

May 18, 2019

Hebrews 10:24-25

Fruitfulness on the Frontline: We Gather to Scatter

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Now you might have noticed when you walked in today the **camera crew** taking some footage. That's because earlier **Doreen** and I filmed our interviews with Chris Lake from the Vere Institute. You know Chris from when he preached on frontline ministry here at Cornerstone last November. The session we are helping Chris film is about **sustaining a whole-life vision** in a church over the **long haul**. In other words, **how** can we encourage and equip each other to honor and serve God in every part of our lives, especially our frontlines, **year after year**?¹

Now each session is centered on a Scripture passage, and since Chris asked me to think about the passage for the video, I thought it made sense to also preach on it and share some of the things I learned. So today we're looking at two verses that connect how the church can help us on our frontlines.

Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (NIV®)

Chris chose this passage because it does a nice job showing how our **gathered church ministry impacts** our **scattered church ministry**. If you've never heard the phrases gathered and scattered before the gathered church is **anytime Christians get together to do ministry**. So gathered ministry can be any part of a church service (the singing, the sermon, communion), it could be a potluck dinner, Cornerstone Kids, community groups, an Outreach event, a Bible study, youth group, anything and anywhere we as Christians get together. That's gathered church.

Scattered church is you when you're not with a bunch of Christians. It's your **frontline**. It's our **normal everyday places** like our jobs, our families, and our neighborhoods. It's **wherever** and **whenever** we're **not surrounded** by fellow Christians but are still doing ministry. So it could be you at *Market Basket*, or *Dunkin Donuts*, or *Choice Fitness*, or over the Holidays or on the weekends when you're spending time with your family or in-laws, or anywhere else that you have relationships with those who don't believe in Jesus **yet**.

So often we can **unintentionally silo** these two. When I'm at church I'm at church and when I'm at work I'm at work and the two have nothing to do with the other. But if we believe that as followers of Christ, as disciples, that we are to give every part of our life to Jesus, then we shouldn't silo our life. And that's where the church comes in. *The church gathered helps the church scattered follow Christ.*

Now before we dive into today's text I actually want to back up and understand the **context** of today's passage. We don't want to pull a verse out of context but want to understand the passage it's coming from. So I'm going to give you an **overview** of the passage leading up to these verses.

- **v1-18 Christ's sacrifice is enough to forgive sins.**

Chapter 10 of Hebrews begins by declaring Jesus was **enough**. When he died on the cross for our sins we don't have to offer any more **bulls** or **sheep** or **goats** or **pigeons**. The Old Testament **sacrificial system** is **satisfied** because the **perfect sacrifice** has been offered, Jesus Christ. It's kind of like when you go to **school** you may take out a **loan** for **thousands** to **hundreds of thousands** of dollars. Once you graduate you have to

start **paying** and it can take **decades** to repay the debt, payment after payment, month after month, year after year. That's a **heavy burden**. But what if one day you opened your **student-loan account** and found your entire bill paid for? Because of sin we all owe God a debt, but it's **too big** to ever repay. The **good news** is Christ has paid our **debt in full** and his payment **pays it all**. Imagine never having to make another student loan payment. It might not **sink in** right away but it would when you get to **keep that money** every month. Your debt is paid. *Christ's sacrifice is enough to forgive our sins.*

- **v19-21 We can enter God's presence through Christ.**

Hebrews 10:19-21 Therefore, brothers and sisters, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, 20 by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, 21 and since we have a great priest over the house of God, (NIV®)

Since Jesus died we can enter into God's presence, the **Most Holy Place**. The Most Holy Place was the **inner room** in the **temple** where God's presence sat above the **ark of the covenant**. No one was allowed to enter there except the **High Priest**, and he could only enter once a year under **special circumstances** (Lev 16:1-34). On the **Day of Atonement** the High Priest had to sacrifice a **bull** for his own sins in order to enter the Most Holy Place. But now by Christ's blood **we** can also enter into God's presence (Heb 7:27).

When verse 20 talks about a way being open through the curtain it's talking about the **veil** that **separated** the Most Holy place from the rest of the temple (Heb 9:1-9). Do you remember what happened **when Christ died** on the cross?

