

**Preaching Christ....
...by the power of the Holy Spirit
...and the authority of the Word of God**

Date: 27 February 2022
Services: *Across the Diocese*
Series: Year of provocation
Reading: Hebrews 10:25
Title: Year of turning up

Bible reading – Hebrews 10:19-25

¹⁹ 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, 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. ²³ Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ 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.

Three exhortations have been our focus throughout February... from Hebrews 10:19-35

I called the series – a sort of launch series for the year – “Year of Provocation” ...

As I wanted to provoke – prod you – to make 2022, a year where you...

1. draw near to God
2. hold firm to the hope we profess
3. and consider how we may spur one another on toward
 - a. love and
 - b. good deeds

now in the last sermon in this series, I want to urge you make 2022 – the year of **turning up**... the year of **turning up**.

Now – how does this come out of the passage...?

Let me read you the last part again...

Have a look with me from v24

*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,***

Now – when you think about this it makes for perfect logic...

Because if we are going to put our minds to work, considering how to spur one another on to **love** and **good deeds** then **we’re going to have to meet together....!**

...and meet together more than for an **hour** on Sundays – meet together **often**...

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- meeting together – related to the word ‘synagogue’ – gathering...
- and it sadly, it was obvious that some to whom this letter was written... **WERE** neglecting to meet with their brothers and sisters in Christ... its quite a strong word used here... – means to **abandon** or **desert** –
- why had people abandoned meeting with other believers?
- because perhaps of **persecution** or **fear of persecution** – a very real **possibility**, maybe due to **peer pressure**... we can't **be sure**...
- **why** do people neglect meeting with believers **today**?
 - **Ridicule** from others? Maybe
 - Risk of **COVID** – **understandable** –
 - Maybe an underlying issue with the **leadership** of the church – if so – that needs to be talked through and shared and brought into the **open**
 - But **sometimes** – people have just grown slack – allowing other **distractions** to get in the way... there was a time at Roseville when the 10am congregation missed quite a few **families** as **soccer trials** were on around this time of year... and I wished that the parents would make a clear **stand** – and say – **no** – our family **prioritises** getting to **church** on **Sunday** – we'll have to find **another** competition that doesn't involve **Sunday** trials – or we'll come to the **early morning service** or the **evening** service...
- And do you see what the writer does?
- They point out that not only are some neglecting the **meeting** with **other believers** – but they've made it a **habit** – a **custom**
- ...they are now comfortable **NOT** to come – the exact **opposite** to what it's mean to be.... Meant to be a **habit** to **COME**... // an **unbreakable norm**...
- Sadly it is a habit that doesn't take long to form... some people formed the habit during the **lockdowns** of the last two years – decided they quite liked **church** on the **couch**.... with their **slippers on** and **coffee** at **hand**... and that **habit** has not yet been **broken**.... /
- ...some are in the **HABIT** of **NOT** coming for **other** reasons...
- But **here's** the challenge if it has become **YOUR** habit... // to stop... **stop** the **habit** – **break** the **cycle**... and make this the **year of turning up**... //
- Now – **why** does it **matter**?
- **Why** is it **important**... ??

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- We could go to loads of reasons...
 - To respond in **praise** to God's **grace**
 - To hear God's word the **Bible** read and **explained** and **applied**
 - To **pray** with other **believers**
 - To **serve** God by one means or another...
 - To serve other **believers** with the gifts God has given you for the service of others
 - To be part of God's great **plan**, that through the **company** of **believers** – we **mediate** – we **radiate** – we **communicate** – his **love** and **grace** and **offer of forgiveness** to the **world!**
 - Loads of other good reasons... ///
- But let's just stick to this **passage** from **Hebrews**
- As I commented earlier – pretty hard to encourage other Christians to **love and good works** as we were charged to do in last week's verse if you **never actually come across other believers!!**
- But there's **more** – come back to v24 as we read on to v25 - *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.*
- Two things we need to look at here – that we shouldn't **neglect** or **abandon** meeting together because we ought to be **encouraging** one another... and **then** we need to explore a certain **urgency** the author throws in – *and all the more as you see the day approaching.... //*
- Encouraging – the word used means to **call to one's side**, to **summon**, to **address**, **speak to**
- to **exhort, comfort, admonish, console, entreat, instruct, teach others....** There is a **wide range of meanings...** it is a very **significant word!!**
- – in John's gospel – it's the work of the **Holy Spirit** – the **paraclete**
- So let me ask - **to exhort, comfort, admonish, console, entreat, instruct, teach others** – was it with **THAT** mindset you last went to church with??.... Or **home group** through the **week?? //**
- There is a lot of things I do **BETTER** in the company of others...
- For a while – I was **swimming** very morning – with another person – we were good for one another – **John** and I – I sometimes only went because I knew **John** would be **waiting**
- Another time – my friend **Tony** would meet up for a **walk** – sometimes the fact that **he** was going to be there was the only reason I **turned up....**
- I **pray** better in the company of others

