

INTRODUCTION:

This morning, I would like for us to turn together to **Hebrews 10** and consider several verses concerning the importance of our assembling together as a congregation of God's people.

- I think all of us are familiar with the phrase, **“Some Assembly Required.”**
- This is certainly one of the world's most famous understatements.
- It seems like there are many things we purchase that need to be assembled.
- About three years ago when, Traci was a 2nd grade teacher and she setting up her classroom and she needed a new chair to go behind her desk.
- When the chair arrived it was in a box, and by just looking at the size of the box, you would never have imagined that there was an entire office chair inside.
- There were wheels, and screws, a base, a back and a seat, and all of those things had to be assembled before the chair could be used.
- Some assembly was required.
- As we look at **Hebrews 10**, I think we will be reminded that something very similar could also be said about the Lord's church—some assembly is required.
- It is very important for us to assemble together as a congregation.

As we look at **Hebrews 10**, we see that the author of the book is trying to encourage Jewish Christians to stay faithful to the Lord's church.

- If we were to assign a theme to the book of **Hebrews**, I think it could be summarized best by saying, **“Jesus is Better.”**
- The Christian way of life is far better and is superior to the Old Testament system.
- In **Hebrews 10:19-22**, for example, the author points out that as Christians, we can approach God in a way that was never possible under the Old Law.
- This passage says, *“Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.”*

As we look back into the Old Testament, we understand that no ordinary worshiper under the Old Covenant would have ever had the courage to enter into the Holy of Holies.

- Basically, under the Old Covenant, God was not approachable.
- Most of us are familiar with the tabernacle, or the tent, the place of worship in Old Testament times.
- No one but the Levites enter the tabernacle, and of the Levites, only one man (the High Priest) could enter the Holy of Holies, and even that was only done one time every year.

I have read that it was customary for the other priests to tie a rope around the High Priest's ankle, so if God struck him dead for some reason—if his sacrifice was not acceptable, they could remove his body from the Holy of Holies without putting their own lives in danger.

- They would simply pull the rope and drag his body out from under the curtain.

In **Matthew 27:51**, the Bible tells us that when Jesus died on the cross, that curtain was torn in two from top to bottom.

- In other words, through the sacrifice of Jesus, God removed the barrier and started allowing his people to approach Him directly.
- That is what the author of **Hebrews** is saying in **Hebrews 10:19-22**—through Jesus, we can enter the Holy Place with confidence.
- This is one reason why we get together as Christians—to come together as a congregation to praise God—to enter the Holy Place and draw near to God.
- If you haven't already, please turn in your Bibles to **Hebrews 10**...

This morning, I would like for us to consider the next few verses— **Hebrews 10:23-25**— and I'd like for us to notice that there is another reason for us to get together as Christians—not only for worship, but also to encourage one another to stay faithful as we should.

- I won't be putting these verses up on the screen because I'd like for us to keep our Bibles open during our study this morning.
- Let's read together **Hebrews 10:23-25....**

23 Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful;

24 and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,

25 not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

- I. As we look back over these three verses, I'd like for us to start by noticing the **IMPORTANCE OF ENCOURAGING ONE ANOTHER THROUGH OUR ASSEMBLING TOGETHER.**

We are living in a time when many of the things we need to do can now be done at home.

- There are companies all around us that allow some of their employees to work at home.
- There is a lot of computer work and data entry that can now be done at home.
- Not only that, but there are many people who are basing their businesses out of a home office.
- It avoids the expense involved in owning a separate building, and in many ways there are other advantages to doing this.
- Most of us are also aware of the amount of shopping that can be done at home.
- Last week, I was able to purchase Bible dictionaries on line.
- I simply clicked a few buttons and I'm sure they'll be arriving in the next day or two.
- When I think about home schooling, I usually think of the teaching of young children, however, even as adults we can study at home and receive a fully accredited college degree, even a Master's degree, from home.

These are all very nice and convenient ideas, and yet we understand that our Christian faith is different.

- We understand that we cannot survive in isolation.
- We need the encouragement of meeting together with our brothers and sisters in the Lord.

- We need the constant encouragement just to make it through the week.
- I always enjoy looking around 15 or 20 minutes after worship services and seeing all of the people who are still visiting with one another.
- We learn from each other during those times.
- We enjoy each other and we encourage each other when we gather for worship.

Several years ago there were some gray whales that were stranded in the ice near Point Barrow, Alaska.

- They were gasping for breath through a hole in the ice.
- The rescuers needed to find a way to transport these three whales more than five miles past the ice pack, out to the open sea.
- The rescuers decided to cut holes in the ice about twenty yards apart, and for eight days, they very gently encouraged the whales to move from one hole to the next until they finally made it to the open sea.
- I think we understand that our assemblies as Christians are a lot like those holes in the ice.
- We need that time together just to survive from week to week.
- Every time we assemble, we can breathe once again.

There is something comforting about being with one another in the church.

- We can let our guard down. We can show our appreciation for one another.
- We can reaffirm our love for one another.
- We can serve God simply by listening to one another.
- If we are tired, we can share that and be encouraged.
- We can speak to one another and pray for one another.

Earlier this week, I used the Bible program on my computer, and I typed in the phrase *“one another.”*

- That phrase (depending upon which version you are using) is found 155 times in the Scriptures.
- We are to *“love one another,”* be *“devoted to one another,”* *“be of the same mind toward one another,”* *“build up one another,”* *“accept one another,”* *“admonish one another,”* *“greet one another,”* *“care for one another,”* *“serve one another,”* *“show tolerance for one another,”* *“be kind to one another,”* *“be subject to one another,”* *“comfort one another,”* *“bear with one another,”* *“live in peace with one another,”* *“encourage one another,”* we speak to *“one another”* through our singing, we are to *“confess our sins to one another,”* and *“pray for one another,”* *“be hospitable to one another,”* and finally, we are to *“fervently love one another from the heart.”*
- All of these things can be done as we assemble with one another.

