

Preparing for Church

Hebrews 10:19-25

Introduction

Good morning, Lighthouse. Are you ready for the Word of God this morning? If you came for a feel-good sermon, I can't promise that for the whole thing. Preparing for church. If you're thinking "I put some clothes on, got out the door and I'm sitting here today" is the solution then stay tuned.

There was a man who was stranded on a desert island for many years. One day, while strolling along the beach, he spotted a ship in the distance. This had never happened in all the time he was on the island, so he was very excited about the chance of being rescued. Immediately, he built a fire on the beach and generated as much smoke as possible. Soon, the ship was heading his way. When the ship was close enough to the island, a boat was dispatched to investigate the situation. The man on the island was overjoyed with the chance to be rescued. After rescuing him, the captain of the ship asked the man on the island how he had survived for so many years. The man replied by telling of his exploits for food and how he was able to make a fine house to live in. In fact, the man said, "You can see my home from here." He pointed the men in the direction of his home. They looked up and saw three buildings. They inquired about the building next to the man's house and he replied, "Oh, that's my church - I go there to worship on Sundays." When asked about the third building, the man replied, "That's where I used to go to church." He was the only one on the island but still found a reason to leave the church. I found the joke to make more of a good point than humorous.

There is more to coming to church than simply showing up. Nothing complicated, but I want you to give your best worship and honor to the Lord. The Word of God teaches us how we are to come before the Lord in worship. Our text is Hebrews 10:19-25.

Scripture

Hebrews 10:19-25 (19) Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, (20) By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; (21) And having an high priest over the house of God; (22) Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. (23) Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;); (24) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: (25) Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

Outline

Question: How should you prepare for church?

Answer: To prepare for church you should:

I. Know and understand Who you are coming to worship, vv. 19-21.

A. We are worshipping the One who granted us access to God, vv. 19-20.

(19) Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, (20) By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh;

1. Having boldness to enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

a. Notice that this is not a command or an exhortation. It is a statement of fact.

b. Entering God's presence is far better today than the Levitical system.

- c. The Priest each year before entering the Holiest of Holies could not do so with confidence. He did it with fear and trembling. If he made a mistake, it could cost him his life.
- d. We sing each time after observing the Lord's supper "What can wash away my sin – nothing but the blood of Jesus."
- e. The blood of Jesus provided a new and living way which He consecrated with us, that we really can come into the presence of God with boldness.

2. Church is much better when you're a child of God. Do you know the One you came to worship?

3. This is not the first instance Hebrews mentioned approaching God with confidence.

Hebrews 4:14-16 (14) Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. (15) For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. (16) Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

- 3. Under the Old Covenant, the High Priest had access because of the blood of a dead animal. Now under the New Covenant we have access because of the perfect sacrifice of the sinless Son of God.
- 4. "Through the veil, that is his flesh" it says: The veil separated the Holiest from the holy place. To enter the Holiest, you had to pass through the veil. But this veil separating man from God's intimate presence is forever opened wide, being torn into two from top to bottom.
- 5. Hebrews makes an analogy between the veil that stood between God and man

and the body of Jesus. Jesus' body was "torn," and so was the veil, each indicating that now we can come to God boldly. We can approach God with confidence.

B. We are worshipping our great High Priest, vv. 21.

(21) And having an high priest over the house of God;

1. The High Priests were supreme religious leaders of the Israelites. The office of the high priest was hereditary and was traced from Aaron, the brother of Moses, of the Levite tribe. The high priest had to be "whole" physically (without any physical defects) and holy in his conduct. The high priest had to offer a sin offering not only for the sins of the whole congregation, but also for himself.
2. The most important duty of the high priest was to conduct the service on the Day of Atonement, the tenth day of the seventh month of every year. Only he was allowed to enter the Most Holy Place behind the veil to stand before God. Having made a sacrifice for himself and for the people, he then brought the blood into the Holy of Holies and sprinkled it on the mercy seat, God's "throne."
3. Jesus is our High Priest, but His High Priest role is far better. He is called our Great High Priest. Consider this contrast:

(1) Jesus' High Priest is based from Melchizedek, not Levites. Melchizedek is what is called a Christophany. He was Priest and King of Salem. No other priest was also a king. The same Priest and King whom Abraham paid tithes to. A Priesthood that predates the law, hence why we tithe to our everlasting priest today.

(2) Jesus had no offering to give because He was sinless: so He offered himself on behalf of others.

