



Miracles that follow the plow :: Pastor James Coates Church Shut Down and Fenced

Pastor James Coates Church Shut Down and Fenced - posted by SHMILY, on: 2021/4/7 17:53

A church in Alberta, Canada, has been shut down and fenced off by the Alberta government for running afoul of coronavirus rules.

Alberta Health Services announced in a statement that GraceLife Church would stay closed until it can provide proof that it will comply with health restrictions, the Canadian Press reported.

CTV News reported that the police and security staff were around as chain-link metal fencing was installed around the church building and its parking lot Wednesday.

The church, located west of Edmonton, dismissed public health warnings for months, and its pastor, James Coates, spent a month behind bars.

Coates was charged in February for violating coronavirus public health orders. He was then jailed for refusing to comply with a bail order that stated he could only hold services that followed public health orders.

In early March, Coates's attorneys argued that it would go against Coates's religious conscience not to lead worshippers. He returned to preaching on March 28 after paying a \$1,500 fine and pleading guilty to a count of breaching bail.

Churches in the region are allowed to open at 15 percent capacity with social distancing and masks, but officials say GraceLife has had hundreds of congregants attend its church services.

Alberta Health Services said they attempted to work with the church for months before shutting it down. Some of the steps they took before enforcing a closure include the following:

- Issuing an order on December 17 requiring the church to comply with restrictions from Dr. Deena Hinshaw, Alberta's chief medical officer of health.
- A Court of Queen's Bench order obtained January 21 requiring the church to comply with the previous order.
- A closure order issued on January 29 requiring the church to shut down until they complied with the restrictions.
- Issuing a letter to Pastor James Coates on March 27, informing him of the continued spread of the coronavirus.
- Last week, Alberta Health Services invited Coates to a virtual meeting to discuss coronavirus risks, but the church did not provide any dates to meet.

GraceLife has become the target of criticism against Premier Jason Kenney's government as the church remained open, despite Kenney's warning that those who violate the rules will face the consequences.

<https://www.breitbart.com/health/2021/04/07/canadian-church-shut-down-fenced-following-coronavirus-rules/>

Re: Pastor James Coates Church Shut Down and Fenced - posted by TMK (), on: 2021/4/7 18:24

I am trying to figure out if playing Russian roulette with Covid in church is on the same par as snake handling.

Maybe worse, because it is very likely that far more people have died from being exposed to Covid at church than have died handling poisonous vipers.

ADD: Jesus answered, "It is said: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" Luke 4:12

Re: brother Todd - posted by JFW (), on: 2021/4/8 8:16

So to be clear... you're in favor of this measure to protect people from covid?

If not could you please clarify your statement as it seems to suggest as much but wanted to be clear about your intention regarding your statement- ie; what are you hoping to accomplish?

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2021/4/8 8:23

Of course I'm not for such ridiculousness.

What I AM for is pastors not putting their congregants at unnecessary risk. If you must meet in person, meet outside, like our church did this past weekend. Or spread folks out. Or wear masks.

What if an unsaved person is infected by an unmasked saved person inside and dies? Was the loss of that soul worth it?

Re: hmmm " - posted by JFW (), on: 2021/4/8 8:56

Yeah that just doesn't really pass the smell test...

you say (when questioned) that you're not for this ridiculousness yet you make no effort whatsoever to address or even appeal to the plight of the OP purpose in posting... instead you mock with a callous spirit thinly veiled in humor and then go full humanist in redress of your initial position. I'd expect this from an unbeliever but not a beloved brother :/

The "what if" game you're playing here places concern over physical health well beyond that of spiritual health... and that dear brother is squarely a humanist disposition that surprises me coming from you as I have been repeatedly blessed by your faith and sincerity over the years here on SI -

This is a first and is in no way a small matter but the first crack in what may prove to soon be a formal breaking of the levy.

As such, to mock and jest would be in all accounts inappropriate... for how by your comments can one be edified? I'd expect this from an unbeliever but not a beloved brother :/

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2021/4/8 13:22

I guess it would help me if I knew what your position is on the issue.

I see three possible positions but perhaps there are more. 1) don't allow churches to meet, period. 2) Allow them to meet with limitations to protect congregants. 3) Free for all (no masking, distancing, etc).

It is my understanding the church in question was at #3- but I not 100% certain about this. If this is the case, then to me it is irresponsible for a pastor to invite persons in to a free for all, potentially to their doom. That is why I equated it to snake handlers. My understanding is that persons who do this are trusting that God will either keep them from being bitten, or will protect them from the venom if they are bitten. COVID-19 is simply a very small serpent that can kill just like a snakebite. But in the case of snake handlers, you can see the snake and know what you are getting into. It is also why I posted the scripture about not putting God to the test.

You seem to be equating common sense with humanism. If that is how you are defining the term then I simply disagree.

I am certainly not placing physical health over spiritual health. You seem to see this as a black and white, one or the other issue. I believe that both are possible. We have been attending two different Zoom services on Sunday, a Bible study on Sunday afternoon and a Bible study on Wednesday evening. Of course I would rather be able to meet in person and very soon we will be able to. In the interim, thank goodness for Zoom.

