



Sermon – November 7, 2021
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Verses Covered This Week

Hebrews 10:23 - 25

Let me invite you to open your Bibles with me. We're going to be in Hebrews chapter 10 this morning. Hebrews 10 beginning in verse 23. Now as you turn there, if you're a guest with us this morning, whether in the room or catching us by video, welcome home. And I want to say a special word if anybody joined us this past Sunday for the Fall Festival and is stepping into Central for the first time, we're glad you're here. We don't have the same amount of candy as we did last week, but we've got warm hearts to welcome you in our congregation. And as we ready ourselves for God's word, I want to remind you that at the end of today's message, we're going to be responding to what the Lord is saying to us through His word by taking of the Lord's Supper. And during the response song, I want to invite you to make your way to tables around the room, if you'll be participating in that, to grab your elements if you don't have those already.

So let's think about it. Last week, we're working our way through our Every Generation Reaching the Next Generation sermon series, and last week we talked about how the mission of the church is to reach every nation. This morning, we're going to think for a while about what it looks like for the church to have the marks or the characteristics necessary to reach every nation and every generation. And if you think back to last Sunday's message, Luke 10:2, we talked about this prayer for laborers. That the harvest is plentiful and the workers are few. And I challenged you last week to join me in setting your alarm for 10:02 either AM or PM. And I'm just curious, by show of hands, anybody else like me have that alarm go off at an unexpected time this past week? OK. I did too. And I remember hearing some different stories throughout the week. One person in our church set the alarm but then told their friend, "Hey, I set my alarm but I forgot what time it was. What time it's set for." And so they weren't going to know when it was going to go off until it finally did that. I've heard incredible stories about people taking time to pray in different settings. I was out at the Central Sports football fields yesterday at 10:02 A.M. and when the alarm started going off, I gathered up several people around us and we prayed together. I've heard about one of our church members who is a teacher in town and when 10:02 A.M. hits, she pauses in her classroom and prays with her students. I even had a friend who's a new member here tell me about the alarm going off at his, while he was at the barbershop getting his hair cut. And when the alarm went off and the barber asked him what that was about, he got to share with him, not only about this 10:02 prayer challenge, but also to talk

about Jesus Himself. I'm just asking you for this next week, let's keep doing that in the lead up to this Get in the Game Sunday. And I want to read us this morning our sermon text. It's 10:01 right now so I imagine they'll be some alarms going off in just a moment and we will pray for laborers at that point. Hebrews 10:23 says this:

²³Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴And let us consider how to stir up one another

There we go.

To love and good deeds, ²⁵not neglecting to meet together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Let's pray together.

Father in heaven, we're reminded as we come to Your word that apart from You we can do nothing. Apart from You it doesn't matter how great the harvest is, if the laborers are not plentiful, if they are not raised up by Your Spirit, if they are not sent out by Your church, then we are missing our opportunity to join you in advancing your kingdom. We pray even right now in our midst through this message, through the life of our congregation, that You will raise up men and women to serve our church, serve our community, and serve the Gospel to every nation and every generation. We ask these things in Christ's name and for His glory. Amen.

So here we are in the book of Hebrews. And if you just had to distill this text into one key idea, the idea book of Hebrews is teaching us how Jesus is better than anything this world has to offer. He's better than the Old Testament sacrifices. He's better than the priest. He's better than the law. He's even better than the angels. And in this text, in Hebrews chapter 10, what's happening is that the author is shifting his attention from the greatness of Jesus to what that should mean for our lives. What that should mean for our church. And the question we have before us this morning is if we want to be at Central, a church where every generation reaches the next generation, what does that look like? How does it play out? And what we're going to notice as we work our way through Hebrews 10 this morning, is that this chapter is going to show us the three marks of a church that reaches every generation. And I want you to notice the first one with me there in verse 23. We're going to find the text telling us that a next generation church must be centered on the Gospel. As I was going through some of the historical records of the church, I came across this letter talking about the first pastor at Central. A guy that went by the name of Brother Holleman. And this Baptist leader wrote to our congregation and said this about our pastor and our church as it began. He said: The church that has a pastor like Brother Holleman is indeed a fortunate church. He believes that the whole Bible is the inspired word of God. The Gospel that he preaches is the Gospel of Jesus Christ. It is the Gospel that people everywhere need to hear. That's in 1932. Writing about the founding pastor of our church. And what I love about Central is that same heart guides us today. That we're unwavering in our commitment to the inerrant and inspired word of God. We're unwavering in our declaration that Jesus is the only way of salvation. And His name must be taken to the nations. That heart that has gripped us from the beginning is what Hebrews 10:23 is calling us to, and it says we must be centered on the Gospel. You see, every church that wants to reach the next generation is faced with a choice. In order to reach the next generation, will we water down the Gospel or will we

