

Hebrews 10:22a

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[0 : 00] Let's turn in your copy of God's Word with me to Hebrews chapter 10. Those of you who have been with us for a while might be scratching your heads. I did say Hebrews chapter 10.

We're going to take a little break from Romans and spend the next couple of weeks, a few weeks, three to four, in the book of Hebrews to take a brief break and to talk about something that's kind of been pressing on our hearts.

But before we get started there, let's pray together. Father God, thank you for the congregation. Thank you for those whom you've called your own. And I thank you, Father, that you've called us together this morning to study your Word.

I pray, Father, you'll be generous to us in understanding, that you will fill in the gaps in my preparation, those that I know about and those that I don't. I pray, Father, that I will speak accurately and truthfully for the edification of your church this morning.

And we pray this in the precious name of Christ who makes it possible for us to pray. Amen. So as we have been praying through our preaching, something that we try to make a habit of doing, kind of sticking our finger in the air, seeing which way the wind is blowing, we felt that it was important for us to take a little break from Romans, not that things are going poorly there, but just to stop and talk a little bit about the vision of Christ's family church, which is not an odd vision.

[1 : 28] It shouldn't be a foreign thing to any Christian. We place a statement that we call our vision statement on the screen. If you've been here at all, and I hope paying attention, you'll know that that statement says, Christ's family church exists to experience, proclaim, and display the supremacy of Jesus Christ in all things.

What we want to talk about is how that actually fleshes out. Because it's just a sentence, otherwise. How is it that we experience, proclaim, and display the supremacy of Jesus Christ in all things together as a local church?

And so we have a little analogy we like to use, and I keep saying we, I'm talking about the leadership of the church, which you'll maybe key into because you've seen our logo. It's a group of trees standing together, and you may notice that they're not spindly pine trees, but they're mighty oaks, I say, or some sort of hardwood, pick your favorite.

The large difference between these varieties of trees is that one's a softwood and another's a hardwood. One puts down a different type of root. Pine trees put down a taproot.

If you ever see a field cleared, the first type of tree to come back into that field is a pine tree. And the pine tree knows that in order for it to compete with large hardwoods that cast lots of shade, they have to grow quickly.

[2 : 44] So they put down what's called a taproot, a long root, and they send out little roots from that, and they grow. But what happens around here when we have ice storms come? When those trees get a little heavier than they should be, they're the first to go, right?

That's that snapping you here in the middle of the night, and you hope that one of them doesn't snap and fall on your house. Those are the pine trees, because all it takes is the weight to snap that one root, and the whole thing comes down.

It's not the kind of trees we want to be as Christians, right? We want to put down deep, solid roots that reach out deep into the Word of God. So that's one area, one thing we do together is we study together.

We read God's Word and we understand it together. We also want to put our branches high into the air. We want to exalt God in all that we do, in our singing of praises to His name, in our prayers, in our proclamation of Him.

And so those are the branches. And we also want to bear fruit, the fruit of love, both to the church and to the world.

[3 : 52] So you find in that this neat little four-week sermon series, right? It's little fruits, branches, fruit to the church, fruit to the world. It's a nice little package, and that's kind of the way we set out.

Nathan, we're going to take a break from Romans, and we want you to preach on these things. This is what we're going to do together as a church. God tends to thwart our plans, though, doesn't He? As I began preparation to study this morning to talk about roots, kind of topically talk about that, what it means for us to study the Word of God together, I was led to Hebrews chapter 10 as a text to preach from.

And I discovered in this, all of these elements are contained. So I'm not going to preach over the next few weeks in the neat little roots, branches, fruit to the church, fruit to the world, order. However, we were going to get all that in there, which is why I'm giving you this lengthy preface. So I'm just going to verse by verse preach through verse 19 through verse 25.

So let's read that together. The writer of Hebrews writes, Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, by the new and living way that He opened for us through the curtain, that is, through His flesh, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts frinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.

[5 : 22] Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Now we're going to spend most of our time this week and next in verse 22. I have six points I want to pull out, squeeze out of that one verse, verse 22.

