

## LET US DRAW NEAR

Hebrews 10:19-25

Key Verse: 10:22a, "...let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith..."

Do you ever wonder how you can encourage someone or inspire them in a good direction? The book of Hebrews has many "let us" encouragements to fellow Christians. One of my favorites is: "...let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus..." (12:1-2). In today's passage, there are three "let us" encouragements: "let us draw near," "let us hold fast," and "let us stir up one another." Let us listen and learn and pray to apply these encouragements in our own lives as we run the race of faith as followers of Jesus.

Before we get into the "let us" encouragements, we need to do a brief review of Hebrews. Look at verses 19-21. "Therefore, brothers (and sisters), 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..." There is a lot to unpack in these verses. But let's consider just three things here: the blood of Jesus, the curtain, and a great priest.

All of these have to do with the Jewish temple or tabernacle. God set up intricate rules and regulations for the Jews to come to him through the tent or temple, through priests, and through the sacrifices of bulls and lambs. It seems strange to non-Jewish people but this was all to emphasize the holiness of God and how serious sin or transgression or wickedness is to God. The Jews were commanded by God to have priests sacrifice perfect, defectless lambs at the temple on behalf of themselves and their people. This was the way God commanded them to approach him. Without the shedding of this blood, there was no forgiveness. The blood represented life. God demanded life as the penalty for sin. The wages of sin is the death penalty. God accepted the sacrifice of bulls, lambs and goats.

These were all just a foreshadowing of the ultimate human substitutionary sacrifice. To borrow the words of a Christian singer: "... Most people don't find out till it's too late, that someone has to pay the price. You can pay it yourself, or let someone else, but who would be that nice? To pay a debt that isn't his, well I know someone like that. And he's your best friend, he really is. He really loves you." (Altar Call by Keith Green)

The book of Hebrews declares that Jesus Christ is the perfect sacrifice for our sins. His blood cleanses us of all sin when we confess and repent of our sins and trust in him. Heb 9:12 and 14 says, "...he entered once for all into the holy places, not by means of the blood of goats and calves but by means of his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption...how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God."

Jesus' death also removed the curtain that separated sinners from the holy presence of God. That curtain was torn in two at the very moment that Jesus died on the cross. Hebrews 9:24

declares: "For Christ has entered, not into holy places made with hands, which are copies of the true things, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf."

Jesus is also the great high priest who represents us before God. At least 12 times in Hebrews Jesus is called our high priest. Hebrews 3:1 says, "Therefore, holy brothers (and sisters), you who share in a heavenly calling, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession..." Again, Hebrews 4:14 says, "Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession."

Jesus is the perfect lamb sacrifice for our sins. Jesus' death opened a new and living way for us through his death on the cross. Jesus is the great high priest who represents us before a perfect and holy God. Jesus' death for us fulfills all the requirements for our forgiveness and salvation. To him be glory now and forever. Amen.

With this brief overview, now let's consider the three "let us" encouragements.

First, let us draw near. Look at verse 22. "...let us draw near 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." This verse tells us to draw near to God. This echoes Hebrews 4:16, "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need." Our faith in Jesus gives us confidence to draw near to God's throne of grace. Again, Hebrews 7:25 says, "Consequently, he is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them." We draw near to God through Jesus our Intercessor, and he is able to save us completely. And Hebrews 11:6 is a familiar Bible verse to many, "And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him." We draw near to God through faith in his promises to us in Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior and Great High Priest.

Look at verse 22 again: "...let us draw near 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." It mentions our hearts being sprinkled and our bodies being washed. These are both references to the temple worship. The priests sprinkled the people with blood. Listen again to 9:14 quoted earlier, "...how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify our conscience from dead works to serve the living God."

There was also a washing ceremony. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 refers to this washing by faith in Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit: "Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God."

Brothers and sisters, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.

The second encouragement is in verse 23. "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful." Here are three verses in Hebrews that speak of holding fast our confidence, confession and hope in Christ:

3:6, "...but Christ is faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house, if indeed we hold fast our confidence and our boasting in our hope."