uphold the Gospel? Some churches might be tempted to turn away from the blood of Jesus. To minimize the significance in order to be more relevant or to create less resistance to the nature of Christianity. But Hebrews 10 is giving us a totally different picture. That the way we reach the next generation is not by being embarrassed by the Gospel, but by embracing it. And if we're going to embrace that Gospel, we need to understand the nature of what it looks like. And that's what Hebrews 10 is going to show us. Notice the way it talks about how the Gospel we hold to is a hopeful Gospel. Right there in the middle of the verse, it talks about the confession of our hope. This idea of confession is this sense of allegiance or commitment. A firm grip onto the hope that we can find only in Jesus Christ. And what should that confession look like? What should it look like as we hold on to it? Notice what it says there, without wavering. That we might firm, unchanging, uncompromising, steadfast in the midst of the spiritual headwinds we face.

I'm not sure how many of you were there at Kyle Field yesterday to watch the Aggies beat Auburn. Normally, we're used to a flyover with planes coming across. Yesterday it was 4 helicopters. The lead helicopter was a Chinook, one of those double-blades. And as it went by, I noticed something strange. Did you happen to see that the cargo door on the back of it was laid down while it was flying right over us? And as I looked closer, I could see that sitting on the edge of the cargo bay door that was wide open was 3 or 4 soldiers with their legs dangling over the edge of the helicopter while it was flying over us. I don't know about you, but I'm out on that one. But I imagine, if you were to go up there and see that in action, the reason they were able to be on the edge, to take on something that would seem of such great risk is because they had been fully secured. And there was a deep trust in the apparatus that secured them safely so that no matter what they experience, no matter how close to danger they were, they could trust in a reliable hope grounded in a faithful promise. That's what Hebrews is showing us. That when we come to the Gospel, when we seek to center our lives on the message of Jesus Christ, it holds us fast. It secures us. It gives us a confession of our hope. It is a hopeful Gospel. But it's not just a hopeful Gospel. Notice the way the verse goes on. It also tells us it's a faithful Gospel. That's why he says at the end of verse 23,

[for he who promised is faithful.](#)

That word for there is showing us that this phrase is giving us the grounds or the foundation for which he is saying what he has just said right before it. And what is that foundation? What's the foundation for our hope? It is the faithfulness of God. He who promised is faithful. As a matter of fact, that's what the entire book of Hebrews is about. It's showing us God's faithfulness to keep His covenant promises. The things that He declared of old He is now brought to fulfillment and culmination in Jesus in a way that proves His faithfulness to His promise. Proves His ability to make eternal life available to each one of us. In other words, the faithfulness of God is the foundation for the faithfulness of believers. That that faithful Gospel fuels us. And that's why we must be centered on the Gospel. But the question we need to be wrestling with as we talk about this first mark of a next generation church is, how do we do it? How do we stand and stay centered on that Gospel? And you'll see the answer at the very beginning of verse 23. We haven't looked at it yet, but the original command is, let us hold fast. This term, hold fast, that occurs several times in the book of Hebrews. It means to cling, to latch onto, to lock in. You can get this sense of intense investment in the grip that's there. You know, it started off as a normal flight for Captain Tim Lancaster and his co-pilot. They were taking off from