But I think I would be remiss if I didn't talk first about the first three verses, which we're going to get into as we progress through this text in the coming weeks.

But I feel it's very important that we set the stage properly as we begin to talk about what many have called, and I've been reminded over and over again this week, is the lettuce patch. Let us, let us, let us.

So verse 19 through 21, the writer of Hebrews has just finished talking about the old sacrificial system. All right? For those of you who aren't totally versed in your Old Testament knowledge, the Old Testament sacrificial system, there was a temple, and within that temple, there was an inner sanctum called the Holy Place.

[6 : 36] And within that place was a place called the Holy of Holies. And this is where the glory of God dwelt. Physically, we could see it, the Shekinah glory, where we could actually see the glory of God dwelling in this place. All right?

Unless I misspeak, we couldn't actually see it. But one day a year, one guy, the high priest, could see it. It was a very special day, the Day of Atonement.

And I won't get into all of the ritual that was taking place there, because I don't have time. But there was much preparation, lots of things he had to do to be able to enter into the presence of God. In fact, they sewed bells into his garments and tied a rope around his ankle in case they heard the bell stop moving, because they would know he died because he did something improperly, and they could drag his dead body out of the Holy of Holies.

That's how serious it was to enter into the presence of God. So the writer of Hebrews is either teaching us for the first time, for many of us, but here he's writing to a Jewish culture and he's reminding them of this.

[7 : 40] What an awesome thing it was to enter into the presence of God. He goes on to tell us that there's now been that atoning sacrifice, once and for all, has been made by Jesus Christ, our great high priest.

Greater than any of the high priests, he has made one sacrifice that has officially and forever atoned for the sins of God's people. So now, we come to verse 19.

Therefore, since we have confidence to enter the Holy Place by the blood of Jesus Christ. How shocking would that have been to the readers, the original readers of this letter?

We read past things like that, right? Yeah, confidence, yeah, yeah. To enter into the Holy Places. Confidence. Even the high priest didn't have confidence when he entered in. He had safeguards.

The safeguards. The bells and the rope. Guys, I'm going in. You may not come out. Pull me out, alright? Bury me somewhere. Don't stink up the Holy Place because I'm not sure how this is going to go.

[8 : 44] We, though, by the blood of Christ, we have confidence to enter into the Holy Places by Jesus' body. The curtain that was torn.

You remember when Christ died? The temple curtain that was dividing the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place tore from top to bottom. And here the writer of Hebrews says it was his body that tore that curtain for us.

And then verse 22, let us draw near. And that's where we're going to spend our time this morning. We'll get to the rest of the verse next week.

But this morning, we're going to spend our time, verse 22, let us draw near. Christian worship, let me say. Because we can, let's do that.

Because this is a grace given to us, let's draw near to God. Now, we all worship all the time. And I know that. Alright?

[9 : 43] If you don't, we all worship all the time. It depends on what you're worshipping. So this morning, we're talking about Christian worship, not the worship of other things, of your stuff, or yourself, or your girlfriend, or your wife, your favorite football team.

We're talking about Christian worship. Because we all worship all the time. And particularly, we're going to talk this morning about those things that we do corporately, together. Certainly, there are times for individual worship.

I would encourage you to it. But specifically this morning, about those things that we do corporately, the prayers we pray, the songs that we sing, and the study of the Scriptures.

Now, this concept of worship, this idea, the subject of worship, has spawned many battles in the church. In fact, officially, they're called worship battles.

When you hear that term, it's in reference to songs, specifically. We've probably all participated in that in some degree, or at least been around that.

[10 : 43] I like the drums. I don't like the drums. I like hymns. I like modern praise and worship. I prefer the contemporary service. I'll go to the traditional service. I like things acoustic.

I love an electric guitar. These types of arguments, which are much heat with very little light, if that makes sense to you at all. These arguments are predicated on opinion.

We do the same thing with preaching. There are varying preaching styles. Some preachers use their hands, as you'll notice I do. Some stand kind of stiffly behind a lectern.