If congregations cannot use Zoom, there are other options to meet in person safely.

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Re: brother Todd - posted by JFW (), on: 2021/4/8 15:16

I suppose we are indeed viewing it from differing perspectives as such we are unlikely to change one another's mind s in an online forum -

Personally I find your response saddening,... not the "common sense" part (as you put it) but the lack of concern much less empathy for this body of believers not to mention the callous jesting at their expense comparing the desire to meet together and worship (when schools are open in CA) to snake handling "just seems quite detached and unlike your historical disposition"

As for common sense vs humanism... if common sense were actually a thing, more people would have it ;)

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2021/4/8 16:10

But Fletcher-

Didn't the church bring this on themselves? Didn't they know they would be shut down if they did not comply? It's not like they weren't warned. I guess I find it a tad hard to feel too badly for them because I think they were engaged in an act of civil disobedience and weighed the cost of doing so. Perhaps God will use this closure to His benefit, and theirs. I suspect He will.

They won't be shut down forever.

Again I am not sure what you think should have happened in the US (I realize this church is in Canada). 559k have died in the US. Do you think that nothing should have been done from day 1 and just let nature take its course? Do you think everything except churches should have restrictions?

I do realize what the media has done with Covid and it is and was an atrocity. Nonetheless 559k are still dead.

Re: brother Todd - posted by JFW (), on: 2021/4/8 17:04

The church should receive (at least) the same provision and consideration as schools, businesses and governments, no ?

So yes I do see this as governmental overreach as the "rule" is being inconsistently applied to different groups based on perceived importance with no serious considerations for the health and wellbeing of the populace, just lip service

As for the death toll... none of us are getting out of here alive "wether by disease, distress, violence or otherwise- if people are giving the right "my choice" on abortion why not here?

Honestly Todd, Walmart's are a preverbal cesspool and no one usually gets a bath before going but churches are generally the cleanest place we go all week and most everyone usually bathed beforehand ... yet big box stores were allowed to stay open and received an increase in visits while churches and small businesses like mine had to close ... I'm not buying it

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2021/4/8 17:30

I don't disagree with your sentiments. But there are so many buts. It's a complex issue.

I can understand why grocery stores etc were given preferential treatment. I mean you gotta eat.

Here's where I expect you and I may greatly differ. Let's say there were no restrictions placed on churches. No masks, no distancing, full capacity etc., all while Covid was raging. I think, in that instance, a godly Pastor would self-restrict(masks, distancing, capacity limits) as an act of loving his neighbor. I suspect you would disagree with this, which essentially is where we differ.

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Re: - posted by NeedHim2018, on: 2021/4/8 19:37

I actually live in Edmonton Alberta. I feel badly for Pastor James Coates and for the people who attend his church. I love and appreciate them as brothers and sisters in Christ. They are a part of the same denomination which my church is a part of.

I also have to say that in love I can't agree with the approach his church has taken towards COVID, and to protecting the health of people in the congregation, and of the public.

To me, the government asking church attenders to wear masks and social distance are reasonable requests, based on the circumstances. And for me the Bible tells us to obey authorities, unless there are good reason not to.

Since I believe there are good medical reasons for wearing masks and social distancing, as an appropriate measure to deal with this virus, I can't see good reasons not to follow these instructions. As far as health restrictions that have been imposed within Alberta, from my perspective, in general our churches have been allowed to operate at a higher capacity than have most institutions in the province.

So again, I love James Coates and have been praying for him, his family and his church. But I also feel there would have been better ways for his church to handle this whole matter.

John

Re: brother Todd - posted by JFW (), on: 2021/4/8 20:21

Ha yes indeed we must eat but it wasn't just grocery stores or even hardware stores it was a host of businesses deemed "essential" like the CBD dispensaries and "special" restaurants etc... As well as certain Mosques that were allowed to worship... and actually brother James' Church was and did abide by all the government prerequisites while in church -

(For me) this is no different than the 1st century Jews in cahoots with Roman government restricting the worship of early Christians... there can always be a "reason" given when needed to apply restrictions as I'm sure they used social unrest or something of the like to garner compliance from Rome to enforce the restrictions.

As for your hypothetical scenario,... in my mind each "godly" church leader would have to be obedient to Holy Spirit and walk in the light as He is in the light.

Again (for me) when we see our elected officials go out to restaurants and even host parties with pictures and footage of them in attendance without masks or social distancing all while locking down their constituents from basic family gatherings then I'm gonna reject their premise for doing so -

The facts are that in San Francisco alone the deaths from lockdowns exceeded covid deaths 10-1 from suicide, drug overdoses, domestic violence, etc... so they don't "really care" about the population but about power.

In any case I love you very much as my brother in Christ and just was surprised that you take the position "they brought it on themselves" (as this it's justified) because I hope that you don't feel that way about the early church, which again (for me) the similarities are unmistakable.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2021/4/8 20:36

Perhaps I need to think about this matter further. Like I said I don't disagree with your sentiments and agree with all of them.

I just struggle with the concept of purposefully putting those you shepherd in danger, regardless what our hypocritical politicians do.

