

**THE DAY IS DRAWING NEAR****Hebrews 10:19-25**

**Intro:** Forty three years ago today the day was drawing near – June 14, 1980 was the day of our wedding. We thought we were ready. We had a limited budget so my sisters made sandwiches to augment the dinner mints we planned to serve along with a cake my aunt had made in exchange for me painting her kitchen. The only flowers we had were the ones that Kathy and her bridesmaids carried and the boutonnieres me and my guys had in our lapels – so my sister Carolyn raided my parents’ rose garden and the fields around my parents’ home, in search of wild flowers and she beautifully decorated the sanctuary and the fellowship hall of the church. The night before the wedding my guys and I tried on our tuxes and my jacket was HUGE ON ME. So I switched with Kathy’s brother who was going to walk her down the aisle and that problem was solved. You always want a wedding to come off without a hitch and ours did, no matter how many glitches happened or threatened to happen. But, truthfully, how the wedding goes is not nearly as important as the years following it “until death do us part.” You can have the most glorious wedding and still have a disastrous marriage. Or you can have a tiny ceremony and a marriage that holds strong for 87 years and 290 days like Zelmyra and Herbert Fisher who were married from 1924 until death parted them when Herbert died in 2011. They anticipated the day of their wedding back in 1924, and then they lived out their vows faithfully for nearly 87 years. They were ready.

Are we ready as the day draws near? I mean the day we will meet Jesus, either when he returns or we draw our last breath? And as we think about that, let’s think about how we are building one another up and helping one another to prepare as the day draws near?

Our text directly addresses this question. Listen:

**(Read Hebrews 10:19-24)**

Ray Stedman summarizes this passage in his commentary with, “*Draw near, speak out, stir up—that is the whole Christian life in a nutshell.*” and I can’t think of a better outline for this talk. So I’m going to talk about building one another up using those very building blocks.

The writer of Hebrews has been talking about our life in Christ and our great high priest and the confidence and peace we can have in him and he tells to boldly. . .

**Draw Near**

- I love how Peterson paraphrases verses 19-21 and it’s a good way to begin: *So, friends, we can now—without hesitation—walk right up to God, into “the Holy Place.” Jesus has cleared the way by the blood of his sacrifice, acting as our priest before God. The “curtain” into God’s presence is his body.* Hebrews 10:19-21 (The Message)
- At the moment Jesus died on the cross . . . *the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom.* Matthew 27:51. Prior to that only the High Priest could enter the Holy of Holies once a year and with great fear and trembling. After all he was in the very presence of God, and if he was unworthy it could be fatal. But by Jesus’s ultimate and once and for all sacrifice, all believers have free access to God’s presence. By Jesus’s blood we are worthy. David Guzik says “*We can have boldness because we enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus. If we entered as the Old Testament high priest did, with the blood of animals, we wouldn’t have boldness. But with the blood of Jesus providing a new and living way which He consecrated with us, we really can come into the presence of God with boldness.*”
- This boldness isn’t a presumptuous and arrogant attitude of entitlement as if Jesus owes us for being his, instead it’s a confidence that comes from knowing he has run interference for us and has taken the full blast of our punishment. As a result we have a new and living way. His sacrifice for us doesn’t go stale and doesn’t need to be renewed, instead a living Jesus ushers us into the presence of God. Because of that divine appointment, we don’t need an appointment.
- F. F. Bruce points out that “*The ‘house of God’ over which Jesus exercises His high priesthood is, of course, the community of God’s people.*” We are the house of God, Church! That’s us. So we don’t go it alone. We go with confidence into God’s presence – TOGETHER!
- So with such strength in numbers, let’s use that boldness to . . .

**Speak Out**

- The Hebrew writer tells us to . . . *hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful.* Hebrews 10:23. This was written probably 30 or so years after Jesus had returned to the Father and already believers were beginning to be concerned about the fact that Jesus had not returned as he had promised – and it’s likely that persecution for following was rising and this affected their boldness to profess Jesus. In light of this the writer of Hebrews urges his readers to hang in there and not only that, proclaim their hope in Christ because of the guaranteed faithfulness of the one making the promise – Jesus Christ himself.
- Tell people about the hope you have in Jesus. My calendar on my phone tells me this is “pride month”. All month long the LGBTQ+ community proclaims its pride in their respective choice of lifestyle – and they do it boldly – as if to not only convince others, but also convince themselves. How often have you seen a bumper sticker that says “I’m the proud parent of an honor roll student at \_\_\_\_\_ School.” And how many times have you seen “I love my \_\_\_\_\_ dog”. This is all well and good, but if people proclaim or even march in support of their choice to follow a particular lifestyle or their pride in their kid, or their devotion to their labradoodle, can we not be bold enough to say we are followers of the Risen Christ who came to clear the way for all who believe to come into the very presence of the God of the universe?
- We need to speak out church. No, I’m not saying we should march and shout obnoxiously and beat people over the heads with our Bible. No I’m not saying we should even put a bumper sticker that says Jesus is the answer or something to that effect. We can simply and lovingly and kindly share with the world the reason for the hope that lies within us. Jesus Christ – the only hope for humanity (1 Peter 3:15)
- Let’s speak out to others and let’s . . .

### **Stir Up one another**

- The word for “stir up” comes from a strong word that implies incitement. Loving one another will not just happen. We need to incite one another. So the writer of Hebrews is encouraging his readers. As I just pointed out there were people who were discouraged and they needed to be built up. Discouragement can cause us to fold in ourselves and the very time when we need each other the most. Guzik says “*Jesus meets us in one another to stir up love and good works.*” That word translated as love here is that familiar Greek word agape which is an other centered love. A. T. Robinson writes “*Love needs stimulation and society. Faith and hope can be practiced by a solitary, in a hermit’s cell or on a desert island. But the exercise of love is possible only in a community.*” Ohhh! That’s huge!!!! That’s why we ached in our isolation during the Covid quarantine. And that’s why when we don’t gather together we have a gargantuan hole in our soul. We NEED each other.
- Guzik says this about verse 25, “*Forsaking the assembling of ourselves together: Forsaking fellowship is a sure way to give place to discouragement. This discouragement festers where God’s people are not exhorting one another.*” And then he goes on to say “*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 believers to encourage someone who needs to stand strong against a tide of 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.*
  - *So much the more as you see the Day approaching: As the Day of Jesus’ return draws nearer, we should be more committed to the fellowship of God’s people, the assembling of ourselves together.”*
- Here is a simple truth – The church is no place for lone rangers! One commentator wrote “*The word saint never occurs in the singular, and that ‘inevitably it is plural.’”*
- So, let’s gather together in order to encourage one another. We need to meet together, to build one another up. Until Jesus comes. And the day is drawing near. Each day is one day closer. F. F. Bruce wrote, “*Each successive Christian generation is called upon to live as the generation of the end-time, if it is to live as a Christian generation.*” We are the generation. Let’s live for Jesus.

**Conclusion:** Draw near. Come boldly and joyfully into the presence of God.

Speak out. Tell the world who Jesus is and what he has done in your life and will do in theirs. Boldly, lovingly, kindly.

Stir one another up. Encourage one another. Build one another up. And for the sake of the Kingdom, DO NOT STOP MEETING TOGETHER! The day is drawing near – be ready and take others with you. Amen.