I like his preaching. I get a lot out of it. I don't prefer his preaching. I don't enjoy it. Many, many things that cost heat, but very, very little light.

And all are predicated on opinion. So who gets to define how we worship? Is it us?

[11 : 43] Who gets to define how we worship? Ultimately, who has the final say in what happens here in Christ's family church on Sunday morning?

Who decides that? God decides that. Beloved, the Bible gives us much latitude in the particulars. Much latitude.

There is no New Testament-inspired liturgy. An order. I could preach at the beginning and we could do all the songs at the end. I could preach at the end and all the songs at the beginning.

I can preach right in the middle like we do. There is no inspired liturgy. There's much latitude. We can play drums. We don't have to use drums. We can use an organ.

It doesn't matter if we don't. There is room for preference. But ultimately, how do we filter what we do? How do we hold it up to light and see if what we're doing is proper on Sunday morning?

[12 : 46] Now, it's not my burden this morning to prove to you that what we do is right. I am sure we can improve what we do together. I just want to hold what we do up to the lens of Scripture to the very beginning of verse 22.

Let us draw near. And here is the reason. In Matthew 15, verse 8 and 9, Jesus says this to the Pharisees, This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

In vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men. Does that scare you a little bit? It scares me.

Let me explain to you why. Jesus says to them, Your worship the thing you call worship and I am calling worship, so catch that, is in vain.

So we can call what we do worship, even God will call it worship. But if we don't worship rightly, it's in vain. That frightens me.

[13:57] And for these people, it wasn't that they were worshiping the wrong God. they were worshiping the right God wrongly. So let's learn a little bit about how to worship the right God rightly.

Let us draw near. And the implication is let us draw near to God. So if you hear me say that and your text doesn't read that way, I'm adding the to God because of the preceding verses. Let us draw near to God.

I discovered this week that this phrase, I thought I was being very holy to preach on just one little phrase, it's actually, in the original language, in Greek, it's actually one word.

So I'm preaching on one word this morning. That word is proserkamai. Don't write it down.

Proserkamai. And I'm going to break out some of this for you, but it is plural, present tense, in the active voice, and in the subjunctive mood.

This one word tells us an immense amount about how we ought to worship together corporately. So I have three points this morning. Number one, Christian worship is corporate in emphasis.

[15:14] It's corporate in emphasis. We can see that in the plural form of this word, as well as the rest of the text.

Take a quick look with me. Verse 22, let us, our hearts, our bodies. Verse 19, since we have confidence. Verse 20, that he opened for us.

Verse 21, since we have a great priest. Verse 23, let us hold fast the confession of our hope. verse 24, let us consider.

Now, I understand that worship is a lifestyle. I'm one of the first people to complain about folks who just call music worship. Right? To think that only the time, the only time I can come and worship God is when I come to church and we sing songs together.

That's improper. Entirely improper. However, worship is congregational in emphasis.

[16:19] If you look throughout the scriptures at the instruction for worship, it is heavily weighted to the side of the congregation. I'll explain why in a second. But here's the problem with the worship is a lifestyle.

I hear people say that. Well, worship is a lifestyle. So what we tend to do then is use it as an excuse to not meet with the congregation. Some of you may know somebody who says, I just feel close to God when I go hiking.

So I'm going to go on Sunday mornings to worship God on the Appalachian Trail. Now, there's something wrong with you if when you hike the Appalachian Trail and you get to some of those grand overlooks, you aren't caused to worship God.

You should worship God when you spend time in nature. He created it. It speaks of His glory. You should do this thing. However, God's character culminates in the person and work of Jesus Christ. The redemption of His people and we must be in the midst of His people to have our minds and hearts lifted properly to God. The grandest overlook you've seen on the AT does not compare to the people sitting in this room.

[17:38] We're all a pitiful looking bunch of people, but what Christ has done for us is awesome. We properly worship God when we're with His people because we see the greatest work that God has accomplished amongst His people.

Martin Luther said rightly, if you expect to have God as your father, I just fancy lost my spot. There we go. Sorry. There we go.

If you expect to have God as your father, you must embrace the church as your mother. If you expect to have God as your father, you must embrace the church as your mother.