4:14, "Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession."

6:18, "...so that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to hold fast to the hope set before us."

To hold fast means to hold tight or cling to and not let go. It is a term among sailors to hold on to some part of the ship so they wouldn't be swept overboard. When waves rocked the boat they had to hold fast to something secure. Likewise, Christians can hold fast to God's promises, because God does not lie. We have been given many promises of God in Jesus Christ in the New Testament. All God's promises are "Yes" in Christ. Are you in a difficult situation? Find God's promise in the Bible regarding it, and hold fast to his promise. What then is the promise or confidence that we have been given in Jesus Christ? For one thing, we have the hope and promise of eternal life, such as John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life." Are you feeling anxious about your future security? We have Jesus' promise in Matthew 6:33: "But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you." Our senior pastor said he struggles with feeling weary and tired, so he is holding fast to Matthew 11:28 as his 2025 key verse, "Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The Bible is a book of God's promises. Do you want to be free from worry or fear? Hold fast to the confession and hope that is in Jesus Christ. God is faithful. God keeps his promises. Never will he leave us or forsake us. Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Third, let us stir up one another. This is an interesting one. Look at verses 24-25. "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."

The words "stir up one another" can also be translated "provoke one another" or "spur on one another." But hold on before you go around provoking and jabbing your fellow Christians. What is it we are told to stir up or provoke or spur on one another to do? The verse says "to love and good works." We are not competing with one another. We are encouraging one another to love God and love others and to do good works. This is a healthy, godly stirring up one another. Why do we need to do this?

Obviously, it is because we are all prone to stop loving and doing good works. What might cause us to stop loving or doing good works? Perhaps tiredness or discouragement or bitterness or being emotionally wounded. In such times, we need a good friend to come alongside us to help and encourage us.

Have you seen the video clip of the marathon runner who fell near the finish line and couldn't finish the race? Then his brother comes and helps him cross the finish line. Or the Olympian runner who got injured in the race and is crying in pain and disappointment? Then his father runs onto the track and helps him cross the finish line. Those are good examples of helping someone not to give up but to fight the good fight and finish the race.

When I was a student, I had a friend. We lived in different buildings on campus. But whoever was first to get up would go and knock on the other's window to wake each other up. For what? It was to go to a Daily Bread prayer meeting. That was encouraging each other in love and good deeds, which we both appreciated. We did this not to annoy each other but to encourage and help each other.

The author gives one example here. He says in verse 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 drawing near." Do you ever get tired of meeting together? The early Christians did. And they didn't have the conveniences of cars or busses or alarm clocks or the internet. I really wanted to attend the men's Bible study on this passage on Saturday morning to help me more with preparing this message. I even had an alarm clock to help me. But my body said I need more sleep. So I chose not to attend the online meeting. Sorry, guys. Thanks and good job to those who attended.

Of course, there are valid reasons not to gather with others, such as sickness, or physical limitations, or long commutes. But the Bible is urging us to keep meeting together to encourage each other in following and loving Jesus and waiting for his return. This means overcoming hindrances and lame excuses. Perhaps we need a friend like I mentioned before.

I have a faithful fishing friend. I mean fishing for people, not for fish. This person is my wife. We have a standing appointment to invite college students to Bible study once a week, usually right after a lunch Bible study. In all honesty, I often don't want to go because I'm tired or it's too cold or rainy or I just don't want to be rejected when I speak with a student. But we spur one another on to go anyway. And you know what happens? I'm thankful, even if no student shows interest. Somehow, just doing it for Jesus with joy and prayer makes me happy. I never regret it or feel like it was a waste of time. Have you considered how you can encourage someone who is down or struggling and needs a friendly boost or helping hand?

Let's consider how we can stir up one another to love and good works. Let's hold fast to our hope in God's faithful promises. Let's draw near to God in full assurance of faith. Chapter 11 has a lot of good examples of living by faith. But that's another sermon.