



*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever. — Hebrews 13:8*

Ever since my back surgery over a year ago I spend at least thirty minutes every morning stretching. I do not miss a day. During that time I throw on my headphones and listen (mostly) to music, though an occasional blog post or Ted talk gets some air time. I have some favorites that get repeat play, but I try to make a point of listening to a variety of things.

The past few days I've been listening to some old-school contemporary Christian music. Newsboys from what I like to call the "sarcastic era" when every turn of a phrase made me laugh. (*"Out of the shaker and onto the plate, it isn't karma it sure ain't fate, that would make a deadhead sell his van, that would make a schizophrenic turn in his crayons."*) And DC Talk from the time *Jesus Freak* was popular. (*"Separated, I cut myself clean, from a past that comes back in my darkest of dreams. Been apprehended by a spiritual force, and a grace that replaced all the me I've divorced."*)

It had been a very long time, and the reintroduction elicited thoughts and feelings I hadn't anticipated. There was an unexpected comfort, kind of like going home after a long time away and wondering why you left in the first place. Songs often take us to specific places or recall particular memories, and in this case I found myself back at a time when the church was changing, and our congregation was evolving. The concept of traditional worship was being challenged by creative ideas that would eventually carve out a space for something fresh and unfamiliar, yet effective in drawing new generations into a relationship with Jesus Christ. As always, change is a scary thing, and so there's often a desire to return to a time we thought of as more secure. Or at least more friendly and predictable.

I wonder how many of us are thinking like that nowadays, wishing we could return to whatever normal was before the pandemic. Many of us long for the familiar pre-coronavirus landscape where, even if our lives were chaotic and messy, we had become comfortable with it, and had accepted it for what it was. We may not even have liked it all that much, but we knew how to get around and make things work. It's like that old saying, "The devil you know is better than the devil you don't know."

The fact of the matter is that we will never return to that pre-COVID time. That familiarity is gone forever. Something new is on the horizon; we just don't know what it is yet. But there is one thing we DO know. Scripture reminds us that "*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*" What we DO know is that Jesus Christ was present with us in the yesterday of pre-coronavirus time, is present with us now during the COVID era, and will still be with us when the future is created and a new normal is established. I hope we can take comfort in that, and press forward knowing that Christ is walking with us.

Peace,

Pastor Chuck

Let us pray. God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, you are the creator, redeemer, and sanctifier of the entire universe. As we travel through this uncertain time, help us to remember that Christ is with us and, as the world around us changes, help us to have faith that your love for us abides forever. Amen