(3) Jesus only had to offer Himself once and for all as opposed to a yearly offering.

(4) Every High Priest died and was passed on. Our High Priest rose from the dead and is forever High Priest.

4. Every believer has the benefit of Jesus as our great High Priest – He is our intercessory to God the Father, however, there is special ministry mentioned about His role as High Priest that not every believer is experiencing.

a. He is the High Priest over the house of God. What is the house of God?

It's the church.

b. This is one of many reasons it is essential to stay faithful in God's house: because to forsake it is to miss out on Jesus' High Priestly ministry to the house of God.

c. There is a special protection God gives to those apart of His church – His body. Satan is ready prance on any of God's children that forsake and leave the body.

1 Peter 5:8 (8) Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour:

d. The ones easiest to devour are the ones wandering outside the protection of the flock. We need our church fellowship.

5. When we come to church to worship: This is who you are worshipping: The God of the Universe, The King of Kings, The Lord of Lords, The Almighty One, The Savior of the world, The Holy God, Our Great High Priest who died for us and gave us access. His name is Jesus What more can we give other than

our worship? And because of who we worship: we must:

II. Prepare both our inner and outer man, vv. 22-23.

A. Prepare to come before God with a true heart, v. 22a.

(22) Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience,

1. This is the inner man. True heart means a clean conscience. This we do this is by confession. Come clean before God. This is never done by righting all your wrongs or living perfectly, but by a life of confessing and forsaking.

1 John 1:8-10 (8) If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (9) If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. (10) If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us.

2. This is possible because of Jesus' priestly ministry. The work of Jesus gives us all the means to draw near. The problem of access to God has been settled. The problem of a perfect High Priest has been settled. The problem of moral and spiritual pollution has been settled.

3. The blood of Jesus is what cleanses us from an evil conscience. You don't have to come to church with guilt eating you alive. You can take care of it before God. He already knows, why not be transparent with Him?

4. You can come to Him no matter what – whether you are broken hearted, ashamed, full of regret – He understands. If you're feeling overwhelmed with guilt and shame. Church is where you need to be. Don't convince yourself that others are going to judge you. Let God sort that out.

Psalm 34:18-19 (18) The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. (19) Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.

B. Prepare to come before God with our bodies cleaned, v. 22b.

(22b)...and our bodies washed with pure water.

1. Our bodies washed with pure water.
2. I understand there is some debate whether this refers to our physical bodies washed vs it referring to more spiritual cleaned with word washing.
3. However, the context and historical setting would indicate it is talking about being physically cleaned. The High Priest would cleanse Himself in the Jewish mikveh before entering the tabernacle. Jews would also physically wash themselves before worship. This was even a practice Gentiles had for Pagan worship.
4. Also, consider 2000 years ago. Do you think the people would probably stink? Why would they subject their brothers and sisters to the smell gathering together in fellowship without bathing?
5. Washing their bodies was an outward sign of their inward man being purified. Do you know what the application here is? Before you come to church, bathe, take a shower. Be clean. Do it for your church family if you're struggling to find the reason to shower before church or fellowship gatherings.

C. Prepare to come before God confident in our faith because He is faithful, v. 23.

(23) Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;)

1. How is it we can do any of this? Because He is faithful that promised.
2. This is my favorite part of this passage: our basis is on God's faithfulness. Therefore, we can have full assurance of our faith and come with confidence.

III. Commit yourself to be here to encourage your brothers and sisters in the Lord, vv. 24-25.

A. Commit yourself to consider one another to build them up in love and good works,

v. 24

(24) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works:

1. What is that you come to church for? Is it about what you can get? Or do you have mindset of what you can give?
2. When you come to church, your mindset should be to encourage each other and build each other up to love and good works.
3. We need each other for this! We need our Church fellowship with one another. This goes beyond just Sunday morning main service.

B. Commit yourself to not forsake assembling in fellowship to build each other up, v. 25.

(25) Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

1. So how do you expect to fulfill building each other up and provoking each other to love and good works if you're not here? We offer a live stream service opportunity here at Lighthouse and I'm grateful we do. However, many here and myself can testify it's not same. The atmosphere is gone. I'm glad we offer it for those who couldn't be here for that day for whatever reason, but it was never designed to replace gathering to worship.
2. Of course there are outside opportunities to show love to some of your brothers and sisters in Christ outside of worship times, but why would you neglect the perfect occasion to do so? More importantly, why would you disobey the command to assemble and worship the Lord together?
3. Consider this question: Do you have things in your life that cause you to miss

church? Or is church the reason you miss things?