Any expression of Christianity devoid of the church is totally foreign to the pages of Scripture. I encourage you to begin reading Scriptures in that way.

Pay attention to the pronouns. The writer of Hebrews did not get himself trapped in a pronoun conundrum. He didn't start verse 19 and say, therefore, brothers, now I've got to say all these plural pronouns throughout the rest of the text.

[18:48] Now I'm stuck with these we's and us's. It wasn't an accident. He could have simply gone back and changed brothers. It was inspired that way.

We have a shared faith. Language entered into evangelicalism in the 60s. Much of the traveling evangelists will phrase personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

We're all familiar with that phrase. True that Christ saves individuals. I'm one of them. true that I have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

I don't need an intermediary for me to pray. I can go personally to Him to pray. All that's true. But why is it that we think when we step outside of the language of Scripture we won't have problems as a result?

The simple call to salvation is not personal relationship with Jesus Christ. It's repent and believe. So as we stepped outside of that as evangelicals we began to lose the value of church of the congregation the fact that we have been called as a people persons but as a people.

[20 : 11] We lose that value in there. Look at some of the shocking even language of the New Testament. We are compared to a body made up of many parts a household made up of family members a temple made up of living stones.

These are the analogies that we're given the metaphors by which to view the church and the result always in these texts is that by themselves they make no sense.

The individual parts are meant to be part of a whole. They're not meant to exist on their own. Look at David wrote many of our songs most of them in scripture.

Psalms 22 says I will tell of your name to my brothers in the midst of the congregation I will praise you. Psalm 40 9 and 10 I have told the glad news of deliverance in the great congregation behold I have not restrained my lips as you know O Lord I have not hidden your deliverance within my heart I have spoken of your faithfulness and your salvation I have not concealed your steadfast love and your faithfulness from your great congregation Psalm 149 says praise the Lord sing to the Lord a new song his praise in the assembly of the godly and we could go on and on and on I kind of skipped through the book of Psalms for you David understood what it meant to praise god in the congregation public glory brings more glory than private glory I could say to my wife Sam I love you let me tell you how wonderful you are she would appreciate that how much more glory is brought to my wife though when I say to you

I love my wife let me tell all of you why I love her whether she wants me to do that or not could be embarrassing for her but you get my point now all of you know why I think my wife is wonderful not just her public glory brings more glory than private glory that's why we want Christ family church to grow not because we're counting numbers I have no idea how many people are here this morning we want more praises to be lifted what more glory given to our father by Christ family church our gatherings as Christians our gatherings are the closest semblance we have to heaven on earth what's going to be happening in heaven it's just going to be a big picture church Christ in the middle of the whole thing we see in revelation an innumerable company of angelic beings and an innumerable company of redeemed sinners worshipping

[23 : 09] God together in concentric circles around the throne that's what's going to be going on in heaven if you don't like big groups of people you're kind of a solo kind of person me and Jesus kind of person if you don't like big groups you don't like big music you don't like it when people sing loudly around you that's distracting to you you!

are going to hate heaven this is the closest thing we've got if we don't love this we're going to hate heaven number two Christian worship is frequent in occurrence the word is present active which means simply this let us when he wrote this word let us draw near he was saying let us draw near now and continually not at one time let's gather together let us and then continue to gather together you'll remember after Pentecost as the believers were gathering together still on their holiday as they had gathered in the city they met together how often every day right but as they had to return back to their lives back to work and labor the first day of the week was the day that became the day of gathering it became known as the

Lord's day because it was the day that Christ was resurrected so it got away from the Sabbath being the last day of the week to the first day of the week the Lord's day that was a day of work for them so they gathered in the evenings on the Lord's day 325 Constantine made the first day of Christian emperor made the first day of the week a day of no!