Birmingham, England back in 1990 on a routine flight to Spain. And they had ascended to 17,000 and at that point, Captain Lancaster had already begun to loosen his seatbelt. The hardest part of liftoff was over. And in that moment, everything changed. A loud boom came from the cockpit. And no, it wasn't a bomb. Instead, there had been a mechanical error in the windshield in the cockpit. It hadn't been replaced properly. It hadn't been fastened with the right types of screws. And when the pressure within the plane rose in relative connection to the pressure outside the plane in the air, what happened is that windshield on the front of the cockpit flew out of the plane, dislodged, and lots of things started going with it including Captain Lancaster. He was ripped from his seat because he was not strapped in. And his legs became lodged in a portion of the control panel. But they were lodged in such a way where half of his body was out. His upper torso and his head were outside the plane at 17,000 feet. You want to talk about holding fast? I imagine he was doing everything possible to grip and to hold on knowing that life and death was at stake. And if you're that co-pilot, you're trying to find the fastest way down in an emergency landing. They descended that 17,000 feet and landed in 20 minutes. Lancaster had to hold fast for that entire time. By the time that plane touched down, broken bones, frostbite because the air at that temperature is under 0 degrees. And yet he survived without injury. Why? Well, you might think it's just because of his power, his grip, that fact that he held fast. And I'm sure that played some role in it. But the only reason that Captain Lancaster survived that flight disaster is because the moment that boom sounded, a flight attendant, in a moment of wise instincts, raced to the cockpit, flung the door open, realized what was happening, and that flight attendant held fast to the captain. And the only reason he was not ejected from that cockpit, wasn't because of his own strength, it wasn't because of his own grip, it wasn't because he was the one holding fast. Why did he stay secure? Because someone else was holding him fast. When Hebrews 10 gives us this picture of holding fast to the Gospel, we need to recognize that that is a response to the reality that Jesus is holding fast to us. That He will not let us go. That we will not be cast out. That He will hold us secure no matter what the challenges of this world bring. And it's a reminder to us as a congregation, as we move forward into the future, if we want to be committed to reaching the next generation, it starts with holding fast to the Gospel because we know that Jesus is holding fast to us.

But notice how this text goes on here because we see a second mark beginning in verse 24. We find next that a next generation church must be committed to the mission. So notice the way he talks about this commitment. Verse 24 says:

²⁴Let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works,

So if the first mark of a next generation church is that we center on the Gospel, the second mark of a next generation church is that we center on the Gospel mission. It's about both holding fast to the Gospel message and commitment to the Gospel mission. And you see that playing out here right in verse 24 when he shows us the three things that would be true if we're going to see that commitment play out. The first you'll notice at the start of the verse is we need to consider the mission. You see that word consider there? It means to contemplate or closely examine, to scrutinize, or size something up. Here we are right after Halloween. To just give you the mental picture. It's like when your child or grandchild goes over to that big stash of candy. And they're looking down in it, digging through, trying to figure out the perfect piece they want to take for this moment. They're sizing it up before they select it. They're detecting what they want to have before they devour it. There's this deep concern and this deep commitment to making the

right selection. When he says, consider, there, that's the type of image he's giving us. That we need to turn away from ourselves and towards, to others if we want to see the commitment to the mission advance. Because so often in our hearts we turn inward in a focus on our own selves. A focus on our own lives. But we need to turn away from ourselves and put our eyes on Jesus and on others around us. How can we cause them to walk faithfully in the mission that God's called us to? That's one of the reasons why we've had this commitment for last week and this week to this 10:02 prayer time. Because each time that alarm goes off on your phone, it is a reminder to consider others. It is a reminder to pray for laborers. It is a reminder of our commitment to the mission.

But notice how the text goes on. He doesn't just say, consider the mission, now he tells us we need to commend the mission. That's what he's speaking about there when he talks about how we should stir up one another. This idea of stirring up is to encourage or to motivate, to activate. You go back to Kyle Field yesterday, you remember before the team takes the field, they get you all hyped up. You got the drums playing, and then that song, Power, comes on and starts thumping through the crowd. And then they got the flaming fire that shoots up and the smoke and Reveille and the Yell Leaders lead the way. What's happening in that moment, they're stirring up the crowd to activate them for a purpose. That's the picture here that Hebrews 10 is speaking of. That what we ought to be doing with one another is to stir each other up. To commend faithful service to Christ to one another. And that's one of the reasons I can't wait for next weekend with our Get in the Game Sunday. So if you remember, next weekend, we have our Central Tailgate starting Saturday at 3:00 p.m. Come out for some food and fun. Watch the Aggies play Ole Miss. But on Sunday, if you come dressed up like this, you're going to be the one who stands out looking strange. Because we want you showing up next week in something more like this. Maybe you want to dust off your old Johnny Manziel Jersey that you haven't been able to wear for a while. Or maybe if that's not your thing, you just want a nice Aggie pullover. That'd be great too. Pick your favorite sports team. Wear their clothing. And the reason isn't because we're celebrating sports. The reason is because we want a visual reminder to one another that we're challenging you to get off the sidelines and get in the game for the sake of Jesus. To serve in this church. To serve in this community. And what we're doing next week as we do that is we're doing what this verse tells us; stirring up one another. Commending the mission to each other. And what happens when we consider and we commend is the result of that, the end of verse 24 tells us, is we commit to the mission. That's why the end of the verse tells us there that you're stirring one another up to love and good works. So Hebrews 10 is reminding us that a commitment to the mission involves both the heart and the hands. It involves both our attitudes and our actions. It includes both the great commandment and the great commission. That's why he speaks there of how we're called to love and good works. That's something that's been a hallmark of our church from its very beginning. I came across this other letter this week that was written back in the 1950's when Central was getting ready to move into our location at Coulter Avenue. I want you to hear the way they talked about our church from its very beginning when this note said this.

