confess our weaknesses and faults and find LIFE!

Let’s Pray

I praise You Almighty God, ruler of heaven and earth. You are an eternal Oneness, not an eternal “singleness” or a self-isolated God alone in the cosmos. You are Father, Son and Holy Spirit. One God from everlasting to everlasting.

And You created us in Your image, in the image of a God who is in a perfect eternal loving relationship. You created in us a need to be in relationship. In relationship with each other and in relationship with our God. When we are not, we’re not emotionally and spiritually whole.

I pray that during this season of “self-distancing” and “self-isolation” we will turn our hearts toward each other and we will turn our hearts to You. May friendships be mended, may marriages be healed, may families come together, forgiveness be asked, may we confess our need of You.

May this season be a time when we ask You for forgiveness. Many have “self-isolated” themselves from God. May we come back to You. May prodigal sons and prodigal daughters return to Jesus. May many across this city of Fredericton, across this province of New Brunswick and across this beautiful country we

call Canada take advantage of this time of “self-isolation” and turn to You, bow their knees, draw near to You and confess You as their Lord.

We sang earlier, “Your Love Never Fails”... Your Word says that “nothing can separate us from the Love of God”. **You are only a prayer away!**

Forgive us as a country for we have pushed you out of our society and out of our nation. We have “self-isolated” ourselves from God as a nation! There was a time when our Prime Minister and political leaders would have asked us to pray when faced with a national emergency, a medical pandemic, an economic crisis. But today, that would not be “politically correct” in Canada. We send “happy thoughts” instead of prayers. When things go well, we credit it to good Karma and thank our “lucky stars”. Forgive us Lord!

We do pray for Prime Minister Trudeau and his family. As he self-isolates may he also seek Your face.

And YES, we pray for our leaders Federally and Provincially, and our public health officials, give them guidance and wisdom as they seek to keep us healthy and safe.

God, You are our refuge and You are our strength. A very present help in times of need. Therefore, we will not fear. God keep our land, glorious and free!

Please join me in praying together the Lord’s Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy Name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.

For thine is the Kingdom, and the Power and the Glory, for ever and ever. **AMEN**