**Preaching Christ....
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- I **read the Bible better** in the company of others...
- I **help and serve others – better** – in the company of others
- Friends – this is what we need to be **doing** for one another in our **relationship** with the **Lord Jesus //**
- I need **your** encouragement! To **keep going!** To keep **servicing** Jesus – keep **loving** him – **keep reading his word** – to keep **yielding** my life into his **service** – to keep **opening** myself up to the **transforming** work of the **Holy Spirit...**
- We need regularly to be **caring** for one another... and **checking in** with one another....
- Is your **marriage** OK, is your **cancer** back? Are you **upset?** – you look **upset**; can I **pray** for you before you **go??**
- It is about **turning up** and about cultivating a certain **attitude** in turning up – that sees it as more about **others** than about **you...**
-//and finally we need to explore what the writer means by *encouraging one another... and all the more as you see the Day approaching...*
- What is the author talking about here?
- Well of course – some of you will I’m sure know that he is referring to that **great** day when Jesus **returns** – when all **wrongs** in the world are put **right** – when **evil** is finally put down **once for all...** when the **new heavens** and the **new earth** appear – and we will live with the Lord **forever...** // that’s **“THE DAY”**
- It was foreshadowed – **promised** in the Old Testament...
- Old Testament background – **The Day of the Lord**
 - [Is 2, 13; Ez 30, Joel 1, 2 and 3; Amos 5, Mal 4]
 - Both – a **shocking** day of **judgement**
 - AND a **glorious** day of **liberation** and **restoration** – when **all evil** put down
- New Testament references
 - [1 Cor 3:13; Acts 2:20; 1 Thess 5:2, Phil 1:6, 10]
 - **Everyone’s work** is **revealed**, the day will be **unexpected**, and **Jesus’** will **return**
 - Again – a day both of **judgement** and **liberation**
- But let me ask...If the day was approaching **then**, where does that leave us **now?** – close to 2,000 years later?
- Still coming, **will** come: we just don’t know when it will be: when? **Soon!**
- The ‘last days’ are **ALL** days in between **Jesus’ ascension** and his **return...** and the Bible says...
 - 2 Tim 3:1-4 - It’s not going to be **easier** to be Christian – it’s going to be **harder**
 - 2 Tim 3:12 – everyone who wants to live a godly life **WILL** be **persecuted....**
 - .../ that’s why we **need** to encourage each other!
 - There will be so much that might **lead us astray!**

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So:

- if we are going to **draw near to God** – and encourage one another to do that
- if we are going to **hold firm to the hope we profess** – and encourage one another to do that
- if we are going to **spur one another on – to love and good works**
- if we are going to **encourage one another** – and all the more as we see the Day approaching...
- ... we are going to have to **meet, and meet, and meet!**
 - Sunday
 - Small group
 - Prayer triplet
 - Church prayer time
 - Over coffee
 - Over dinner

Some honest concerns from a bishop for his flock

1. That some **are** neglecting meeting
2. That some are in the **habit** of neglecting
3. And **they** are missing out – God brings great blessing as Christians meet – it’s part of his great design... as the church is the body of Christ....
4. And **we** are missing out – we’re being robbed of **their encouragement.... Their ministry to us...**
5. Not just missing out.... but in **danger** – danger because they could end up wandering away **altogether...** not only from the **church** – but from the **Lord Jesus! //**

Let me finish with three thoughts

1. Why is it that we think God’s commands are designed to make us miserable? – they are **always** for our **good!**

Meeting together – and encouraging one another – **wonderfully good and precious for us...** vitally significant... we ought never begrudgingly to church or any other meeting with believers... this command is for our great good...

So in the **brilliance** of his design – and his **command** – he says – don’t **neglect to meet together...**

2. **We need one another** – every one! There are moments when God intends to bring blessing to someone else **precisely through YOU.**
3. **What will you do with this?** For you to turn away from this summons would be like saying to God – I know that you often bring super natural blessing to your people through the encouragement of others, but **I will get along without it – thank you** – and that will run completely contradictory to God’s word.

So friends...

Let me urge you – provoke to make

2022

- **Year of drawing near to God**
- **Year of holding firm to what you believe**

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- Year of stirring up others to love and good works...

And so all that might happen... make it also the year of

- Year of turning up – as often as you can – to be a blessing and encouragement to others... and allow them to be a blessing and encouragement to you!