work so what do you think the! did? they began to meet both in the morning and in the evening they didn't say oh great now we got some time that's fantastic let's do morning that's a little more convenient for us others said nah we like the evening we like to get up and go hiking and we'll meet in the evening they met at both times for two reasons one they believed that God was worth it rather than giving God a little bit of what they had they gave God much of their day and number two they understood that corporate worship is the primary place of blessing you guys know that our times

together your fellowship of believers is the primary place of blessing it's the place in which our spiritual gifts are activated when we're together as a body of believers it's when we function as we should function with the body it's when our gifts are activated we'll be blessed by God meet with the congregation I think that we've far too much taught church attendance as a legalistic matter you should be here which is entirely true you should be here but why why should you be here why should you want to come together with the people of God I can tell you that the people I know with the most immovable faith those who despite the circumstances in their life have a spiritual solidness in them have already settled in their mind this issue of whether or not corporate worship is important they've already come to understand I need the body of Christ cannot do this on my own those are the people I see as the most firm in their faith are you one of those people I tell you that brutally honest

[27 : 28] I wake up fairly early most Sunday mornings 530 ish and sometimes I hit that snooze a couple of times 6 ish I don't always want to come here on Sunday mornings I wake up and think just to have a day off to catch up around the house be so nice and after our morning service we go home and it become my habit to take a short!

while Kate is napping and kind of recoup from the morning and I often wake up from that nap and think we have to do this again tonight we're getting back together again I have to prepare I haven't even looked at the text we're studying this evening the thing that makes me come even sometimes I walk in these doors not wanting to be here the thing that makes me come is I know this to be true I know that throughout my life I have been most blessed by God when I'm with his people if you have not experienced that I would invite you to involve!

yourself with the congregation now of course there are exceptions! we can't all be here all the time conveniently I get to schedule events I'm part of that process so I can schedule things around my schedule so I'm not talking about people who have to work sometimes I'm not talking about those who physically can't get themselves out of bed to come I hope I think that God gives extra grace to those who are invalids and can't actually make it to meet with the congregation I'm not talking about people in our case that live too far away to be at everything that we do ultimately what I'm talking about is our hearts I'm talking about people who just find something else to do there's something better something comes up we all have those friends that you ask if they'd like to hang we'll hang out if something better doesn't come up a lot of people treat church that way we'll see how things are going that morning a lot of us lead ourselves into that day that way

I can go to bed at two o'clock in the morning and if I'm feeling chipper I will go meet with the congregation if I'm not I can always stay home that's what I'm!

talking about not those exceptions some people may ask well how frequent is frequent enough some of you may have that question in your mind now it's a troubling question to me I think it's the wrong question I think really the question that should be asked is when can we meet together how often can I be with God's people how much do I have to do to get by if a husband came to me and said Nathan how much time should I spend with my wife be very indicative something else going on in their marriage wouldn't it he should want to spend time with his wife he should enjoy spending time with his wife both because it's his reasonable service to her and because of how it makes him feel a husband binds up his identity in his wife

[30 : 57] I am a husband we don't tend to do that with the church beloved you are Christians you are bound up with the church the New Testament doesn't command a certain frequency so to add that in there it would be wrong of me to say there's a certain frequency Sunday morning Sunday night and Wednesday the New Testament doesn't command it I think that that kind of idea would have been entirely absurd to the New Testament writers to think that they even needed to give us some frequency rate as a redeemed people delivered from sin in a hostile world if you're living as a radical Christian in this place the world is hostile to you we will want to be together we will want to find the encouragement to continue on which we'll talk about in verse 25 in coming weeks our efforts to avoid legalism should never prevent us from using our common sense so someone comes to me and says

Nathan I would like to grow in my faith what should I do I would ask them the question do you read your Bible do you spend time daily in the word of God David did he meditated on it day and night I would start there if you're not already doing that the same holds!

true of meeting the church singing praises praying together common sense tells us we should meet together we should be about this work and verse 19 or 22 tells us that as well all right point number

three Christian worship is thoroughly preoccupied with God thoroughly preoccupied with God I mentioned earlier the phrase let us draw near and I add it to the end to God there are actually some translations that render it that way because of what has just been said because we've now been granted access confident access to God that's what we're talking about here the verb here let us draw near is subjunctive which means it's conditional it means we can't just draw near in any old way we want to draw near we can't just draw near and we're near we have to do so in a proper way if we're drawing near there's a way in which we draw near so our worship of