On December 11, 1925 our church was formed with 81 charter members. Since that time, the church has grown in direct relationship to her faithfulness to Christ, His teachings, and His mission commands. Our future is bright today because of the firm foundation of these years of spiritual accomplishments.

And what was true after 29 years in 1954 is still true today in 2021 after 96 years. Our future is bright because of a firm foundation. And that firm foundation as that letter tells us, is based on our commitment to the faithfulness of Jesus. Is based on His teachings. Is based on His mission's mobilization in the life of our church. In other words, it's based on the exact same thing Hebrews 10:24 is speaking about, love and good works. The great commandment and the great commission. If we're going to be committed to the Gospel, it's going to drive us to be committed to the mission. One of the practical ways that you as a congregation can jump into that commitment even today is when we head out from the worship service. I want to challenge you to make your way out into the main foyer when we do that. Because starting today we have our Angel Tree packets available for pickup. Our church has made a commitment to support over 300 children in our community who may have nothing this Christmas. If you're not familiar with the Angel Tree program, what we do is we match ourselves with children in our community for whom one or both of their parents are incarcerated. Christmas may not be a merry time for them. They may not have financial provisions. They may not have gifts under the tree. But the other thing they likely won't have is any connection to the gift of the Gospel that we have in Jesus Christ. So you can go out there and select your age, your gender, or the types of toys you want to provide, and pick up those packages. Not just provide for them something under the tree that they will lose sight of in a short amount of time, but through that to also provide for them the message of hope that we've already been hearing about in this Texas morning. If we are committed to the mission, it will drive us to a love that overflows in good works for the sake of this advancement of the kingdom.

And that's why I want you to notice one final mark of a next generation church that's right here in verse 25. You'll notice the third thing that this text tells us is that a next generation church must be connected in community. Here's how he says it. Verse 25:

²⁵Not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another in all the more as you see the day drawing near.

Our culture is facing a crisis of community, especially after this pandemic season. Because that isolation has resulted in a disconnection. And that disconnection has given way to a loneliness that has woven it into the fabric of many of our own hearts. And that's not just true in the culture around us; that's true right here in our church. For our men when we were back at our men's retreat in January, we did an exercise, If Someone Really Knew Me. And loneliness showed up time and time again on those cards. Fast forward to this Fall. We did a similar exercise in our college gathering. And the struggle for loneliness, the struggle for the desire of community was one of the most common things that our college age students mentioned. It's a challenge in a broken world to find the type of deep community that we all crave. There's a longing for it, a hunger for it, especially in this next generation that we are seeking to reach. And if we want to be the type of church that reaches the next generation, one of the most significant factors that will play into that is can we be the type of church where they can find connection to community. Where they can not just believe but belong. And what we're going to find here is that Hebrews 10:25 shows us what that community should look like. You'll see at the start of the verse here it tells us that it needs to be an encouraging community. That's why it says there,

Not neglecting to meet together as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another.

