

Hebrews 10:19-25: *Life Together: Stirring One Another Up*

Get on the Bus – *Well I am thankful to be preaching to the gathered church this morning as this is much more comfortable to me than what I did Thursday night when I spoke at our IDC Women's event – I cant remember being that intimidated but as a single man who grew up with no sisters I actually felt nervous and today feels much different!*

- We are starting our Life Together series today looking at what the bible says about our life together as the church – *I think there can be a misconception sometimes that Christianity is a individual faith (think Monks for instance) but the Christian faith is an intently communal one – Salvation in Christ means you are being brought IN TO A FAMILY WHERE OUR LIVES NOW are to be oriented toward the good of one another*
- So whether you are a Christian or just checking out Christianity – *Over the next few weeks you will get to see what our Lord says about what our life together should look like as we begin today with the admonishment to encourage one another!*

Pray – gathering of the firstborn!

Introduction – Growing up many of us in this room had like tables in the lunch room that would have been labeled the “cool” table that we would wanted to sit at or there may have been a special club that we wanted to get in to – *There are all kinds of groups that human beings have longed to be a part of to give them a sense of being special or cool or unique*

- When I was a senior in HS of course I was sitting at what I wanted to believe was the cool table and we had a new principle that year that was trying really hard to make the students like him – *And I remember this awkward day when he came over and sat down at our table trying to buddy up with us and we just sort of sat there looking at each other like “what is going on here” – There is a desire in the human heart to be accepted and not just accepted but to be accepted in to something elite or cool or special*

Transition to the Text – Here in this text the author is saying to this group of persecuted Christians who at that time don't feel special or unique or cool – *But the author is telling them that now “In Christ” you have now been invited to sit down at the coolest table or you have now been invited in to the fellowship of the most exclusive club – And here is that club our brother John says “that which we have seen and heard we proclaim also to you, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed your fellowship is with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ”*

- The author of Hebrews begins with a beautiful picture of who we are now and where we are now as those who have been saved by Christ who now have Access to the Living God – *And then he turns from these beautiful truths of about what the gospel has done on our behalf to then how we should live and think in light of that with 4 Exhortations*
- And as we turn to the text notice the tone of the writer as he doesn't address them as hearers but begins with “brothers” – *He is addressing them as family members and that is how I preach to you today not as a group at an event gathered to hear me speak but as a fam!*
- **Believe that we have access to God because of the work of Christ (READ 10:19-21)**

When we read these verses I am not sure we come to grips with how radical this statement is – *These verses would have been staggering to the original audience – They would have know one does not simply go in to the Holy of Holies without the high likelihood of death!*

- The Israelites knew of the Holy place – *A place called the Holy of Holies which was the most inner*

room of the Tabernacle where God's presence would dwell that was shut off to all by a curtain or veil – And in which the High Priest would enter only one day a year and he had to follow exact specifications

- In fact such precaution had to be made that they tied a rope around him because there was fear that he might die in the presence of a Holy God – *And so they tied a rope around him so that they could drag him out without going in – This is the kind of precaution that had to be taken to allow a sinful man to enter the presence of a Holy God*

The privilege we now have as believers is staggering and we must see with eyes of faith – *What was held once a year for the High Priest is now ours and its not just once a year but unhindered access – What a privilege this is in what once bring striking fear or certain death we now can enter in to His presence not sheepishly with bold confidence not because of our virtue but because of His grace!*

- Our first parents were able to commune with God in Eden in the day and that was forfeited when they sinned – *And now in a sense through this living way we have been returned to Eden!*

Illustration – Have you ever been in a place where you knew you weren't supposed to be in the past and now you are supposed to be there?

- I have had times where I was back in a Green Room at a big event where someone told me to sneak in past security and just act like you belong even though I didn't have a pass – *And I am usually back there sort of hiding in a corner sheepishly trying not to be noticed or asked where my pass is and maybe only grabbing one diet coke! – And there have been times when I am in a Green Room and I do have a pass and man I am back there acting like a King like yeah bring on the sandwiches and the Queso, I think I'll take an extra Diet Coke with me as I leave*
- Why? Well I have the access pass – *I am the platinum Delta flyer! This is what we have brothers and sisters – We have the pass for Access to the King!*

And how was this access accomplished – Jesus Christ purchase our access pass by being ripped apart for us – *And what happed literally to His body also happened to that curtain or veil that separated the Holy Place from outsiders that the High Priest would enter in to once a year was the entrance to the Holy Place – As we are told in MARK 15 that it was torn from top to bottom in 2 because Christ death had made the curtain no longer necessary but through His body and death has given the access pass to sinners in to the presence of God!*

- Christ could do this greatest work because unlike the other High Priest in Christ we now have eternal High Priest unlike the past ones who sacrifice was a once for all time sacrifice that never needs to be replicated – *oh we must see how radical this is – Once we were not a people, now we are! Once we were orphans and prodigals and now we are firstborn sons and we no longer need priests to sacrifice lambs the final lamb has been sacrifice and His blood is good for eternity!*
- **Application or Question** – Could the depth of our prayer life be measured by how well we understand what is being taught here – *Christian! The author is not saying this is a confidence we must acquire he is saying it is a confidence we have!*