Matthew 27:50-51a And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit. 51 At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom... (NIV®)

Since Christ paid for our sins with his blood we can **access to God**. But he also acts as our **High Priest**. You can **speak to Jesus** and he will speak to the **Father** on your behalf. A lot of us have **electronic key cards** and **name badges** and without those things we can't get into work. What happens if you show up **without it**? Someone has to **vouch** for you. Someone has to **let you in**. The only way we can get into God's presence, into his house, is because Christ Jesus has **vouched** for us. He's given us his keycard and assured the guard at the gate that we can enter in. *We can enter God's presence through Christ.*

Now "**since**" we have all this through Christ—the word "since" is used twice (v19, 21)—what should we do?

- **v22 Let us draw near to God's presence.**

Hebrews 10:22 let us draw near to God with a sincere heart and with the full assurance that faith brings, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. (NIV®)

Since Christ's sacrifice opens the way to God's presence, let's enter into God's presence. The author doesn't say, "**let me** draw near" but "**let us** draw near." Hebrews is speaking to the **whole church**. In response to all that Christ Jesus has done on "our" behalf we can together come into God's presence. We draw near to God by **worshipping** together, **praying** together, and **going on mission** together. We can draw near to God by **walking in faith together** on our **frontlines**.

By Christ we've been washed clean and can enter into God's presence. You know when **little kids** get **muddy** from **playing** and before they can come inside their **mom** has to hose them down? She rinses them off so that she can **welcome them in**, not so she can leave them **shivering in the cold**. No. She invites them into the **warmth of home**. Because Christ has cleansed us *let us draw near to God's presence.*

- **v23 Let us have hope.**

Hebrews 10:23 Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. (NIV®)

Again, as we gather around the one who cleanses us we experience hope, hope in the promises of Christ Jesus. What's the **difference** between an **employee** or **coworker** who has **hope** and one that **doesn't**? The employee that **believes in their product** or has hope they can **gain standing** in the company will do a much **better job** than the employee who **doesn't believe** in the product or that he has **no choice** but to work there. As believers in Christ we should be more like employees who have hope. This impacts how we treat those around us on our frontlines. If we believe God can do something in their life we're going to treat them **differently** and will never lose hope. *Let us have hope.*

Let's **review**. **Since** Christ's sacrifice is enough and we can enter into God's presence through him, let's draw near to God, let's have hope, and now our main text...

- **v24-25 Let us gather together to encourage one another.**

Hebrews 10:24-25 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching. (NIV®)

I think as a church leader when I come to this passage of Scripture it's really easy to **skip** verse 24 and go right to **verse 25**. See the Bible says church attendance is **important!** That's true, **but why?** Why does it **matter?** That's why you have to read **verse 24 first**, because it's **all framed within the context** of **love and encouragement**.

We need to **think deeply** about how to **love God more, love each other better**, and how we can encourage each other to **do good deeds for God**. Then it tells us the **best way** to do this. **You can't be a long-distance Christian**. Have you ever been in a long-distance **relationship**? You live in one **state** and your **boyfriend or girlfriend** lives in another and you have to keep it going over the **phone, text message**, and the **Holidays**? Those relationships are hard and they **often** don't work out. If we want to encourage each other to love better and do good works we have to **be in relationship** with each other, we have to **gather together regularly**, and the **primary way** we do this is by the **gathering of the church**.

The church gathered helps the church scattered follow Christ. When this Bible passage talks about love and good deeds, maybe it's talking about **volunteering** for **church programs** but I think it's first talking about just **living your normal everyday life for Jesus**. We need to come together to tell each other "You can **keep loving your coworker** even though it's hard" or "here are some **ways to bless your neighbor**" or "**I'll pray for your non-Christian family member with you.**"

As **Doreen** and I were getting ready for our interviews with Chris we were talking with him about how the gathered church at **Cornerstone** has helped Doreen on her frontline. Two examples:

1. **Community Groups** - When Doreen was trying to reach out to a **woman** and her **child** through **Facebook** some of you involved in children's ministry in her community **group** gave her suggestions for what children's Bible she should give. That's an amazing example of how Children's ministry helped someone not just by coming to church but by equipping the people of the church to go out and minister in Christ's name. *The church gathered helps the church scattered follow Christ.*
2. **Sermon** - About a month ago I shared a story of how the Lord convicted me to reach out to a past coworker and share the message of Christ Jesus and how difficult that was. I called her and didn't

share, and then had to call her back and say there really was something I wanted to say. Well the very next day something **similar happens to Doreen**. She's with **family** and they start talking about Jesus and why he died. Her family said that he died because the **government** didn't like him. True, but that's **not** the **whole story**. Doreen **almost let the moment pass her by**, but she didn't because the sermon was fresh on her mind and so she shared that Jesus also died because he loves them and to save them from their sins. How cool is that?! *The church gathered helps the church scattered follow Christ.*

These two examples just **scratch the surface** of all the ways we can encourage each other. This week I reviewed all the different ways I could think of that we are trying to emphasize and encourage frontline ministry at Cornerstone.

