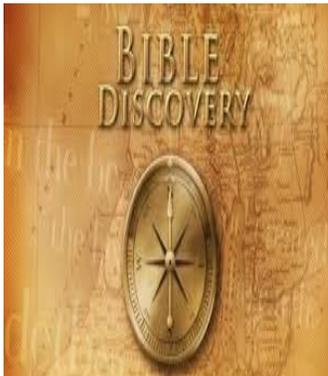


12 Oct 14

Hebrews 10:19-25

Spurring One Another to Love



With Thanksgiving, we've the joy of celebration in the air. We've the harvest before us and again we rejoice to consider God's bountiful goodness. We come in with thankful hearts to praise the Lord on Thanksgiving Sunday – the day of saying thank you to God for that bountiful harvest, for the many blessings of family, and for His constant care. Like you I'm sure my list includes the major things: life, health, family, friends and this country we live in. But even more than that, I'm thankful for my salvation, my church family, and the mercy God showers on me each day. **But why bother?** Doesn't God bless whether we gather and thank Him or not? Surely, this is not needed in our modern, enlightened age. So why do we still gather in Jesus' name?

Having been active in church all my life at times wondering what the church believe they've become, and what outsiders see us as being is it possible both have gotten it wrong? I know for sure the church isn't a place for the "perfect" where they're complexion is pallid enough to be "holy". Each of you has probably heard the saying, "*The church is not a museum of the holy but a hospital for the sick*". Yes, we're a hospital where the sick, the battered, the pained, the injured and the broken come to find healing. The church is you and me – the Body of Christ!

The church is where a prostitute can get tired of her trade, walk in just as she is and find sanctuary. It's where she can fall at Jesus' feet, pour out expensive perfume, wash his feet with her tears and dry his feet with her hair out of a thankful heart. The church is where a broken and beaten little man, hated by all, can creep into the back, fearful of even looking up to God, cry, "*forgive me for I am a sinner*", and then, perhaps just days later have Jesus publicly call out, "*Zacchaeus come down immediately. I must stay at your house today.*"

If we would seek God's dangerous grace, if we would know the real Jesus - radical and wild, breaking from traditions and cultural norms; if we would follow in the footsteps of Jesus our Saviour; if we would let God direct our paths and lead us in His Way; ***we would be that church!*** The church where a drunk can walk in without fear he'll be turned back because he reeks of alcohol. The church that places loving arms around a single girl – just a child herself who's with child and be her support, her comfort without judging. We would be the church that is ***spurring one another to love*** just as the Father has loved us giving us His Son, Jesus, to be our Saviour –the Saviour of all who would come to Him – just as we are.

We want to be a thankful people. That's good. First and foremost, we as the church must gather together to worship God for He's worthy to be praised & worshipped. Doesn't Psalm 100:4-5 say, "*Enter into His gates with thanksgiving...*"? But if we're to be a people of God, giving Him praise and worship, surrendering our hearts, our minds, our strength, our soul, then we must first be a people of fellowship gathered without borders, without conditions, without judgment.

How do we do that? Our fellowship begins with a passion for God! As with crops gathered each fall, the people of God are from different backgrounds with one thing in common... ***we love Jesus Christ!*** Our common desire is to know God more and to help everyone discover how amazing He is! Then, being anchored in our passion for

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Christ as our Saviour and Lord, we recognize Jesus' ministry was all about compassion. Therefore, we too must make compassion a priority. Our goal must be to balance spiritual food and clothing with physical food and clothing for those in need in our community. Such community-minded compassion is not a new concept with Christian fellowship.

Remember James' instruction, "*What use is it if someone says he has faith but he has no works? If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.*" [James 2:14-17]



I don't think such exhortations are earth-shattering to you this morning – they're concepts repeated often, in fact have become polarizing points between denominations. There are those who lean toward worship in praise and adoration of God and do it well; then there are denominations which get an A+ for their devotion to serving others in need. My call to you this morning is let us not throw the baby Jesus out with the bathwater in our caring for one another and for the community around us – let us persevere in the work the Lord has called us to do by holding firm to the faith and to the love and to the conviction that Jesus Christ is Lord and that He leads us in all our endeavors.