(READ V. 22) Exhortation 1– Draw Near to God – *In the OT this terminology was used in the context of drawing near to God in worship that fits with the call in a minute not to neglect the gathering*

Now in light of our access the author gives the family 4 exhortations – *And these exhortations come out of the truth we already have access not the other way around – We work from access not for access!*

- One of the things to notice about these exhortations is they are not individual but corporate – *“Let*

us” – *This is not to say we don’t do them apart as well (Bonhoeffer Life Together – The Day Alone and the Day with Others)* – But here the focus is on our life together and that we pursue these exhortations as a family as we spur one another on, encourage one another to commune with God and enjoy this access to Him

So here the author exhorts us to be intentional together in communing with this God who has granted us access to know Him who created us – *And to do so with a assurance and a clean conscience!*

- **Illustration of Mae Mae: We can do this with the confidence of a child who feels no awkwardness in asking their parents for something or being with their parents somewhere other people wouldn’t necessarily have the boldness to be – *A couple of Sundays ago Matt Sigmon came up to do the announcements and his little Maebry with SUPREME CONFIDENCE bounced up to the front during the service with him just smiling ear to ear***
- **Now for many of you in this room you would’ve felt supremely awkward to walk up there beside Matt and just chill – *But for her there wasn’t even a hitch in her conscience at all because I am with my Dad – That is getting at a little bit of how we should approach God to be with Him with no hitch in conscience at all!***

(READ V. 23) Exhortation 2 – Hold Fast to your belief in this Access – *We are called together to hold on tight to the central confession of our faith namely the central truths of the faith and supremely that Jesus is Lord!*

The call here for this audience is likely don’t shrink back to Judaism but hold firmly to Christ without wavering or faltering – *Have you ever had a time when you were holding on for dear life?*

- **Illustration – It seems to be a poorly kept secret that I am not a fan of Lakes – I mean I just think there are snakes and monsters and pick up trucks in there and I am just not a fan – *In college the girl I was dating her parents had a lake house and I went over to get on the ski jets and her dad knew of my fear and when I was getting on the Jet with her brother it tipped over and we fell in and her dad just calmly said “Nate that’s where most of the snakes are” – I jumped up grabbed tightly on to the dock and sprung out of the water and the rest of the day when we went tubing I was holding on so tight to that tube not to get thrown off that my hands hurt for days***

That’s what’s in mind here because the Christian life is a matter of perseverance and the author is saying understand these truths and hold on tight to them – *And again this is to be a group activity as this is not MY HOPE but OUR HOPE – We should encourage one another to stand strong as Bonhoeffer says, “The Christ in their own hearts is weaker than the Christ in the word of other Christians”*

- **I think sometimes we have the view that God is merely tolerating us – *And its in those moments we need brothers and sisters to say to us “Stay Calm and Hold on” or have hope because it is not merely that God is tolerating you it is that HE DELIGHTS OVER YOU LIKE HE DELIGHTED OVER HIS SON at the Jordan River “This is my beloved child in whom I am well pleased” – In the moments we falter we need the FAM to say to us stand firm not because you are faithful but because the object of your faith is and He has never lied!***

(READ V. 24 and 25) Exhortation 3 – Be Intentional in Stirring Up and Encouraging your brothers and sisters – *To greater love and greater service or works*

We see clearly here that we have been saved not just for the vertical relationship with God but for the

horizontal one with our Christian family – *And we see in these final 2 exhortations that the NT has no category for a me and Jesus Christianity*

- The writer here is saying when you come to the Gathering (*the word here is EpiSynagogue*) come intentionally thinking how can build up and encourage my fellow brothers and sister – *Now just because I think he is distinctly talking about the gathering here that does not mean that we should not have the same mindset when we come to smaller gatherings like a GG – You are to gather with other believers as an active participant and not a passive one*

So in light of that some implications/questions I want us to think through for coming to the gathering:

- **The Church is not a country club where you are waited on hand and foot – *So what is your mindset when you come to the gathering:* IS YOUR FIRST THOUGHT HOW CAN I BE BENEFITED TODAY OR IS YOUR FIRST THOUGHT HOW CAN I BENEFIT OTHERS?**
- *If you are coming to the Gathering merely because you like the preaching (most weeks!) and the music then you are coming as a consumer and not for the good of your brothers and sisters!*

Also I think this text has implications for church-hoppers – *If you are a church-hopper or not really committed to a body and by that I mean you only gather with Christians for an hour and half on Sundays you will never be in a position to do this well – This is why we believe in MEANINGFUL MEMBERSHIP where you are accountable to brothers and sisters and have elders giving an account for your soul so that you can have a church to belong to where you will get in each others lives and do this well!*

- To my great shame I did not get this in college and it led to much heartache – *And just a word to college students see the need for the church not just a campus ministry – We believe those are great but you also need a family not just time hanging with other college students!*

In light of this exhortation I want to give 9 Practical ways you can come to the gathering considering how you will build up – and I mean all of us so children listen up:

- Come to the gathering with this mindset of I am ready to stir it up and encourage – Who can I encourage to love and good deeds today?
- Pray for the gathering on your drive to the building
- Come early and stay late - I mean we don't show up to Star Wars late!
- Seek out people to greet that you don't know
- Seek out friends and give them a word of encouragement or pray with them for their upcoming week
- Do acts of service even when you aren't scheduled to serve – And when you are scheduled show up and serve with a smile and as unto the Lord
- Go sit with someone who is sitting by themselves – Or go with a family with a bunch of children and help them!
- **SING!** We are told to encourage one another in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs – Singing is not a you and Jesus time, it's a time to build up the family by preaching to one another (**Matt Foshee!**)
- Be an active listener for the preacher (Liz Pitman) – maybe even same "AMEN" or like Brett let out a "woo"

NOTE In GG this week think of more practical ways to come to the service or GG ready to build up each other – *Sunday morning is not just about what Donnie, Tony, Matt and I do – What you do here has eternal consequences see it as so!*

(READ V. 25) Exhortation 4 – Don't neglect the gathering with your brothers and sisters – *This verse destroys the adage I don't have to "go" to Church to be a Christian – Now attending a worship service doesn't save you but a text like this is saying if you want to have confidence that you are a part of the people of God*

you will gather with them!

- The NT has no category for the thought me and Jesus got our own thing going that would have sounded as strange to the Apostles as it would be me telling you I am a Vegetarian – *And you will not be able to stir and encourage if you don't gather with the bretheren!*
- Now we say often around here the Church is not an event and that's true it's a family that day by day lives life together – *But there is a central aspect to the gathering and even has a missional purpose that an unbeliever might come in and worship God and say God is truly with you*

This text is easy to misunderstand and to see this exhortation as an encouragement rather than a warning – *The main point here is that if you make it a habit of forsaking the assembly you are demonstrating you have walked away from God's people and therefore God Himself!*

- The author doesn't change his argument in v. 26 but says “for” same argument – *For those that are abandoning the assembly... READ V. 26-29*

This text isn't a slogan for bring a friend to church day – *This text is a warning to those that have forsaken the assembly and for those who are beginning to consider forsaking it – What he is essentially saying in this text is that the potential word for a backslidden Christian who never attends a service isn't “inactive church member” but that one is in danger of being L O S T Lost not because they lost their salvation but in the words of our brother John “they went out from us because they were never of us!”*

- The NT has no category for an inactive member who forsakes assembling – *Because what you are saying in that moment is like saying to a man I love you I JUST CANT STAND YOUR WIFE'S VOICE – To disregard the family of faith is to disregard one of the benefits given to you in Christ's brutal death namely a family!*
- This is why we do covenant renewal at IDC – *In many of our churches to our shame we have people on the roles of our church who haven't been to a gathering in years – And yet they are members in good standing and what the author is saying here is there should be a fearful expectation of judgment*

And please hear me that I am saying this tough thing to you now because I actually believe the bible is true – *And that it would be unloving for me in this moment to blunt the force of the text to make sure you are not upset with me!* AND SO IM HERE SAYING THE PRODIGAL CAN COME HIME AND THE FATHER WILL RECEIVE HIM

- And just one more word here which isn't directed at anyone in particular – *But if you are the type of family that misses often because you have a son who travels most weekends because he is good at baseball or you guys have a beach house and make it a habit of missing for that – YOU ARE PASSIVELY teaching your children something about the importance of the gathering and no wonder many of them walk away in college not because there parents ever with their lips said gathering with the people of God isnt important but their actions taught something much different!*

Whether you are a believer or unbeliever this morning lets be warned IT IS NOT TO LATE TO TURN BACK TO CHRIST – *This is a test of faith “do you love the brothers and the sisters? – Salvation is not about a prayer prayed but a life of perseverance!*

- And again this is a community effort together to lets make sure we persevere – *And one of the ways we will do that here is by over and over again encouraging you if you are slipping don't forsake the assembly whether that is here with one of us or one of the many good churches in RDU*
- The exhortation ends with a call for us to do this all the more as we see the final day drawing near – *There might be times of peril ahead for the American church and if there is I bet we will spend a lot*

more time with each other but lets not wait until then

Conclusion – We can't do these things left to ourselves we need the work of another and we need each other

- *And in Christ we have one that so loved the brothers that He would drawn in His own blood for their good – When we look to Him as both our source of power and our example there we will begin to live out the Christ-Life for the good of our family – You see Christ has restored what was broken in the Garden we now have access to the father and we now have a family that though imperfectly now gives a glimpse to the future when brothers and sisters dwell in perfect harmony we get to give just a glimpse of that now!*
- Unbeliever or maybe someone here today who has withdrawn from the people of God It is not to late – Jesus stands as one who says there is peace, there is access, there is salvation for the one who will turn to me and hold on!

And Brothers and Sisters lets not forsake this amazing privilege to together as a family draw near to God – *And to stir one another up reminding each other daily you are at the cool table and even awkward principles are welcome* – AND NOW AS WE TURN TO THE TABLE WE ARE REMINDED THAT WE WILL BE THERE FOREVER!

Prayer bind us together!