1. We ask people about their frontlines in our church **membership application**.
2. We introduce and discuss the concept of the frontline in our **church membership class**.
3. Our whole church did a fruitfulness on the frontline **small group study** and we need to do so again.
4. We encourage our **community groups** to **encourage one another** and **pray** for our frontlines.
5. We have books and DVDs about frontline ministry in the **church library**.
6. We give away copies of the book **Fruitfulness on the Frontline** to new attenders.
7. I've **visited** many of you on **your frontlines** and hope to do so more.
8. The Elders put frontline ministry in **my job description**.
9. We've **taken** and **shared pictures** of people on their frontlines.
10. One of the **Outreach Team's goals** is to **equip** people on their frontlines.
11. I've preached **sermon series** and **individual sermons** on frontline ministry as well as try to mention it **regularly** in my sermons.
12. We **commissioned** people for their **workplaces and frontlines** back in November.
13. We do **frontline story interviews** a couple times a year like you saw earlier tonight.

And I can think of other ways, but that's **over a dozen** right there. Frontline ministry—**whole-life discipleship**—needs to **saturate** our church. Lets constantly encourage each other on our frontlines. Let's pray for each other's frontlines during the service and ask about them **after the service**. Along with your small talk ask, "How's your workplace?" or "How's your frontline?" And then, "How can I pray for you there?" We need to be **intentionally encouraging** each other on our frontlines. Let's do this all the more as we see "**the Day**" approaching. Christ is coming back. We want to take advantage of every opportunity.

To **stay on mission** we need to show up for church. That's why **church attendance** is so important—it's **not about numbers**—it's about helping us live for Jesus. **Imagine a sports team**, for example the **Red Sox**. How well do you think they would play if the players only showed up **two times a month** for **practice**? They'd be **terrible**. If you only show up twice a month to church, then you're probably not going to see God do much on your **frontline**. You simply **won't be prepared** or **training** for it. You'll be out of practice.

But what if you do show up **regularly**? What if the **whole Red Sox** team shows up for practice **week after week**? Each practice the **coach** gives a **speech**, talks about **strategy**, and then the players sit there and talk

about **Netflix** and **football** and the **weather**. It's good that they're there but they're still not going to get any better because **although** they're hearing the coach they're **not internalizing** what he's saying. How often do we listen to sermons and the moment it ends we **never speak** of it again? It's like we're afraid that if we talk about the sermon we have to do it. Well, yeah... I can preach about **frontline ministry** till my **face is blue** but we need to **all continually ask each** other about our frontlines and workplaces and family members if we want to really see a change. We need to hold each other **accountable**.

Okay, now we're showing up to practice regularly, we're talking about the game of baseball, we have a **great practice** and we go home but **nobody** actually shows up to play the **real game**. We're still not going to win. The **gathered church** is a **training camp**. It's not where the real game is played. The real game is played **on the field not** in the **locker room**. We have to get out there in front of a **live audience** and **play**. And when we finally score everyone will yell, "**Touchdown!!!**" Just kidding...

A church that gathers together to encourage each other and pray for each other and then goes out and tries to put into practice what it is learning is going to be **unstoppable**. The Boston Red Sox won the **2004 World Series**, the **2007 World Series**, the **2013 World Series**, and the **2018 World Series**. They've won **nine** world series in total. Let's win a frontline world series. How do we do that? *The church gathered helps the church scattered follow Christ.*

*May the Father who loves you,
The Son who sends you,
The Spirit who empowers you,
Be with you and bless you,
Wherever you are, whatever you do, whoever you're with,
To his praise and glory.*

- Mark Greene²

Pastor Jonathan Romig preached this message at Cornerstone Congregational Church. You can download a PDF copy of this sermon above, which includes further endnotes and references. Click to listen to sermons or to read our story.³

¹ “Your Frontline is the place where you spend the majority of your time outside the church, where you are in contact with non-Christians.” - Life on the Frontline (Leader’s Booklet)

² The one about... 8 stories about God in our everyday by Mark Greene. Page 6.

³ All Scriptures are quoted from the New International Version (NIV®) unless otherwise noted.