First of all, then, we can look at **Hebrews 10**, and we see a definite value to assembling together and encouraging one another.

- II. There is a second aspect of this passage I’d like for us to consider, and that is, **THERE IS A DEFINITE DANGER INVOLVED IN “FORSAKING” THE ASSEMBLING OF OURSELVES TOGETHER.**

This past week I read the story of a minister who was greeting people as they left church one morning, when the minister saw a man who had not been there for quite some time.

- The minister shook the man's hand and said, **"You need to join the Army of the Lord."**
- The man replied by saying, **"I'm already in the Army of the Lord."**
- The minister said, **"Then why do we only see you on Christmas and Easter?"**
- The man whispered back, **"I'm in the Secret Service."**
- We understand, though, that there is a definite danger is forsaking the assembly of the church.

We need to remember that the entire book of **Hebrews** is a book of warnings.

- The Jewish Christians were tempted to turn back to Judaism, but the writer of **Hebrews** had to warn them to keep on practicing their Christian faith.
- In **Hebrews 2**, the writer warned them to pay closer attention to what they had heard, so that they would not drift away from it.
- In **Hebrews 3**, the writer warned them to be careful that they do not have an unbelieving heart that falls away from the living God.
- In **Hebrews 6**, the writer warned them again about the danger of falling away.
- And now, in **Hebrews 10**, the writer is warning these Jewish Christians about the danger of forsaking the assembling of the church.

Over and over in our society, someone will remind us of the symptoms of a heart attack.

- The American Heart Association wants us to be on the lookout for pressure and pain in the chest, dizziness, fainting, sweating, nausea, and shortness of breath.
- If we experience these symptoms, we are told to get help immediately.
- In a similar way, when we forsake the assembling of the church together, we are showing a symptom of a very serious heart problem spiritually.

It is sometimes tempting to underestimate or even downplay the importance of our assembling together.

- It is not a matter of **"only"** missing church.
- Let's think for a moment of what we miss when we miss the assembling of the church.
- First of all, we miss the singing—The Bible tells us that singing is how we teach, and admonish, and encourage one another.
- We also miss studying the Bible as a congregation—There is a value to personal study, but there is also a value to being in a Bible class and hearing the input of our brothers and sisters.
- We also miss public prayer—There is a value to private prayer, but when we approach God as a congregation, we go to God together and reaffirm our love for God as a congregation.
- We also miss the collection—We can give on our own, but there is a special value to pooling our resources and obeying PL's command to give on the first day of every week.
- We also miss the Lord's Supper—We can take the Lord's Supper on our own, and yet we know that just like a real family, there is a special value to eating together.
- The Lord's Supper is also a memorial, and just as we show our respect by attending the funeral of a friend, we also show our respect for God by participating in the memorial service for His Son.

It is not a matter, then, of “**only**” missing a service.

- There is a lot that happens when we assemble together, and the writer of **Hebrews** is very clear in pointing out the danger in forsaking those meetings.

III. As we look back to **Hebrews 10**, I’d like for us to move on and notice a special sense of urgency that the author gives in **verse 25** by saying “**AND ALL THE MORE AS YOU SEE THE DAY DRAWING NEAR.**”

What is the “**day**”?

- The commentaries go in all different directions on this question, but I believe the answer can be found in reading the next few verses, as the author gets extremely serious.
- Let’s look at **Hebrews 10:26-31** in light of this warning about not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.
- The author says...

26 *For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,*

27 *but a terrifying expectation of judgment and THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES.*

28 *Anyone who has set aside the Law of Moses dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses.*

29 *How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled under foot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?*

30 *For we know Him who said, “VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY.” And again, “THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE.”*

31 *It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*

I have heard from some people the argument that there is no such thing as an eternal hell because “**God is not a God of vengeance.**”

- The author of **Hebrews** would have to disagree with that statement.

Verse 26 very clearly says that if we go on sinning willfully, after we know better, that there will be a punishment involving fire.

- There is not a single sacrifice in the entire world that could possibly cover our sins if we continue in that direction.
- Part of the reason is given in **verse 29**.
- When someone intentionally sets aside God’s law, that person has trampled under foot the Son of God.
- That person has treated God’s Son like road kill.
- What an insult—to reject God’s offer of salvation through His Son, and then to trample that sacrifice under foot!
- What if someone did that to one of our children?
- Let us think again about what God said there in **verse 30**, “**VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY.**’ And again, ‘**THE LORD WILL JUDGE HIS PEOPLE.**’ *It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God.*”

SUMMARY & CONCLUSION:

This morning we have looked at **Hebrews 10**, and we have learned that like a lot of things in this world, there is some assembly required in the Christian faith.

- We cannot be part of the “**Secret Service.**”
- We encourage one another when we meet, there is a danger to forsaking our meeting together, and there is a special urgency to our assemblies as we see the day coming near.
- That day is the Judgment Day, and if we go on sinning willfully after we know better, even Jesus Himself cannot save us from that situation.

As with any sin, the Bible promises forgiveness for us as Christians if we will change our lives and work it out with God in prayer. We learn about this in **Acts 8** and **1 John 1**.

INVITATION:

If you have not yet obeyed the gospel, I would like to very kindly suggest that church attendance is the very least of your concerns.

- The Bible teaches that for our sins to be forgiven, we have to trust in the death of Jesus on the cross.
- Jesus died for our sins, and in response to that sacrifice, He demands that we change our lives and be immersed in water for the forgiveness of our sins.
- If you have any questions, you can talk with us, but if you are ready to take these steps right now, you can come to the front as we stand and sing...