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Re: - posted by SHMILY, on: 2021/4/9 2:14

Brother Todd

Here is the link to the thread when Pastor Coates was first arrested. In it Greg has copied Grace Life Church's statement regarding their stance. Also the link for Pastor Coates last sermon before he was arrested was in the first post of the thread. In it he explains his position as he sees it Biblically.

If you have not already seen them I think they may be helpful for you to understand. You may agree or you may disagree but you will have more information.

https://www.sermonindex.net/modules/newbb/viewtopic.php?topic_id=63878&forum=48

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2021/4/9 7:25

Thank you shmily. I will definitely take a closer look.

Re: - posted by dolfan (), on: 2021/4/9 14:52

TMK said: "Didn't the church bring this on themselves? Didn't they know they would be shut down if they did not comply? It's not like they weren't warned. I guess I find it a tad hard to feel too badly for them because I think they were engaged in an act of civil disobedience and weighed the cost of doing so. Perhaps God will use this closure to His benefit, and theirs. I suspect He will."

Pastor Coates said this in February. They weighed the cost. I don't know that they are feeling like they can't worship at all --- but they are absolutely being punished for worshipping together. (There are at least 2 mosques in Alberta that have had zero interference from the province and have packed worshippers en masse. There is video of buses rolling in full of worshippers. And, I say, that's as it should be --- they certainly shouldn't be mistreated, either.)

It is right and proper for them to gather and "make noise" about their plight. But, you're right and you agree with their pastor that they are not to be pitied.

The bit of video that I've seen of Pastor Coates -- a very young man, indeed -- is eye-opening. He's making no excuses, he's asking for no exceptions. Rather, he is simply calling out the truth: that Jesus says "gather", so they gather, and if the state chooses to restrict that and then punish for crossing the lines of restriction then he's saying they've overstepped the bounds of proper government. He's right on every score.

I am actually a bit enthused by their message and the simple humility of "we must obey God and we are willing to pay the cost". I'm also enthused by their prophetic witness to the government that their jurisdiction over the church of Christ ends when they interfere with obedience to the instruction to gather.

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2021/4/9 15:06

Surely there is some news or discussion somewhere as to why mosques are allowed to be open? Is the government literally going after Christian churches but not mosques or is that fake news?

Re: - posted by TMK (), on: 2021/4/9 15:07

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/amp/canada/article-mosque-synagogue-leaders-in-alberta-call-on-gracelife-church-to-follow/>

Re: brother Todd - posted by JFW (), on: 2021/4/10 9:17

Here's the best (most credible) current report I could source for you,... please consider the sincerity of their plight-

<https://www.dailywire.com/news/exclusive-pastor-and-lawyer-defiant-after-canadian-police-raid-barricade-church-at-dawn>

Re: - posted by havok20x, on: 2021/4/11 16:36

Believe it or not, persecution against Christians is a real thing. The entire world is against Christ--either openly or in private. The world hates us--Jesus said this would happen.

It should not surprise us that a Church simply attempting to do what the Bible says is going to run afoul with worldly governments.

Of course, no matter how you feel about COVID, those people who are meeting at that church are doing so based upon their own will and volition. No one is being forced to be there. If they are not masking and social distancing, then they are doing so willingly. The government's sphere of authority has no jurisdiction in matters regarding the churches (they cannot legislate when/how/to what extent a church carries out its God-given authority and duty). Of course, I would not suggest that people can blatantly do evil in these areas and get away with it. Yet, there is nothing in the Bible that suggests that a Christian is obligated to do every ever loving thing the government mandates. There are some things they should do, certainly--they are commanded in Scripture. But there are some things they shouldn't do--some of these things fall along lines of support (should Christians support freedom of speech as used to defend the porn industry?), some of them fall along lines of participation (should Christians participate in prenuptial agreements just because they are allowed or should they sue a brother before unbelievers just because it is legally allowed?), and some fall along lines of downright sin (should Christians get abortions?).

No one here believes in unilateral submission to the government. Not a single soul here. So it is a straw man argument to use that as the sole means of proving the necessity of following COVID restrictions. There would be a coinciding principle in the Scriptures that led us in that direction. Loving your brother? Is that the principle? No. You ever fed your brother fatty foods? Then you're risking killing them with a heart attack. Was that their decision? So is showing up to church, not wearing a mask, or social distancing.

COVID has made everyone lose their minds. Its ridiculous to be perfectly honest.

You want to wear a mask, social distance, or not show up to church? Do so at your own volition and will--you answer to God for those things, whether they were for good or for ill. If you believe in your heart that wearing a mask and social distancing is right for you, do it. Don't violate your conscience. Do it and do it with a smile under that mask! But don't make me do it, because I would also have to violate my conscience to do so on a continual basis. If I waive my rights, it will be in consideration of circumstances, the weakness of other brethren, etc. But no one is going to come and tell me that I must do any of those things. They have no authority or grounds to do so, save ignorance or willfull disobedience to the clear commands of Scripture regarding these types of matters. And to extend the same grace I desire--I would not shame nor look down on a brother for wearing a mask or not wanting to hug.

But frankly, I would rather die a thousand gruelling deaths and have loved and been loved by the brethren than to live a single day away from them.