That phrase, to meet together, it only shows up twice in the New Testament and it's from the root word in the original language where we get our term synagogue from. It's an assembly, it's an opportunity to gather together. And right there in this text, there is a challenge not to neglect it, not to give up on it. And it makes you wonder, what was he speaking about in the life of the people receiving this word? Why might they have been reluctant to meet together? We won't take a look at it but if you want to put it in your notes, Hebrews 10, verses 32 and 33 give us an indication of why. There was persecution going on in their midst. Hardship that was causing them to be hesitant. And while we might not be facing that same hardship today, there might still be a reluctance in the life of some of the people in our church or in our community to gather together. Not on the basis of the hardship of persecution, but on the basis of the hardship of this pandemic. Just think about the way that this has changed our habits, our patterns, our customs. I still remember being down here last Spring waiting for God to open the door to bring me as your new pastor. We couldn't even meet together. For the first 6 weeks or so that I led this church, we couldn't gather in the same room. And I remember the conversations we were all having. That in a sense, at that time, absence made the heart grow fonder. We wanted to get back. We wanted to reconnect. And I still remember that first Sunday we gathered back in this room. It's the first time in my life I ever heard people bust out into spontaneous applause just because we were gathered. But think about what's happened in the last 18 months. That excitement gave way to uncertainty as the virus rose. And that uncertainty gave way to a complacency or an apathy in the life of some people. Who as this text says, it warns them not neglecting to meet together as some are in the habit. What began to happen is habits began to change. Customs began to form. Substitutes for time began to be made. The type of priority that was focused on the gathering and investment of the community of God gave way to other things. A live stream became a substitute for life on life engagement. Or your favorite podcast took the place of your local preacher. There's a warning in this text, not just for the Hebrews in that time, but for you and me. That there is something missing when we fail to gather in community. And what is it? Well, that's what the text is pointing us to. Right there in the middle of the verse it says, don't neglect meeting together, but encourage one another. There is this contrast that takes place here. Between those who fail to meet together and those who encourage one another. In other words, it's not possible to provide the same level of encouragement in the call to follow Jesus when we're apart as we are together. I just wonder, have you ever thought through this. When is the last time you showed up on a Sunday morning and one of the questions on your heart was, how might I encourage those around me today while I'm gathered together for church? When you're thinking through how you serve or how you engage, it's so often tempting to come with a consumer mentality. What can this provide for me? But there's a different picture in Hebrews 10:25. It's not about consumption, but contribution. It's not about what I experience, but how I encourage. And the type of church that's going to find its community grounded in the Gospel and going on the mission is one that will only thrive if it's filled with encouragement.

Let me show you how the text ends. Because we'll see a glimpse of why this encouragement is so important. He's going to show us that we need to connect, not just to an encouraging community, but an expectant community. We'll see that at the end of verse 25 when he says this:

[And all the more as you see the Day drawing near.](#)

So why should we connect in community? The text tells us because Jesus is coming soon. You see that phrase at the end of the verse, draw near? I'll give you the Texas translation: He's fixin' to. He's coming. The day is drawing near. And what is this day that he speaks of? We know the New Testament tells us that when Jesus came the first time, He came as a humble suffering servant; beaten, mocked, scorned. And through His sinless life through His death on the cross for our sins and His raising from the dead to newness of life, He ascended back into heaven with a promise. That one day He would come again soon. And that when He comes, He will not come as a suffering servant, but as a glorious King. Bringing victory and judgment to His people. And that expectation should transform the nature of our community. We're a people who long for that day. Who look for that day. Who plead for that day. And that expectation changes the way we live in the present. You know, the holidays are filled with expectation aren't they? You know what it's like on Thanksgiving morning when you smell all those amazing smells coming from the kitchen? It fuels that expectation of the meal you're about to have. Or you can picture that child or grandchild who wakes up on Christmas morning and just can't wait to go out under the tree with expectation to see what they have. Or you turn on the television and try to stay up until midnight on New Year's Eve. And what you find is hundreds of thousands of people amassed together to watch that ball drop. Why? It's because the expectation of a certainty can't help but gather people in community. Let me tell you something. There is no greater certainty in this world than the fact that Jesus is coming soon. That that day is drawing near. And if we want to be the type of church that reaches the next generation, it's going to depend on being centered on the Gospel, committed to the mission, and connected in community. That's why I'm so happy we're coming to this Lord's Supper, crowded in this Texas morning. Because as we partake of this family meal, we get to see all three of these marks in action. When we take the bread and the cup, what's happening? We're being reminded of the Gospel. We're being refueled for the mission. We're being reconnected in community towards this family meal. So in just a moment as we make our ways to the tables and we ready our heart for that, I want you to remember what's happening. In this family meal, as we take of the bread and cup, we are reminding of the body and blood of Jesus poured out for us. And if you've met Jesus in a saving way, if you're walking with Him, this is a family meal for you. But as we ready ourselves, I want to remind you of these words. They come from 1 Corinthians 11 as we search our hearts and examine them as we prepare for the table. Here's what he says. 1 Corinthians 11:27:

²⁷Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.

Let's pray together as we prepare to respond.

Father, we're coming to You this morning with open hearts. Search us, O God, that we may know our ways. That we may see ourselves as You see us. That we will be restored and replenished to walk in newness of life. That we will be restored and replenished to walk in faithfulness to Your mission. That we will be restored and replenished to experience the kind of community that we can only find in Jesus. And I pray in this moment of response that You would use the bread and the cup to convict us of sin and to help us hold fast that confession of our hope. And we pray this in Jesus name. Amen.