God as we're drawing near is thoroughly preoccupied with God I know I read it already I want to read to you again Matthew 15 8 9 Jesus says to the Pharisees this people honors me with their lips but their heart is far we get very caught up as Christians and I think even in our congregation in putting form before substance something we fight against and as individuals in this church I know we buck against this so I'm not scolding you right now it's not my desire at all but often we put form before substance not that heat without light that I was mentioning earlier one writer put it this way for the modern evangelical worship is defined exclusively by the individual's experience worship then is not about adoring god but by about being nourished with religious feelings so much so that the worshiper has become the object of worship catch in this flow for the modern evangelical what they get is what services have become about and this writer says so much so that the worshiper has become the object of worship

Sunday worship is to be centered on my needs and desires I am at the center my needs are paramount meet them or I will go to church elsewhere that is the attitude by and large of evangelical Christians when you leave here on Sunday morning you ought not ask what did I get out of this morning what you ought to ask is was God pleased with my participation this morning we are not the audience we are the performers we are the subjects he is the observer it is God's approval we seek his applause we don't do this for us we receive benefit from it I just talked about growing in your faith and meeting with the congregation didn't

[36 : 12] I but primarily our worship together is to come together for him does God need us I hope the resounding answer in your head is no I have a pitiful God if he needs me but he has arranged things such because he loves us he knows that us gathering together and arranging what we do together as a congregation for him is ultimately to our greatest joy he knows that when we worship him properly when we actually draw near we'll be sustained in joy it's good stuff help that get your spine tingling in revelation as I mentioned earlier we see throughout the book of revelation furthering explanation of what's being seen in heaven by

John and if you don't know this revelation is had the second most songs of praise in it next to the book of psalm I would encourage you to just look through the style of songs that are sung in heaven we see these ever increasing concentric circles around the throne father god the lamb of god sitting at his right hand and we see circles of praise around him all about adulation and praise of Jesus Christ for what he's done so you hear a lot about the secret friendly movement people arranging church services to make it comfortable for lost people to come in and meld not feel too offended and so you ask the question should we plan our services for lost people and I think I would surprise you by saying yes I think we should

I think we should do! we do we should arrange everything we're doing for lost people but with this in mind in John chapter 4 Jesus says that the father is looking for those who will worship him in what spirit and in truth God's the ultimate seeker is he not if we want to draw people into us we ought to arrange our services in such a way that we worship God that it is entirely preoccupied with him and the lost person who's being called by God fit right in worship at its very essence is a reply to God it's a it's a reflex remember sitting on the table when you're a kid getting the check up and getting your knee bopped and you do that little kick you couldn't help it as Chris talked about the Grand Canyon last week and that's the analogy that was brought to my mind it's like standing at the edge of the Grand Canyon how can you not go oh I had no idea I said it was grand but man this is a big canyon it's a response to what we see there so we must then know something of the God we worship right it's why we preach expositionally it's why we go verse by verse through his written word because it belongs to him and he thought it was important to tell us the things contained in it it's why we sing wordy songs everybody the scriptures all the songs in scripture are wordy but beyond that it teaches us something we know the God we praise if you can take a song that's sung in church and replace Jesus with your girlfriend's name and it still makes sense it doesn't belong in the service it's not the place for it it's why we do things that way because the integrity of our worship is determined

by the substance that fuels it we can very easily serve the right God wrongly we can also very easily serve the wrong God a God that we don't even understand next week we'll talk more about passion and truth marrying those two together but our worship the integrity of it is going to be determined by the substance that fuels it psalm 9-1 david wrote i will give thanks to the lord with my whole heart i will recount all of your wonderful deeds and he goes on to recount many of them and then revelation chapter 19 we see one of these great songs of worship these praise songs being sung then i heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder crying out hallelujah for the lord our god the almighty reigns let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory for the marriage of the lamb has come and his bride has made herself ready it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen bright and pure the prayer as a response to his name