



Being Good News for Our Community - Spring 2017

Study 4 - Do Not Give Up Meeting Together



Hebrews 10:19-25; Romans 12:3-8

(sermons on Feb 12th)

Introduction

This series is about Being Good News for Our Community but these first few studies are about the sort of people we need to be – both as individuals and in relation to each other – if we are going to have a positive impact on the different communities of which we are part.

Hebrews 10:19-25 Keep Going Together

The Letter to the Hebrews is probably written to Christians from a Jewish (Hebrew) background who were having a tough time, both from Gentile pagans and from Jews who didn't accept that Jesus was the Messiah. Some of these Jewish Christians were tempted to go back to joining in some of the practices of local Jewish communities to avoid persecution and to benefit from the limited protection offered to Jews by the Roman authorities. The Letter urges these Christians to stand firm and to remember how Jesus is greater than everything in the Old Testament that foreshadowed him.

v.19 the Most Holy Place – literally the innermost room of the Jerusalem Temple that only the High Priest could enter once a year on the Day of Atonement; this place symbolized God's Presence amongst his people; Christians have access to God's Presence through the death of Jesus and do not need the Temple, its rituals and its sacrifices.

v.20 the curtain – which sealed-off the innermost room; it was torn when Jesus died (Matthew 27:51)

v.21 a great priest – Jesus, who performs the priestly role of go-between between humans and God

v.22 hearts sprinkled... bodies washed – images from the Temple rituals for approaching God

v.25 the Day – the Day of Jesus' return, which is also the day of judgement

1. 'let us draw near (v.23)... let us hold unswervingly to the hope (v.23). Is it easier to pray and to be confident as Christians when worshipping together, than when we are on our own? How can we know that we aren't simply being carried along by other's emotions?
2. How, in practice, do we 'spur one another on towards love and good deeds'(v.24) ?
3. Why might the Hebrew Christians have been tempted *not* to meet together openly?
What reasons (or excuses?) do we have for not going to church so often, or missing our growth groups, or other opportunities to meet other Christians?
When do we most need encouragement? When are we most able to encourage others?

Romans 12:3(or 1)-8 Making the Body Work Together

In Romans 1 to 11 Paul explains the basis on which, as Christians, we are forgiven, accepted, and are being changed, by God. In chapter 12 Paul challenges the Roman Christians to live out their faith. He uses the same picture of the body with its different parts as we saw in 1 Corinthians 12.

v.5 in Christ we who are many form one body – our relationship to Christ is the basis of our unity

4. Do we see the church (as a whole, and our local church) as a **body** that is inter-dependent?
What does it mean that 'each member belongs to all the others' (v.5)?
5. How do we recognize the **gifts** that God has given us (v.6)? How do we make sure that, as a church, we are using all the gifts that God has given us, and using them in the right spirit (vv.6-8)?