That is our message! We've come to engage in spurring one another to love, knowing it begins by being in Christ, "*by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us*". This new way's not only living because Jesus lives, but because He imparts spiritual life to us. In scholarly circles they call that theology. The modern church has largely relegated theology as being irrelevant to life, boring, and even divisive. Today it's all about love. I've been told of theology - "Be careful! That stuff is dangerous!" Dangerous? Yes, in fact it's life transforming. The dangerous grace of God, however, is exactly where God wants us to be. That's why He calls us to draw near to Him with sincere hearts in full assurance of faith, being cleansed by His Son Jesus Christ from guilt and being washed in the baptism of His wonderful grace. That's the theology sweeping through China, Africa and South America where hundreds of thousands are saying yes to Jesus. That's the theology needed back in the church here in Canada. It's the basis on which we are assured we hold an unswerving hope. The New Testament never divorces doctrine from deeds. What we believe impacts how we behave. We're reminded we can be sure because the One who has promised is trustworthy. Thank God He never changes, that the Creator of the Universe is always the same and that His promises are therefore worthy of being held on to always!

It's vitally important we understand who God is, who we are, and what God has done for us in Christ for how we come with thanksgiving. Only on this foundation of Jesus Christ, the author and finisher of our faith, can we then be encouraged to spur one another to love. Only then do the good deeds flow out of our hearts toward each other, to all we meet as we respond from the love poured into our hearts in Christ. Only then does the Holy Spirit have life within us directing our ways allowing us to discover afresh the joy of service, the wonder of care and a renewed commitment to Christ. Only then can we enter the most holy place of God, find fellowship with Him and offer our thanksgiving.

The Hebrews writer shows how Christ's superiority spurs us on to an enduring faith, even in the face of trials. He shows us how to put our life in Christ into practice. He shows that because of our *new relationship* in Christ, we draw near to God in faith, hold unswervingly to the confession of our hope, and consider how to encourage one another to love and good deeds. Let me show you what I mean...

- **"Drawing near to God"** – understood here is it's "*by the blood of Jesus*" through which we have the confidence to enter the most holy place of God emphasizing the importance of Christ's blood to provide for our forgiveness. His shed blood satisfied our deserved penalty God imposed on our sin. We don't approach God with any good works or merit of our own; we don't bring any sacrifice but through the merit of Jesus' blood.
- **"With a sincere heart"** – There's no putting on a good front for others while hiding sin in our hearts. Christians live to please God, who examines our hearts. Our every thought and motive must be taken captive to the obedience of Christ. Christian living is not just a matter of outward

conformity to moral standards; it requires loving God from a heart that has been transformed by His grace.

- **“Hold Unswervingly”** - We all face persecution and trials. And we all face the pressure of conformity to the world. It's easier to blend in at work or school, instead of standing for Christ. It's easier not to say anything by way of witness. But encouraged to hold on without waivering to the confession of our hope.
- **“Spur One Another to Love and Good Deeds”** – only having drawn near to God, with a sincere heart, holding unswervingly to the hope we've professed, can we be equipped to encourage one another and act on behalf of those in need. The command is consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds. In other words make it an active thought in our daily routine, take the focus off of self and think about others. “What does this other person need to help them grow in love and good deeds?” Within the hurting of the church, there will be those who've had feelings hurt by other believers, they've isolated themselves from the family of God. Instead of thinking, “How can I be used of God to spur others on in love?” they think, “My needs aren't being met. That church is unfriendly and unloving!” That is not the church. That is not Christ. That is not God's call upon your heart. You can't encourage others to love and good deeds when you're alone! You have to gather with the saints to do it!

If we would truly be thankful people coming to our Lord with thankful hearts; if we would forsake all other loves, all other pursuits; if we would turn from our selfish thoughts and set our hearts and minds upon Him alone; we would do so knowing we've come into this place because we know the great high priest who has called us, Jesus our Lord, our Saviour and King, and our commitment is to Him so we can encourage each other. Let us come and thank the Lord, giving thanks all the more as we see the day of our Lord's return fast approaching upon the pages of our daily paper or TV screen, spurring one another to love in Jesus.

If you would like to know more about our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ who loves you and truly cares for you, I invite you to contact us at 1-519-317-8659 or via email at office.mbbc@xplornet.com.

May the Lord richly bless you with his presence...

Blessings,

Pastor Dave