- a. Too often do God's people decide to come only when it is convenient.
- b. I understand when there are occasions that do come up that would cause you to miss. This is often known as the Ox in the Pit principle. Jesus used this illustration to apply to the Sabbath when he was questioned for performing miracles on the Sabbath. Sickness can be a good reason to miss if you are putting others at risk. Family emergencies occur, sometimes a job that puts you on call every now and then. Ox in the pit. But if it keeps happening, maybe it's time to BBQ the ox.
- c. Rarely are these the reasons people decide to miss though. Some go to church cause there is nothing better to do, others go because there is nothing better to do. Why would you let anything come before your worship to the Lord and fellowship with your family?
- d. Is working late on Saturday night a good reason to miss? Birthday party to attend later? Guests coming over in the afternoon?
- e. Do you know what the occasion was when the author of Hebrews made this statement? This is what brought the phrase "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together." These Christians faced heavy persecution for their faith, they faced death for their faith, and still found assembling to worship essential. This is happening even today. Western Christianity has it easy compared to our brothers and sisters in the faith in the east. American Christians will leave churches because of messages like this one today.

f. Want to know the fastest way to grow in discouragement with your walk with the Lord? It's to forsake the assembling of ourselves together.

g. Some only go to church if they feel they "need it" at the time. But our motivation for fellowship must be to obey God and to give to others. We can and should gather with our church family to encourage someone who needs to stand strong against discouragement.

- We gather to receive something from God.
- We gather to give something to God.
- We gather to encourage each other by our shared faith and values.
- We gather to bless one another.
- We gather to work together.

C. Commit yourself to be faithful in your worship and service to the Lord until the end,
v. 25c.

...and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

1. All the more reasons to faithfully commit to worship and fellowship with God's people is because the Day of the Lord is approaching.
2. Do you want to be found outside of fellowship with God and His people when He returns?
3. What will it take for you to forsake the assembly as a manner as some as mentioned in the text?
4. Some leave because they claim they're just not growing. That can seem valid at first, but until you examine their involvement. If this if you're feeling this way today, I ask:

1. Are you a member? (Attending every week doesn't grant you automatic membership).
2. When do you come in? (Is it 11:10am and with no chance to catch up with your family?) Were you in Sunday school? Did you participate in the Lord's Supper? Are in attending a home team? Weekly Bible study? Did you make effort to get know and encourage someone? Were you attentive to the message? Who did you come to worship? Where are you serving? If you're not able to check these things off, perhaps blaming the church isn't the answer. Those who leave with this mentality will leave the next church and the next and the next – creating an unending cycle.

Or: Do you come with your Bible ready to learn, ready to bring your praise to Jesus, ready to encourage your brothers and sisters, excited to be able to give that which He provided, and ready to serve out of love? The standard and expectation you should hold yourself to being in God's house and conducting yourself on Sunday mornings should be the same one you hold your Pastor to. (Expand upon this).

Conclusion

Messages like this aren't easy hear. They're not easy to preach either. Messages like this isn't because we want to pick on you. It's because we love you. We need our fellowship with each other more than ever. Early in our text we saw how Christ's work gave us access to the throne of grace. The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus is what made that possible. Our sin separated us from a holy and righteous God. Jesus took our place on the cross as a ransom for our sin. Three days later He rose again and conquered death once and for all. That is the Gospel. The message this world needs. It's our duty to proclaim it and live in a manner consistent with it. Anyone who would put their trust in Him to save them from their will have everlasting life. Nothing you can work to accomplish, nothing you can ever do to deserve it. In fact, we deserve

just the opposite, but God in His grace and mercy has given us access to Him and be heaven with him. And because of all that He is done for you, why would you ever neglect His church? Some have concluded you don't have to be in church to be a "good Christian." Whatever "good" in the first place means there. I would ask in return "Does someone have to home in order to be married?" You can indeed be a Christian, be saved and not be in church. You can even be in church not be a Christian. Just like a husband or wife won't stop being married, but when they're never home, good luck on having a strong marriage. We need to each other, not just to be in church, but to be the church. Being here, and ready to serve our Savior. Will you let things in your life make you miss church, or will church be the reason you miss things? Furthermore, John F Kennedy said this: Ask not what your country can do for you, but what you can do for your country. Well: Ask not what your church can do for you, but what you can do for your church.

Prayer