

McCabe United Methodist Church

July 22, 2018

Hebrews 10:19-25

“The Big 3 – Question 2: Why Do We Need the Church?”

Pastor Mark Ehrmantraut

Good Morning Church!

We gather under the power of the Living, Risen Christ. This power helps to bring us together as a church. This power continues to form us, and transform us, as the Body of Christ.

Last week we started to consider some big questions. We started with Why do we need Christ? This week it's 'Why do we need the church?' Next week, we'll wrestle with 'Why do we need this church, McCabe?' And then, a 4th question: 'Who's church is it?'

Now what? What's next? I want to give back. I want to make a difference because this Church, this congregation cared about me and I want to make a difference by giving back. As the man and the pastor visited, the guy kept saying: I want to make a difference. I want to give back. At one point, they talked about the concept of tithing. The pastor said: Some people find tithing to be a spiritually meaningful practice. They see it as investing in something bigger than themselves. The man laughed at the idea of tithing. He said he could hardly wrap his mind around the idea of giving 10%. After all, he said. Before giving his life to Jesus, he lived a life where he gave 80% to pimps and drug dealers.

Friends, the church makes a difference in everyday lives and in the world. Have you ever bought something that says on the box some assembly required? Have you ever bought something like that, or is it just me?

It's no different for people of faith. We're individual people. We can do things and work at things, yet in Scripture, God says: assembly is required. God says: People of faith must gather together. Individually we're a lot of moving parts. When we assemble together, we press into God's power. Together, we're more likely to make a real difference.

God spoke through the writer to the Hebrew people saying:

*¹⁹ Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰ by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain (that is, through his flesh), ²¹ and since we have a great priest over the **house of God**, ²² let us approach with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³ Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, ²⁵ **not neglecting to***

meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

We gather. We assemble. We come together in the sanctuary, in small groups, and through mission and service experiences. We have a great priest over the universal Church. We have a great high priest over the 'house of God.' We must 'not neglect meeting together, some do, but we shouldn't.'

Our Scripture says: Let us consider how to PROVOKE one another. We provoke. We agitate so we love and do good deeds, but we DON'T neglect meeting together. Instead, we ENCOURAGE one another. Gentle accountability. Encouraging one another. We do this by coming together as the church.

You've heard it. Manley writes about it. You've heard people say things like: "I love Jesus; I just don't care for the church." "I don't need the hypocrites in the church to help me follow God." "My relationship with God is private; I don't need other people to tell me how to worship my God."

Friends, as much as we want otherwise, sometimes the body of Christ can feel more like a den of lions than a flock of sheep. We get wounded. We hear and see things we wish we wouldn't. Sometimes we're even at fault. We gather together, as humans wanting to make a difference, but sometimes things just go amuck. Yet the Scripture is clear that Church "The Body of Christ" is an absolutely essential part of how God makes a difference. The Church is an absolutely essential part of God's plan for the people of faith and for the world.

Where two or three are gathered in the name of Jesus, Jesus promises to be among us. Remember the Day of Pentecost? The believers were assembled. The believers were gathered together. They were praying and the Holy Spirit rushed upon them. It changed their lives.

The New Testament assumes that Christians gather together. Many of the New Testament letters are to Churches. There's the church in Phillipi and the church in Corinth. There's the church at Galatia and the church in Ephesus. It keeps going...

We need other believers to provoke us.

We need other believers to give encouragement.

We need other believers to offer gentle, faithful accountability.

Neffiger says: Sometimes you just don't feel like going to church. Ever been there? Maybe you have a lot to do. Maybe you're trying to catch up on some things. Maybe the weather's terrible, or, maybe the weather's beautiful outside. We can find a ton of reasons why we don't want to go to church. And when we're finding reasons not to go, maybe that's when we should hit the pause button. Maybe that's when we should consider this just might be the Sunday morning someone needs us the most.

The church is about something bigger than ourselves. The Church exists to make a difference in the world. Being part of the Church, we pool our individual gifts and our resources. Through the Church good intentions turn into meaningful action.

Keep in mind, too, that there are personal benefits to going to church too. Going to Church can feed your body, mind, and spirit too. Worshiping, serving, interacting together. Together we can refocus on God. Together our minds can be renewed.

God knows His people need encouragement and strengthening. God knows we need refuge from the storms life can throw our way. Let us encourage one another in faith and let us faithfully provoke one another to love and good deeds.

Scott Sauls writes: Let's be the church that makes a difference in the community. Let's be the Church that partners in shared missions. Let's be the Church that welcomes others into the miraculous, awesome Story that is bigger than any one of us alone. Let's be the Church that comes alive at the mention of Jesus' name!

Assembly is required. Gathering together is required if we're going to encourage one another and provoke one another to love and good deeds. Let's gather together and be the Church!

Let's pray:

Holy and Mighty God, God who can't be constrained by a box or a building, pull us together. Empower us and send us out into the world to make a difference in your name. Amen.

Offering

As we wrestle with what it means to be the church together, we receive a special musical offering. During this time of offering, we wrestle with how much, and what part of our lives we're willing to offer to God through our prayers, our presence, our gifts, our service, and our witness. May this time of offering be a time for each of us to visit with God in whatever ways will be most helpful to you, and the Kingdom.