

**“Meeting Together”
By Rev. Frances Savill
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Readings:

Hebrews 10:11-25

Sometimes we start to think that the Bible doesn't know about our times.

We face terrorist attacks, refugees flee, and a world-wide pandemic.

We forget that Jesus was a refugee, after his birth his family had to flee to Egypt.

Those seeking Jesus' life, to destroy the would be king, slaughtered children under the age of 3.

Jesus lived in an occupied country, the rulers didn't just execute people, they strung them up on crosses to make a public example of torture and humiliation, to strike fear into the hearts of the people.

The Bible knows this world.

There was violence and betrayal – problems abounded on every front for God's people.

And into the tumult and trouble, and confusion and sorrow, and worry our scriptures were written.

So, let's look at Hebrews 10:11-25.

It begins:

And every priest stands day after day at his service, offering again and again the same sacrifices that can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, "he sat down at the right hand of God," and since then has been waiting "until his enemies would be made a footstool for his feet." For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.

In the days before Jesus, there were offerings made for sin every day.

The priests would offer a sacrifice to God, for the forgiveness of sins.

But the writer of Hebrews says that though sacrifices were made, and forgiveness given the real problem of sin remained.

The sacrifices dealt with an act of sin, but not the sinner.

So these sacrifices had to be repeated time and again.

But in Jesus a new day has come.

Jesus is both our Great High Priest who offers the perfect sacrifice, and the spotless lamb who is the perfect sacrifice.

Jesus Identified fully with us in our humanity, but also being without fault or sin and was able to be the perfect sacrifice.

And his gift, his offering, dealt with our sin once for all.

But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, “he sat down at the right hand of God,

Why is it important that Jesus “sat down” at the right hand of God?

Because he is at rest – his work is accomplished. He has done everything that needed doing.

And now he is seated at the right hand of God the Father – to pray for us- to rule over all things for us, knowing that his offering for us is completed.

Jesus has done for us what we could not do for ourselves, and Jesus reigns in power over the world.

This morning we hear that we do not need to be afraid.

And since we know that we are now at peace with God because of Jesus' sacrifice – because Jesus has done everything that needed doing through his life, death and resurrection, therefore...

Therefore, my friends, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary 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, let us approach 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. Let us hold fast to the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who has promised is faithful. And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

In light of all that Jesus has done, therefore we don't have to be afraid.

We can approach God with confidence.

We can come into God's presence with assurance that we are forgiven, that we are loved and have always been loved.

We can come into God's house with hope.

We can stand fast in our faith, stand fast in the promises of God, without fear, knowing that God who has promised all things is faithful.

We have a hope that does not disappoint us. This passage calls us to be God's hope-filled people.

Eugene Peterson wrote:

“Hope affects the Christian life by making us expectant and alive. People with minimal hope live in drudgery and boredom because they think they know what’s going to happen next. They’ve made their assessment of God, the people around them, and themselves, and they know what’s coming.

People who hope never know what’s coming. They expect it’s going to be good because God is good. Even when disasters occur, people of hope look for how God will use evil for good.

A person alive with hope is alive to God. It is stimulating. It keeps us on tiptoe, looking for the unexpected.”

If you knew you would succeed, if you trusted God's good promises what would you start for the kingdom of God?

What audacious dreams has God given to you?

Let us encourage and spur one another on.

Jesus is for us, what can stand against us?

Jesus has done everything that needs to be done for our salvation – he is our rock and our foundation, so even when there is chaos around us, we are not shaken.

We are free to trust God’s good plan for our lives, we are free to work together to accomplish God’s good plan for our church.

We are free to courageously step out into God’s dream, and accomplish God’s mission.

And so as we wait on tiptoe – we are encouraged to meet together, to worship together, to celebrate what God has for us, and to encourage each other in love and good works.

It seems to me that this is key.

We need to meet together, we need to worship together, we need to stay together, committed to one another, committed to our faith.

How do we provoke one another to love and good deeds?

What provokes you to love and good deeds?

For me, it is the example of others.

There are people, including the elders of this church, and as I see their example, as I see their humble service, as I see their great faith lived out day by day, as I see their forgiveness of others, as I see them live out God's mission in courageous ways, their generosity, their care for the least, I want to be more like them.

Some of you joined in meeting with a group for Practising the Way where we are thinking about what it means to learn about Jesus to become like Jesus, doing what Jesus did.

These groups are transformational, life changing, life enriching.

Others of you have been part of book studies, and again when we hear the faith of others, the struggles of others, the example of others, we are encouraged, we are challenged, our faith is grown. Those are powerful moments.

Those who help with worship week by week – our tech team, our singers, our greeters, those who faithfully serve in whatever way, their dedication encourages me.

The more I see how you live your faith, the more I want to serve God.

Your example, provokes me to love and good deeds.

You make me want to be courageous in serving God, learning to live life on tiptoe, expectant, hopefilled – boldly serving God.

So let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day of Jesus' return approaching.

Thanks be to God!